

*Housing a Complete Community:  
Housing Chapter of the City's  
Comprehensive Plan*

*Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_*

## Introduction: Context and Vision

### The Role and Importance of Housing

A home for all: housing is one of the most basic human needs. Housing provides shelter and security and serves many other roles. It nurtures human connections among family and neighbors; it offers opportunities for innovation and creativity in home maintenance; and for many it is a financial investment.

Housing is tied to many aspects of community life, including transportation, economic development, education, health care, and the environment. Attractive neighborhoods, historic districts, and a wide range of housing types draw people to a community and are closely tied to a robust local economy.

### Housing Issues and Community Pressures

A number of housing issues affect the City of Falls Church. These include the recent accelerated pace of development in commercial and residential areas; an increased demand for public facilities, including parks and schools; the decreased affordability of housing; and a loss of more modest homes and socioeconomic diversity.

### Regional Population and Housing Trends

Since 2010 the D.C. metro area's population has increased by nearly two percent annually to more than six million. Most of that growth is from international in-migration and natural increase. Over that time period the composition of households has changed. The region has experienced a relative increase in millennials and persons 55 years of age and older. Households are generally smaller, with one in four composed

of persons living alone.<sup>0</sup>

At the same time, the region is experiencing a shortage of housing. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments reports that 100,000 homes are needed by 2045 to meet the regional demand.<sup>2</sup> The region's population is growing faster than the housing supply.

### Local Population and Housing Trends

The population of Falls Church has been growing at an annual rate of 2.6 percent over recent years. The percentages of millennials and persons 55 and older have been increasing relative to other segments of the population. One-third of City residents live alone.<sup>3</sup>

In parallel, the City has seen an increase in the number of multi-family homes. Since 2008 four new apartment complexes have been built: Lincoln at Tinner Hill, West Broad Residences, Northgate, and Pearson Square. These buildings account for most of the recent increase in rental homes. Three new condominium complexes have opened in the City since 2004: The Broadway, The Byron and Spectrum.

Meanwhile, the number of single-family attached and single-family detached homes has seen a more modest increase over the same time period. This is largely because most of the lots zoned for this kind of housing have already been developed.

Table 10-1: Housing Stock by Type

Unit Type	2002 Stock	2013 Stock	2019 Stock	Percent Change 2002-19
Single Family Detached	2,241	2,364	2,385	6.4%

<b>Single Family Attached</b>	582	582	582	0%
<b>Multi Family Building</b>	1,881	2,496	3,110	65.3%
<b>Total</b>	4,704	5,442	6,077	29.1%

The City has also experienced a trend in tearing down single-family homes, renovation or expansion of existing housing, and addition of single-family homes. Since 2006, 180 homes have been torn down and 66 net single-family dwellings were added to the City's housing stock.<sup>4</sup>

As with the region, the City's population has been growing faster than its housing stock, as shown in the figure below.

Source: American Community Survey, 2013-2017 and 2010 Census

Figure 10-2: Growth in Population and Housing Stock

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<sup>4</sup> "Single-Family Construction History," Fact Sheet prepared by Community Planning & Economic Development Services, City of Falls Church.

## Vision

*Create and maintain a diverse supply of housing that supports an inclusive community and strengthens the City's small-town character. Ensure that decent, safe, and affordable housing for all incomes and households is available and accommodates all life-cycle stages and needs.*

## Chapter Organization

The remainder of this chapter describes existing conditions in City housing of all types, an evaluation of housing needs in the future, and a set of strategies, policies, and actions to meet the above vision and goals.

## How to Use This Chapter

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the official policy guide for shaping the future of the City. It establishes priorities for housing efforts and projects. This chapter recognizes that implementation must remain flexible to changing conditions and that priorities will change. This chapter should be used as a framework for scheduling projects and documenting completed projects.

