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COMMISSION UPDATES

During December, the full Virginia Housing Commission and three of its four workgroups met to discuss various housing topics.

(1) Real Property, Community Development, and Best Land-Use Practices Workgroup

At the December 5th meeting, the workgroup heard presentations from the County of Sussex on their Economic and Community Development Perspectives and the VHC Policy Analyst's Overview of Other States Methods to Promote Housing Construction through Development Incentives and Local Zoning Pre-emption.

Click [here](#) for a summary of the recent Real Property, Community Development, and Best Land-Use Practices Workgroup meeting.

(2) Land Use and Community Living Workgroup

The workgroup met on December 6th to discuss potential legislation and hear presentations on:

- Virginia First Cities housing access tools
- Local Initiative Support Corporation Strategies for Addressing the Affordable Housing Crisis
- Department of Professional and Occupational Regulations Common Interest Community Ombud's update

The workgroup voted to recommend to the full commission the following proposed legislation:

- Expanding Community Revitalization Fund
- Vacant Building Registration

Click [here](#) for the [summary](#) of the recent Land Use and Community Living Workgroup meeting.

(2) Landlord and Tenant Law, Real Estate Law, and Affordable Housing Solutions Workgroup

The workgroup met on December 6th to discuss potential legislation and hear presentations on:

- Improving Housing Stability from the United Way of the Virginia Peninsula
- Housing Opportunities Made Equal update
- Eviction Diversion Pilot Program Final Report from VHC's research and policy analyst

Click [here](#) for the [summary](#) of the recent Landlord and Tenant Law, Real Estate Law, and Affordable Housing Solutions Workgroup meeting.

At the December 19th meeting of the full Virginia Housing Commission, members heard presentations from:

- Virginia Center for Housing Research on Workforce Development for Affordable Housing in Appalachia
- Updates on several topics from Virginia Housing.

The Commission voted to endorse four pieces of legislation on various topics including:

- Virginia Eviction Diversion Pilot Program continuation to 2025
- Foreclosures on Common Interest Communities
- Vacant and Derelict Building Registration
- Local Funding for Community Revitalization

The Commission unanimously elected Senator Mamie Locke as chair and Delegate Carrie Coyner as vice-chair for a term of two years.

ENDORSED LEGISLATION

Continuation of the Virginia Eviction Diversion Pilot Program: **SB 50 (Locke)** and **HB 477 (Coyner)**

This legislation extends the Court Eviction Diversion Pilot program from 2024 to 2025.

Foreclosures on Common Interest Communities: **SB 341 (Surovell)** and **HB 880 (Bulova)**

This legislation creates a minimum amount of money owed, \$25,000, for a foreclosure remedy to be used by a Common Interest Community.

Vacant and Derelict Building Registration: **SB 48 (Locke)** and **HB 476 (Coyner)**

This legislation enables counties, cities, and towns to register buildings that meet the definition of vacant, derelict or criminal blight.

Local Funding for Community Revitalization: **SB 49 (Locke)** and **HB 478 (Coyner)**

This legislation amends §15.2-958.5 to enable any locality to create a Community Revitalization Fund to prevent neighborhood deterioration and to increase housing supply.

Follow our newsletters for legislative housing updates.

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U.S. Housing Starts Rise Unexpectedly in November

Overall housing starts rose 14.8% from the October numbers to a rate of 1.56 million units, the highest increase since May. The rise is commonly credited to declining mortgage rates. However, permits fell by 2.5% over November but have risen to approximately 4% in comparison to last year's numbers.

Single-family building permits were up 0.7% from October. Single-family homebuilding starts surged to the highest level since April 2022, rising by 18% in November to 1,430,000 units. There is a widespread expectation that single-family homebuilding will gain further momentum as declining mortgage rates and builder incentives draw buyers back to the market.

Overall housing completions rose 5% to 1,447,000 units. According to the National Association of Realtors, housing starts and completion rates need to be around 1.5 to 1.6 million units per month to bridge the inventory gap in the housing market. Multi-family starts increased by 6.9% and showed recovery from the large decline over the summer.

HOUSING COMMISSION HONORS PARTER AGENCY

The Virginia Housing Commission, formerly known as the Virginia Housing Study Commission, established the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA), now known as Virginia Housing, in 1972 with the aim of providing Virginians with quality, affordable housing.

Last year, Virginia Housing celebrated its 50th year anniversary. The agency has had three directors in its half a century lifespan.

The most recent director, Susan Dewey, joined Virginia Housing in 1999 after serving as State Treasurer for three years.

After 25 years of service, Director Dewey retired at the end of 2023.

