



May 2013

Housing is the Foundation of Community Prosperity

## Overview

Affordability  
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Economic Development

Public Health

Educational  
Opportunity

Transportation

Accessibility

## Why the Coalition?

The need for this coalition was identified in the 2008 Regional Housing Conference. At the time, it was determined that the affordability of housing in our community was an issue that needed more public attention. In the intervening years, housing has taken on an even greater sense of urgency. The message of the coalition is that an adequate supply of decent and affordable housing intersects with each of our community's aspirations. A healthy housing supply truly is the foundation of community prosperity.

The Coalition consists of non-profit housing organizations, private developers, community foundations, local housing committees, and others. We are aligned in the mission of pointing the spotlight on our diverse housing needs and seeking a more favorable regulatory environment and funding support for safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Every person in the City of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Greene, Louisa, Fluvanna and Nelson needs a roof over their head. Housing is the single largest component of the average family budget, and the greater Charlottesville community has a foundational need for housing for the wide variety of income levels, as well as diverse and vibrant neighborhoods. The purpose of this paper is to touch on some of the broad implications of a healthy housing supply, set in healthy neighborhoods, and chart the course for the rest of this series.



## Affordability Comparison

How does the greater Charlottesville area compare in the availability of housing for all income levels? The Charlottesville metro area has the least affordable homeownership and is tied with Hampton Roads for the least affordable rents in Virginia, relative to regional median incomes. Over the last few years, rents have only gone up as middle class jobs have stagnated, putting pressure on some of the most vulnerable households in our community. **Of all households in the region, 33% spend more than 30% of income on housing and 14% spend more than 50% of their income on housing.** The gap is even wider in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, indicating an undersupply of housing available to low and moderate income residents.

## Housing and Public Health: the Ability to Live a Healthy Lifestyle

Of all of the line items in the household budget, housing is the most fixed in place. Families with high housing costs can cut all sorts of activities to make ends meet, but, short of a major life upheaval, the housing budget is untouchable.

**When families tied to unaffordable homes start to make serious compromises in their food or health care purchases, even a temporary situation can exert a long-term negative health impact** for adults and children alike.

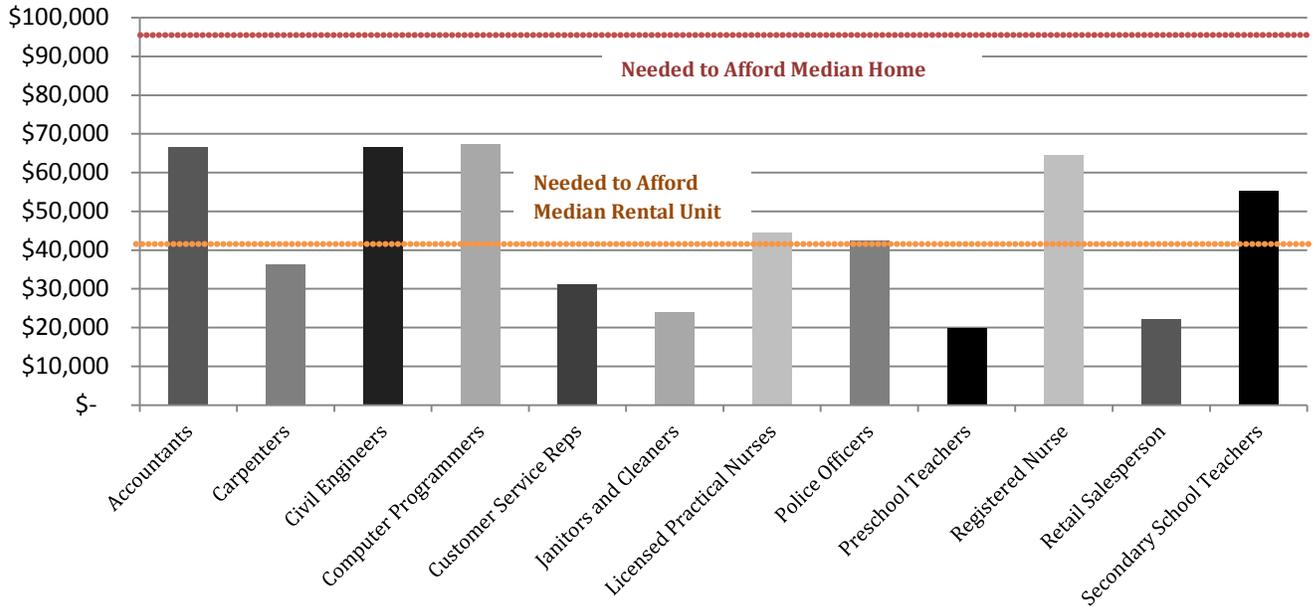
Several studies have found that children in low-income families that do not receive housing support are more likely to suffer from iron deficiencies, malnutrition and underdevelopment than children in similar families receiving housing assistance.