Specific location and design decisions are intended to be worked out on a project-by-project basis during implementation. Specific tasks in the Plan are scheduled in one of three timeframes: short term, medium term, and long term. Those terms refer to the following ranges:

Timeframe	Expected Completion
Short Term	2019-2021
Medium Term	2022-2024
Long Term	2025 or later

## Existing Conditions

### City Neighborhoods and Historic Preservation

Falls Church, first settled in 1699, boasts numerous historic residences and neighborhoods. Although the City has lost many historic properties over time, as of 2005 it had certified 92 historic residences built prior to 1911, some prior to the Civil War. (A few of these have since been decertified and at least one new residence has been certified.) Several City neighborhoods were established prior to World War II (e.g., Greenway Downs), but many have lost integrity over time as homes have been torn down and replaced with larger structures.

The era of greatest residential subdivision growth in Falls Church was 1948-1965. Notable among the City's 31 subdivisions with clear identity today are Broadmont, Falls Park, Village Ridge Hills, and Virginia Forest. The residential area along East Broad Street between Roosevelt Street and Washington Street maintains a high degree of historic integrity and neighborhood stability.

Residents of the City's older residential areas wish to maintain their historic character. As land values rise and housing ages, however, some owners choose to tear down existing homes and replace them with larger structures or add a second structure. Often this new construction changes the character of a neighborhood and can result in a loss of tree canopy.

Particularly in recent decades townhouses and multifamily buildings have supplemented the single-family detached housing. These projects have added to the City's housing diversity.

### The City's Housing Stock

According to the Falls Church City Public Schools, the City contains 5,972 housing units. This figure is an increase of nearly 27 percent from the City's 4,704 units in 2002.

Of these homes, 50.3 percent are in multifamily buildings and 39.9 percent are single-family detached homes. Single-family attached homes (town houses and duplexes) account for the remaining 9.8 percent of housing units.

### Ownership vs. Rentals

The City's stock of rental housing has been increasing in recent years. Figure 10-4 below demonstrates that the number of owner-occupied homes in the City has stagnated, while the number of renter-occupied homes has increased.

Figure 10-3: Renter Occupied vs. Owner Occupied Homes

## HOUSING VALUES AND RENTAL RATES

Housing values in the City and the Washington, D.C., metro area have been steadily increasing for many years. In 2000, the median house price in the City was \$289,500. In 2010, the median house price was \$641,900. By 2016 the median house price increased to \$724,000.

Figure 10-4: Change in Median Home Prices

Jurisdiction	Median House Price 2010 (\$)	Median House Price 2016 (\$)	Percent Change 2010-2016
Falls Church City	641,900	724,000	11.3%
Alexandria City	486,800	520,700	6.9%
Arlington County	571,700	623,300	9.0%
Fairfax City	488,900	487,700	-0.2%
Fairfax County	507,800	516,800	1.7%
United States	188,400	184,700	-1.9%

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016

## Age of Housing

More than 40 percent of housing structures were built nearly 60 or more years ago, and almost 71 percent of housing structures were built nearly 40 years ago.

Figure 10-5: Age of Housing

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016



Pearson Square Apartments

Year Structure Built	Number of Homes	Percentage of Homes	Cumulative Percentage
Before 1959	2,360	41.3%	41.3%
1960-1979	1,686	29.5%	70.8%
1980-1999	731	12.8%	83.6%
2000-2016	932	16.3%	100.0%
Total	5,709	100.0%	-

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016.

The housing stock in Falls Church is older than in most jurisdictions in the region. For example, 29.1 percent of Falls Church housing has been built since 1980 compared to 52.7 percent in Fairfax County and 39.9 percent in Arlington County. Falls Church’s relatively old age of housing reflects the historic character of the City. Age of housing is one factor in the trend in tear-downs, as some homeowners seek to increase their homes’ size and energy efficiency.

### Life-Cycle Housing

For housing in Falls Church to be inclusive, it must accommodate all income levels and all stages of household formation. As discussed above, the City has apartments and condominiums for singles and small households, but few are affordable to those with limited incomes. The City has a supply of single-family homes, but most are very expensive.

