



**Testimony to the Loudoun County Housing Workgroup
Re: Workforce Housing
Brian J. Fauls, Manager of Government Affairs
Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce
November 4, 2013**

Chairman Klancher, and members of the Housing Stakeholders Group, thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Brian Fauls and I am the Government Affairs Manager of the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce.

The Loudoun Chamber and the Loudoun business community have long understood that there is an inseparable link between workforce housing and a community's economic and social well-being. Without a sufficient supply of workforce housing, employers – and our entire economy – is at a competitive disadvantage because of difficulties attracting and retaining workers. In addition, the lack of local workforce housing leads to longer commutes, sprawl and traffic congestion, which ultimately lessens the quality of life for all of Loudoun County's residents.

I would stress that we are talking about more than increasing the supply of affordable housing, as that term is traditionally understood – housing for low to moderate income families – although that type of housing must also be increased. I am talking about increasing the availability of housing for middle class families. Loudoun County is often thought of as a wealthy county – sometimes erroneously called the wealthiest in America – but the reality is that the cost of living in Loudoun County is steep. Incomes that would be considered high in any other ZIP code don't cut it here. This problem will only get worse as Loudoun's population grows.

So, the challenge is not only to create affordable housing opportunities – both rental and for sale - for people with low-incomes but also to create housing that is affordable for people with incomes in the low six figures who still can't buy much. We believe that Loudoun County can meet this challenge.

Specifically we recommend:

- Supporting the conclusions and recommendations of the Housing Advisory Board, including adequate maintenance and investment in a single local housing trust fund, leveraging this fund to provide the highest possible impact;
- Competing for and leveraging funds available through flexible financing and low-interest loans under the Virginia Housing Trust Fund;
- Promoting the use of County-owned vacant or under-utilized land and/or assets to be used or exchanged for the creation of affordable housing units or mixed-use development that includes affordable units;
- Adopting higher densities in appropriate locations to enable a greater number of overall housing products at all price points, including Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs), to be available for sale or rental;



- Using property tax credits, down payment programs, low interest loans, an expedited approval process, and other programs by the County to increase home ownership for low- to moderate-income households;
- Using the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to investigate alternative project solutions, attract non-profit developers, provide financing alternatives for potential projects, and potentially act as a housing authority;
- Supporting market-driven green building incentives in response to the growing demand for green homes and building practices;
- Reducing capital facility fees, which inflate the cost of housing to the point of creating a disincentive for businesses to locate in Loudoun County; and finally
- Researching the viability of creating a separate Housing and Community Development Department to increase the visibility, prioritization and effectiveness of Loudoun County's housing opportunity programs;

Loudoun County, has a thriving business environment and an exceptional quality of life. Yet, if we do not face our workforce housing challenge it will overwhelm us, dramatically changing the future—and face—of this area. However, if we plan today for a wide range of urban, suburban and rural housing choices, and we give potential renters and home buyers the financial tools to make those choices affordable, Loudoun County's future will be bright.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak and for your consideration of our recommendations.