Under her leadership Virginia Housing has received numerous awards and has become one of the leaders in housing finance across the country.

SENATOR LOCKE ELECTED CHAIR

Senator Mamie Locke was elected to represent Virginia's 2nd district in 2003. Now she represents Senate District 23. In 2004 Senator Locke joined the Virginia Housing Commission (VHC).

She has alternated between VHC Chair and Vice-Chair since 2008. At the VHC's December 19th meeting was unanimously elected chair.

For the 2024 legislative session, Senator Locke chairs the Senate Rules Committee and serves on Education and Health, Finance and Appropriations, General Laws and Technology, Commerce and Labor Committees.

While in office Senator Locke worked as a member of the VHC to create legislative solutions aimed at increasing transparency in real estate purchases, enumerating tenant's rights in the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, extending Fair Housing Law, and establishing the Virginia Eviction Diversion Pilot Program.

Senator Locke was Chief Patron of eleven housing bills recommended by the VHC which have been signed into law.

During the 2024 legislative session, Senator Locke is patron of three pieces of legislation recommended by the VHC:

- SB 48 - Vacant and Derelict Building Registration,
- SB 49 - expanding the Community Revitalization Fund, and
- SB 50 - The continuation of the Virginia Eviction Diversion Pilot Program.

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FEATURED NEWS ARTICLES

[Virginia Expands Eligibility For Home-Buying Help \(VPM\)](#)

Virginia Housing raised the income limits to expand eligibility for their homebuying assistance programs. Virginia Housing increased its maximum gross household income and sales price limits for down payment assistance and closing cost assistance programs. These increases are partially a response to market conditions over the last few years.

[Virginia Home Sales Expected To Improve For 2024 \(WAVY\)](#)

Even though Virginia's 2023 housing market remained slow, there are signs that the market could improve in 2024. According to the Virginia Realtors November 2023 Virginia Home Sales Report, home sales across the Commonwealth were down 9.5% from last year. However, that represents the smallest year-over-year decline in two years which may indicate some stabilization.

[As Need Rises, Housing Aid Hits Lowest Level in Nearly 25 Years \(NY Times\)](#)

While the number of eligible households without aid consistently grows, the main federal programs for the lowest-income renters hit their peaks in 2004. Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers now serve 287,000 fewer households than they did in 2004.

The number of severe cost-burdened households is at a record high, which aligns with government findings of record homelessness this year. The cost of providing aid has increased substantially as rent continues to rise faster than wages.

[Forecast For Northern Virginia Housing Market In 2024 Predicts Fewer Sales, Rising Prices \(DCist\)](#)

The real estate market is still trying to reach a post-pandemic "normal," in Northern Virginia. Overall sales activity is expected to decline by 10% or more in Northern Virginia in 2024 even as national projections remain positive. Experts point to a historic lack of inventory as the reason home sales are expected to continue declining in the region. While homebuying is down, home values for owners have rapidly appreciated and are expected to continue to increase due to low inventory in the region.

[Virginia Could Make It Easier For Churches To Develop On-Site Affordable Housing \(Virginia Pilot\)](#)

According to the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, about a dozen churches in Virginia have opened or are developing on-site affordable housing units. Several organizations are pushing for legislation that would eliminate rezoning requirements for religious institutes who want to offer on-site housing on their owned land. A similar measure was passed in California.

[Advantage Capital Finances Affordable Housing Development in Rural Virginia \(Business Wire\)](#)

One of the first investments under the Virginia Housing Opportunity Tax Credit program closed in early December. The legislation was designed to increase access to affordable homes for Virginians.

[Fairfax County Breaks Ground On Tysons' First 100% Affordable Residential Development \(WTOP News\)](#)

The 519-unit building is funded in part with \$56 million from Amazon's Housing Equity Fund, \$89 million from the DHCD, \$227 million in financing from Bank of America, and contributions from the Virginia Housing Trust Fund. The apartments will be available to residents earning between 30% and 70% of the area median income in Tysons.

[Workforce Housing Development Fund To Help Create New, Affordable Housing In Roanoke \(WFXRTV\)](#)

The City allocated \$2 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to start a new Workforce Housing Development Fund. Roanoke has taken several recent actions to increase overall housing supply including zoning reforms, strategic partnerships, educational outreach and more.

[Homelessness is a Stubborn Problem in Southside. But help from the Community is Coming \(Cardinal News\)](#)

With the large increase in homelessness in Southside Virginia, community members and local organizations are working to provide solutions and collect data. The Danville Housing Authority is collaborating with landlords and property owners to connect those at risk of becoming homeless to services. Administration of these programs can be challenging, but the community is making progress on this issue.

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