**“Stable, affordable housing may improve health outcomes for individuals with chronic illnesses and disabilities, and the elderly, by providing a stable and efficient platform for the ongoing delivery of health care and other necessary services.”**

– Center for Housing Policy  
Vital Links: Impact of Affordable  
Housing on Health

Sources and methods used in this series are available upon request from Daniel Nairn, dnairn@tjpd.org

## Median wages compared to income needed to afford median housing unit



Sources: 2012 BLS, 2011 Census

### Housing and Economic Development: a Resilient Workforce

Adequate provision of affordable housing in our community is integral to the health of existing businesses, and it's on every company's shortlist of factors to consider before deciding where to locate.

According to a survey conducted by the Urban Land Institute, **the single most important concern large companies report around the country is the lack of housing affordable to their employees within close proximity to the workplace.** Employees that are forced to commute long distances to find adequate housing are more susceptible to workplace stress and high turnover. This was especially true of the moderate-income respondents, those who compose the "mainstream" of our workforce.

Neighborhoods with a diverse selection of housing types and tenures naturally help the broad range of households in our community have equitable access to economic opportunity.

### Housing and Accessibility: a Home for any Age and Ability

Many of us have special needs for our home, whether it's wider than average doorways to fit a wheelchair or a first floor bedroom. Maybe the home also should be located in a place with safe sidewalks and easy access to services. The more needs a homeowner or renter have, the harder it can be to find a place to live within the household budget. **Since people with disabilities and the elderly may already be pressed financially, a lack of affordable options can tighten the squeeze even further.**

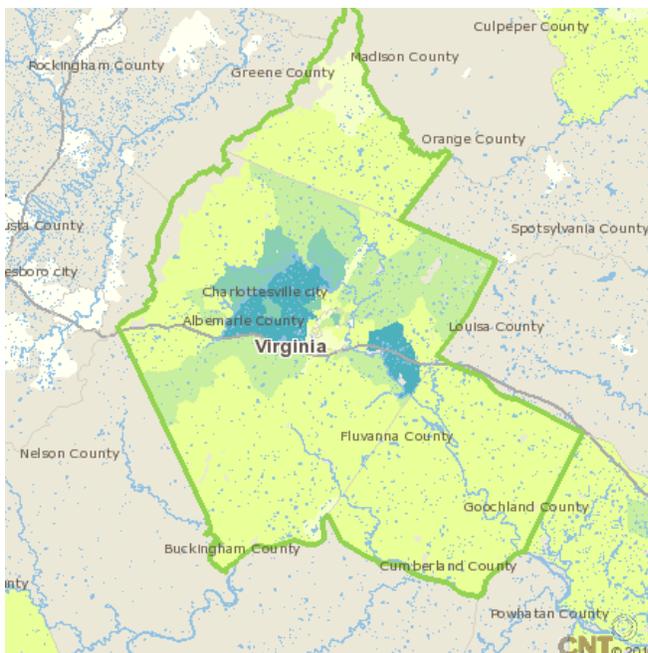
A community with a healthy housing supply will have enough options available to meet the wide variety of needs that exist. A recent study from AARP addressed this question. Their members identified the need for a greater array of multifamily rental options, smaller for-sale homes, accessory dwelling units, and housing subsidies in their communities. Providing these housing types mixed together into neighborhoods allows for a rich, multigenerational environment for all of us.

## Housing and Transportation: Combining the Costs

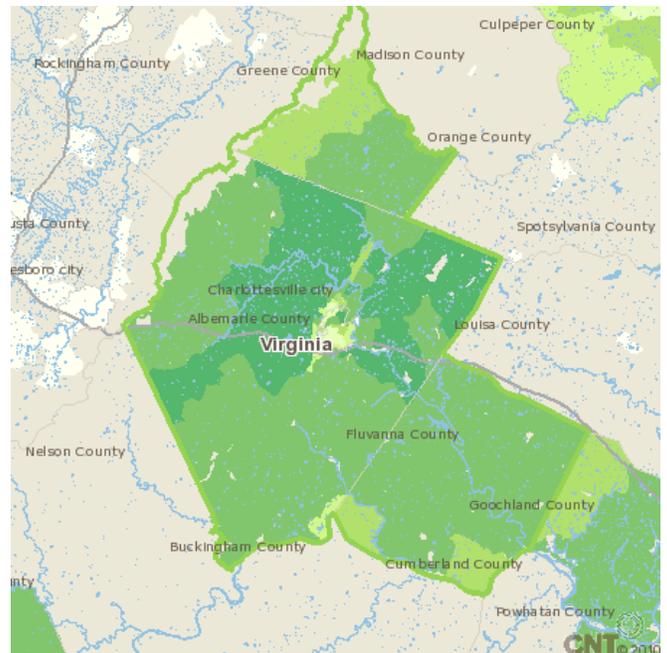
When affordable housing is not available close to jobs and services, many residents will decide to “drive to qualify” for lower cost housing on the fringes of the metropolitan area. However, much of this household cost savings simply gets shifted to cover the extra transportation costs. With the price of gas fluctuating so unpredictably, many families find themselves in a vulnerable financial situation. On the other hand, mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods allow residents to live within closer proximity to the services they need, alleviating excessive transportation costs while granting freedom of movement.

