

# The Central Virginian

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## County approves affordable housing request

Ike Parrish, editor Aug 17, 2023

An affordable housing application from the Fluvanna-Louisa Housing Foundation (FLHF) was met with unanimous approval last week at the Louisa County Board of Supervisors August 8 regular meeting.

The application encompassed three separate public hearings; to rezone the eight-acre site adjacent to the Louisa County Resource Council (LCRC) from industrial to residential, to allow for the use of multi-family dwellings and to make an exemption in the county's building code to allow the use of vinyl and cement board siding instead of stone, brick or stucco siding.

The 25 housing units will be located in the Mineral District between Jefferson Davis Highway, Chalk Level Road and Resource Lane. The site was chosen due to the convenience of its location, being centrally situated between the towns of Mineral and Louisa and adjacent to the FLHF offices and the LCRC, which provides hunger relief and life-sustaining services for Louisa's residents.

The project will address the need for affordable housing in the county, which currently has zero available affordable housing units, according to FLHF Executive Director Kim Hyland.

The development will include 16 one-floor, handicap-accessible senior living units available for individuals making under 60% of the county's average median income, equating to roughly \$36,000. Hyland said the foundation will prioritize seniors making under 30% of the average median income and those living in dilapidated households. The units are intended for residents aged 62 or older or handicapped individuals.

The project could help decrease the number of blighted homes in the county, as FLHF is looking into purchasing deteriorated houses of residents relocated into the affordable housing units and demo or renovate their previous dwelling for resale.

Hyland explained the need for senior living rentals, noting Louisa's aging population with 21% of county residents over 65 years old. Additionally, more than 85% of homes in the county are owner occupied, further exacerbating the need for affordable rentals, said Hyland.

The other nine units are two-bedroom dwellings intended for essential workers who are already living in the county or working in Louisa but cannot afford to live in the county. The two-bedroom rentals are for families with a combined income that amounts to less than 80% of the average median income in Louisa, or \$55,000.

"We work with the applicants; they'll provide us with their proof of income, and we gear their rent to their income instead of the market rate," said Hyland.

Essential workers include those employed in education, law enforcement, Fire and EMS, the service industry and employees of the county.

Many essential workers in Louisa commute from neighboring localities due to the lack of housing availability and rent costs over 30% of their annual income. Furthermore, the county's average household size is more than 2.5 and developers typically build three-to-four-bedroom houses, according to the FLHF.

The FLHF has partnered with LCRC to bring the project to fruition.

“I can tell you right now we’re in a housing crisis situation in Louisa County,” said LCRC Executive Director and co-applicant Lloyd Runnett. “We receive between 400 and 500 calls every month dealing with a multitude of issues and the number one call that we’ve received over the last three years is ‘Can you help us with housing?’”

FLHF said it intends to include the community as much as possible during the construction process, working with local businesses, local contractors and Louisa County Public Schools CTE program while inviting other groups such as the Louisa Master Gardeners to contribute the grounds’ beautification.

FLHF has worked with the county on the project leading up to this point. Louisa County will contribute \$775,000 toward the project. The sum was acquired by the county in 2022 through the Community Project Funding initiative, after Rep. Abigail Spanberger (7th District) secured the money in response to a county request.

Supervisors expressed full support of the affordable housing development following the presentation from FLHF.

“[The project] is the culmination of years and years and years of work,” said Mineral District Supervisor and Board Chair Duane Adams.