The chart below records the average home sales price for different housing types in Falls Church. Using the Fannie Mae Home Counselor Affordability Analyzer, the minimum income required to buy the average property type is calculated. The minimum incomes required are quite high considering Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Area Median Income (AMI) limits. This shows that owning a house in the City is very expensive and therefore an option only for higher income earners.

Figure 10-6: Income Needed to Purchase

Home Type	2018 Median Home Sales Price	Annual Income Needed to Purchase (\$)
Single-Family Detached Homes	\$899,500	\$226,315
Townhouses	\$815,000	\$218,226
Condominiums	\$400,000	\$113,811

Source: Falls Church Real Estate Assessors Office and Fannie Mae Home Counselor Affordability Analyzer  
The following chart details how much one would need to earn to rent an average apartment in the City of Falls Church for each home type. Three-bedroom apartment data is not applicable due to the scarcity of the home type in the City.

Figure 10-7: Income Needed to Rent

Home Type	Average Rent in City (\$)	Minimum Income Needed to Rent(\$)
Efficiency/Studio	\$1490	\$59,600
One Bedroom	\$1612	\$64,480
Two Bedroom	\$2031	\$81,240

Source: City of Falls Church Housing and Human Services 2018 Rent Survey



West Broad Residences



Lincoln at Tinner Hill Apartments.

## Affordable Housing

The City has seen a decline in the number of market rate affordable ownership homes for citizens with incomes less than 60 percent of AMI.<sup>5</sup> The City has only 27 market rate affordable homes at 60 percent of AMI and only 111 market-rate affordable homes at 80 percent of AMI. The City had 25 ownership ADUs in 2012. That number has since decreased to 21 homes due to the expiring control periods. The control period for four more homes will expire in 2019, which will bring the total to 17 homes.

Some developments contain committed affordable rental homes through the City's Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) program, committed Teacher Workforce Units (TWUs), or a community partner. A description of each program can be found in Appendix 1. The breakdown of these homes can be seen in Figure 10-9 below.

Figure 10-8: Affordable Rental Homes

Building	Studio	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	Total	Type/Partner
Fields	-	42	47	7	96	Wesley / Kettler
Pearson Square	-	7	8	-	15	ADU
Read Building	-	9	-	-	9	TWU
Lincoln at Tinner Hill	-	10	4	-	14	ADU
	-	-	1	-	1	CCAU
West Broad Residences	2	10	6	-	18	ADU
Northgate	-	-	7	-	7	ADU
Winter Hill	-	80	-	-	80	Falls Church Housing Corporation
Virginia Village	-	4	-	-	4	Homestretch
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>244</b>	

Source: Falls Church Housing and Human Services

The City does not have public housing. The City participates in the HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The program offers rental-housing subsidies to households with low and moderate incomes. Within Falls Church, several apartment complexes participate in the program.

<sup>5</sup>Market rate affordable means that residents can afford housing without spending more than 30 percent of their gross monthly income at 60 percent of AMI (a yearly income of \$70,320 for a family of four).



Read Building.

### **Housing for Seniors**

In 2016, 12.4 percent of City residents were 65 or older.

Seniors may live in a range of housing, from single-family detached to condos or apartments to assisted living.

The City has a tax abatement program for seniors who qualify by income and/or are veterans or disabled. In 2018 75 seniors received tax relief from the program, with \$244,995 provided in real estate and personal property tax relief.

One development for seniors is the Kensington of Falls Church assisted living facility. The City also has an agreement with Sunrise of Falls Church assisted living. Both properties have agreements with the City that provide for a small amount of affordable beds for those at lower incomes.



The Kensington

The City receives funding from a HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Home Investments Partnerships Grant (HOME). At the Winter Hill apartments, owned by FCHC Virginia Community Development Corporation, for seniors and persons with disabilities, the City uses these funds to provide grants that assist in rehabilitation of the aging facility. Almost all 80 residents of the property have housing vouchers, which assist in their housing cost. In the last 10 years the City has provided over \$100,000 of funding to the rehabilitation effort.



Winter Hill Apartments.

The Railroad Cottages of Falls Church are currently under construction to provide persons 55 or older another housing option. They are small-scale homes with small yards and master bedrooms on the first floor. They seek to provide a neighborly community with shared amenities while also leading the way in energy efficiency, using geothermal and solar energy sources.



Railroad Cottages of Falls Church rendering.

## Housing for People with Disabilities or Special Needs

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) operates group homes for adults with mental disabilities. The CSB also operates a 12-bed intermediate care facility that provides more intensive staff support to residents. In addition, the CSB's Residential Support Program utilizes apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes to provide a greater level of independence and coordination of community support networks.

The City is currently constructing a new group home for adults with intellectual disabilities, the Miller House. Through partnering with local non-profit CRi, the Miller House will serve five persons with priority given to City residents. Four of the individuals will receive full-time care and the fifth will live more independently and receive limited external care. The Miller House is set to open in 2019.



Local elected officials, staff and representatives from Community Residences celebrate the groundbreaking of the new Miller House.

The City also leases a four-home apartment building to Homestretch, a local non-profit, which provides transitional housing and services to formerly homeless families, often whom are victims of domestic violence.

## Homelessness

The City of Falls Church contracts with the Fairfax County Department of Human Development (DHD) for homeless services. Under this arrangement all emergency shelter and transitional housing services available to Fairfax County residents, with the exception of three transitional housing homes administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, are available to City residents. One shelter, The Friends of Falls Church Shelter, operates within the City and has 12 beds – ten for men and two for women. This shelter is open from November through March. At the end of 2018, the annual point in time survey showed that two homeless people were not in shelters.



Friends of Falls Church Homeless Shelter.

## Evaluation of Housing Needs

The following evaluation of needs is based on projections included in the demographics chapter of this comprehensive plan (updated 2019). The evaluation of needs takes into consideration federal and state requirements related to housing equity.

## Federal Housing Requirements

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibits the discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of housing based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, family status, or national origin.

Through its membership in the Northern Virginia Community Housing Resources Board (CHRB), the City educates the public and housing industry on fair housing issues.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits state and local land use and zoning laws, policies, and practices that discriminate based on any characteristic protected under the Act. Prohibited practices include making unavailable or denying housing types because of a protected characteristic. Housing includes not only buildings intended for occupancy as residences, but also vacant land that may be developed into residences.<sup>6</sup>

The City has a Fair Housing Ordinance that offers protection to the same classes of persons protected by state and federal laws. The City participates in a regional fair housing testing program through a contract negotiated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC). Fair housing testing is

<sup>6</sup> “State and Local Land Use Laws and Practices and the Application of the Fair Housing Act,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Justice, November 16, 2016.

completed biannually. The Housing Commission is charged by ordinance to review all fair housing complaints.

## State Housing Requirements

Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires that localities’ comprehensive plans designate areas for different kinds of residential housing, included age-restricted housing. Comprehensive plans are also required to designate areas for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing “sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality.”<sup>7</sup>

## Future Demand, Amount of Housing

Between 2020 and 2045, the City’s supply of and demand for housing are projected to grow as shown in the table below. This represents an increase of approximately 661 to 717 units every five years. This is fairly consistent with the recent pace of residential development in the City. These new units will likely be built in the City’s Revitalization Districts, particularly the West End and West Broad.

<sup>7</sup> Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2223

Table 10-9: Projection of Future Housing Units

Year	Approx. Housing Unit Increment	Approx. Total Units in City
2015		5,384
2020	524	5,908
2025	892 - 953	6,800 - 6,861
2030	880 - 920	7,680 - 7,781
2035	593 - 612	8,273 - 8,393
2040	494 - 528	8,767 - 8,921
2045	444 - 570	9,211 - 9,491