**When housing and transportation costs are considered together, many of the communities in our region are essentially unaffordable to the median income household.** The average family would have to spend more than 45% of their income to live there (represented by darker areas on the maps below).

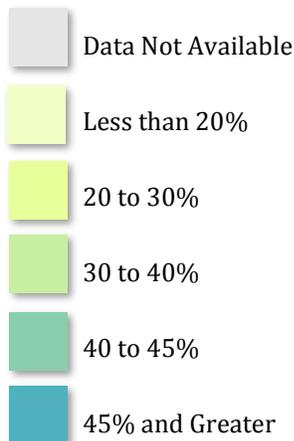
**Housing Costs as Percent of Median Income**



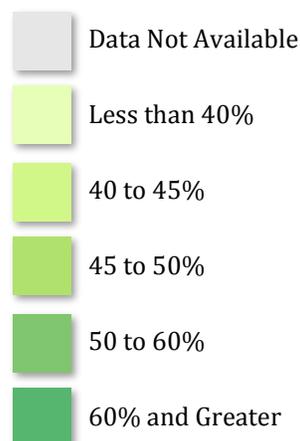
**Housing + Transportation Costs to Income**



Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology



*This map shows what a household earning the area median income would have to spend, as a percent of their income, for median housing costs in various census blocks in Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Greene County, and Fluvanna County. Both renting and owning is included.*



*This map expands the previous map to include transportation costs associated with particular census blocks in our region. Higher levels of car ownership and use add costs to housing options located in less accessible areas.*

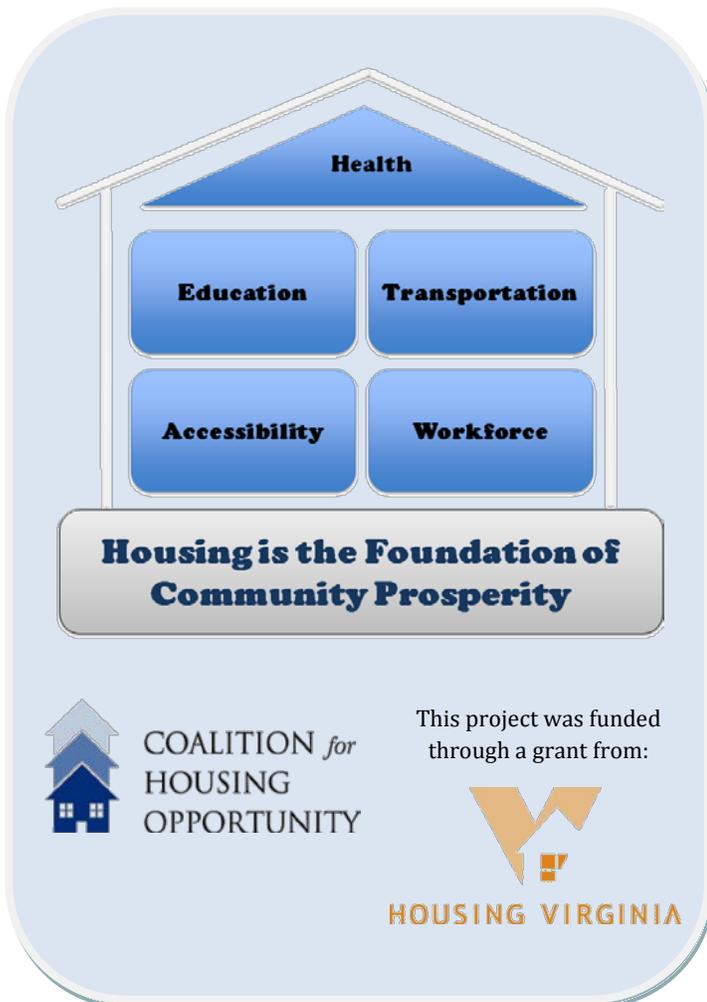
## Housing and Education: an Environment for Learning

Families who have high housing cost burdens can be forced to move as rents go up or the home is foreclosed upon, sometimes doubling up into a crowded home with extended family or friends. Both of these conditions can be hard for children. A large body of research shows that children who move between houses or schools frequently have a harder time performing well in school. **The residential stability that comes with predictable, affordable housing is important for childhood development.** Additionally, an overcrowded and noisy home life can make it hard for a student to complete homework and get needed sleep.

Education is inherently wrapped up in the shape of the community. The Federal Department of Education has teamed up with other federal agencies, recognizing that many of the problems associated with schools ought to be tackled at the neighborhood level. Inadequate housing and concentration of poverty have been identified as major stumbling blocks for an effective educational system. A similar joint effort could be fruitful at the local level as well.

**“By enabling families to afford decent-quality homes of their own, affordable housing can reduce overcrowding (and other sources of housing-related stress) that lead to negative developmental and educational outcomes for children.”**

– Center for Housing Policy  
Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education



## Members of the Coalition

