

Statement for the Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force

My name is Dan Brendel. I offer this statement strictly on behalf of St. Joseph Catholic Church and the other undersigned housing advocates, not as a reporter.

I encourage you to consider affordable housing more robustly in your discussions and recommendations to city council.

You have discussed delivering “capability” to citizens. The capability of people to live here in the first place is of primary importance. Yet the affordable housing shortage is “the most significant factor” and “the ground zero of need in the city,” according to the Alexandria Council of Human Services Organizations. Some two-thirds of our city’s low- to moderate-income households are considered unduly “burdened” by housing costs, jeopardizing their family stability and capacity to secure other basic necessities. Relative to these assessments, we need to do more, and do it more systematically. Currently less than 2 percent of the FY18 All-Funds Budget, and none of the FY19-27 CIP, goes to housing investments and services.

I offer three points for your deliberation:

First, we need to regard housing as core infrastructure and to resource it accordingly, well in advance in the capital planning framework. The city’s Housing Master Plan says the “best” tool to achieve its goals would be “a consistent, reliable source of annual funding.” The city can predict certain funding a few years in advance, but shortfalls remain and need to be augmented regularly. Currently this augmenting occurs ad hoc and within a very short time horizon. In order to encourage new housing opportunities, and to have the capacity to seize them more boldly, we need to plan farther ahead in the CIP. As you work to stabilize things, please be mindful that housing-as-infrastructure not be excluded.

Second, as project alternatives arise, consider diverting ample unencumbered funds to close existing housing shortfalls, and also to additional housing projects at below “workforce” rents, currently a desperate “crowded out” tier.

Finally, consideration of affordable housing co-location should not be ad hoc but a standard requirement early in the process for all future facilities projects.

In Support:

- Rev. Juli Wilson-Black, Pastor, Fairlington Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Jo Belser, Pastor, and Betsy Faga, Redevelopment Committee, Episcopal Church of the Resurrection
- Rev. David Gortner, Associate Dean of Church and Community Engagement, Virginia Theological Seminary
- Michelle Krockner, Executive Director, Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance