

LET'S MAKE HOUSING AFFORDABLE BY ALL

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Throughout the community of Reston can be found a multitude of diverse, and what was once affordable housing. Streets of single family detached units, and clusters of townhouses with delightful open spaces and well-designed layouts of multifamily units dot the landscape of Reston. What is most important is that these housing structures are home to all kinds of people: the young and old; the economically secure and not so economically secure; different cultures and races representing an array of professions and backgrounds.

One of the primary goals of Reston founder Robert E. Simon states: "By providing the fullest range of housing styles and prices . . . housing needs can be met at a variety of income levels and at different stages of family life." In our first 40 years, Restonians achieved this goal and understood its importance. From Cedar Ridge to West Market, and from the Fellowship Houses to Stratford House, the diversity of housing that we have maintained is readily apparent. The affordable housing goal was accomplished by what was built and who came to live in this community, and it was accomplished in the spirit of community not government regulation.

Early in Reston's history, when housing prices likely ranged from \$20,000 to \$50,000, with many household incomes unlikely to exceed \$30,000, there was an affordable unit for anyone who wanted to make Reston home. Community leaders, fearful that market rate housing was beyond the means of lower-income persons, worked with Fairfax County government to build the federally subsidized Cedar Ridge apartments to insure the community was for everyone. These new residents were welcomed as part of the community.

While Reston has changed, it has lived up to another of Simon's goals, that "In order to be completed as conceived, it must also, of course, be a financial success." The wonderful diversity of houses and the many nationally recognized corporate offices make it a magnet for people seeking that "best place" to live.

As Reston continues to mature, the next 40 years promises to be more challenging than the last four decades. Attempts to maintain Simon's housing goal will be a major challenge. The 2000 Census estimates average income in Reston exceeds \$81,000. According to Fairfax County's demographic information for 2004, the median market value for housing in Hunter Mill District was approximately \$372,000. Houses built today are undistinguished in style and cost. As well, the incomes of the people who will live in them are likely to share this resemblance. With a lack of awareness or commitment by developers, ineffective government regulation and a hot housing market, Simon's goal of "the fullest range of housing styles and prices" fades with each passing day.

As our community grows, the core of what makes Reston a great community must not change. By working together as partners, government, community leaders, non-profit and not-for-profit organizations, along with for-profit developers, assure that Reston retains in spirit and in physical design, its original housing goal. Working together we can assure that all future housing developments in Reston will include affordable housing. As new Restonians join the community they, too, will be given the opportunity to share in Reston's inclusive spirit and to participate in this jewel of a place called Reston.