Source: Lisa Sturtevant & Associates

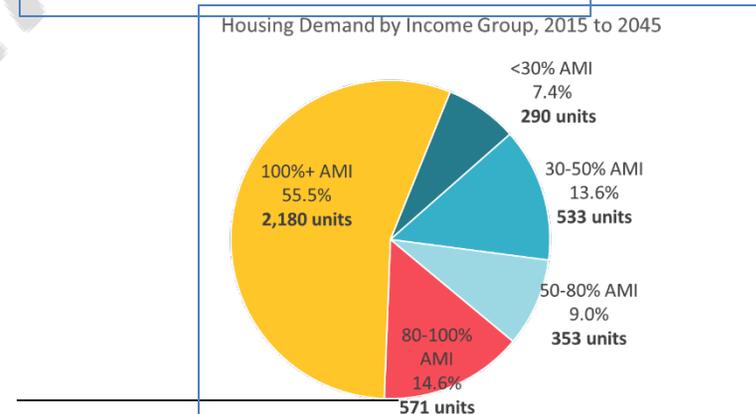
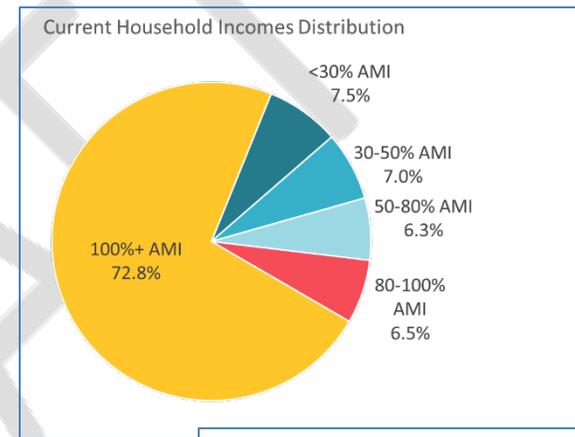
### Future Demand, Household Size

Over the last five years, Falls Church has experienced several changes in household composition, including more people living alone (up 20 percent), more millennials (up about 10 percent), more persons 55 and older (up 23.5 percent), and fewer households with children (down 5 percent). If these trends continue, there will be increased demand for smaller units and increase demand for greater diversity of housing types.

Household composition is influenced by the available housing stock. For example, the rise in households of people living alone occurred at the same time as the rise in one-bedroom apartment construction in mixed-use projects. To house a complete community, the City will need to continue to provide a range of housing, from small apartments and condos to small single-family homes, patio homes, and townhouses.

### Future Demand, Housing Cost

According to analyses prepared by Lisa Sturtevant & Associates<sup>8</sup>, housing prices of existing homes are higher than what can be afforded by typical incomes in the region (see pie chart below). Future demand for housing can be expected to sync with typical incomes for the region. To meet this demand, the City will need to emphasize strategies that maintain and increase the availability of housing affordable to a range of income levels.



<sup>8</sup> Draft Chapter 2 of Comprehensive Plan: Demographics, Lisa Sturtevant and Associates

## Implementation

### Strategies

The following strategies are designed to achieve the Vision statement presented earlier in the chapter. The specific actions that follow are organized by these strategies.

1. Incentivize the maintenance and provision of more workforce, moderate-, and low-income housing.
2. Increase entry-level homeownership opportunities.
3. Support aging in place.
4. Review and relax development regulations to allow a wider variety of housing types.
5. Create policies that foster greater neighborhood stability.
6. Assess and provide housing for people with disabilities.
7. Ensure equitable access to housing.
8. Monitor regional and local housing markets to identify pressures and opportunities.

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Project, Policy or Action	Timeframe	Workforce, moderate-, and low-income housing	Entry-level homeownership	Aging in Place	Variety of Housing Types	Neighborhood Stability	People with disabilities	Equitable access	Monitor housing markets
Establish housing targets in each category of housing including: single-room homes, apartments, condos, quads, attached and detached single family.	Short Term	√	√		√			√	√
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for accessory dwellings, quads, and other forms of housing.	Short Term	√	√		√				
Establish percentage targets for workforce housing (80-120 percent AMI), moderate-income (50-80 percent AMI) and low-income (0-50 percent AMI).	Short Term	√	√						
Conduct a feasibility study to gauge public cost of maintaining existing market-rate and affordable housing, such as The Fields Apartments.	Short Term	√				√			
Conduct a study to assess the feasibility of creating an affordable housing development.	Short Term	√							√
Provide tax relief and rent relief for low- to moderate-income seniors and persons with disabilities.	Short Term			√			√		
Establish a neighborhood gateway program that includes signage that highlights subdivision names as well as new landscaping.	Short Term					√			
Update the Zoning Ordinance to enable more in-place additions as an alternative to tear-downs in areas that frequently require variances for modest additions, such as Greenway Downs.	Short Term					√			
Require at least one universally accessible affordable home to be built at all	Short Term						√		

Project, Policy or Action	Timeframe	Workforce, moderate-, and low-income housing	Entry-level homeownership	Aging in Place	Variety of Housing Types	Neighborhood Stability	People with disabilities	Equitable access	Monitor housing markets
new housing developments.									
Conduct fair housing testing biannually.	Ongoing							√	
Along with other localities, advocate for legislation to add source of income to Fair Housing regulations.	Ongoing							√	
Offer Fair Housing training to all City landlords and property managers.	Ongoing							√	
Evaluate and update parking and other development regulations that increase the cost of multi-family developments.	Medium Term	√	√		√				
Create incentives for developers to provide more affordable housing, e.g., through increased density, tax breaks, or accelerated entitlements to increase the percentage of ADUs to more than six percent.	Medium Term	√							
Develop a sustainable and renewable Affordable Housing Fund, through Affordable Housing grants and loans, Community Development Block Grants, HOME Investment Partnership Program grants, bonds, operating funds, and other potential funding sources.	Medium Term	√							
Secure project-based vouchers for low-income individuals.	Medium Term	√							
Establish an energy-efficiency program for homeowners of low and moderate income to lower utility bills.	Medium Term	√							
Have a First Time Homebuyer Program to provide assistance in the form of revolving down payment loans.	Medium Term		√						
Review the City's Zoning and Historic Preservation Ordinances for ways to	Medium					√			

Project, Policy or Action	Timeframe	Workforce, moderate-, and low-income housing	Entry-level homeownership	Aging in Place	Variety of Housing Types	Neighborhood Stability	People with disabilities	Equitable access	Monitor housing markets
support and strengthen historic preservation.	Term								
Formally recognize civic associations to increase social connectivity.	Medium Term					√			
Inform residents about the importance of the City’s historic neighborhoods through educational programs, enhancement of the City’s website, walking tours, and other measures.	Medium Term					√			
Provide technical assistance to owners of historic properties about the Virginia Historic Preservation Tax Credit and other preservation incentives.	Long Term					√			

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## APPENDIX 1: Housing Initiatives and Programs

Since 2002, the City has allowed for mixed-used (residential/commercial) development in areas zoned for commercial use. This process allows for the negotiation of voluntary concessions including affordable dwelling units or cash contributions to the City's Affordable Housing Fund. Affordable dwelling units have been delivered through this process.

The City also has a Real Estate Tax and Rent Relief program that provides rent relief or a reduction and/or deferral of property taxes for qualified applicants. The Real Estate Tax Relief Program has provided \$1,052,343 in relief to 271 households between 2014 and 2017. The Rent Relief Program has provided \$54,016 in aid to 34 households between 2014 and 2018.

Each year **SINCE WHEN?** the City has allocated CDBG funds to assist families with low and moderate incomes in the rehabilitation of their homes. Between the years of 2009 and 2016, the City expended \$427,262 in CDBG funds to improve housing and human service programs in the City.

The ADU program was established in 2002 and allows developers to offer committed affordable rental homes to the City in a voluntary concession agreement. Usually, new developers offer about six percent of their total homes to be included into the ADU program. The City currently has 54 ADU homes at four developments and will be adding more in the near future with a number of new developments on the horizon.

The City also has 9 committed affordable TWUs at the Read Building that remain affordable for Falls Church City Public School teachers. These homes were offered by the developer, the Young Group, as one of its missions is affordable workforce housing.

The third method the City uses to maintain committed affordable rates is to work with community partners. The City has two examples of this. Wesley Properties used tax credits to create committed affordable rental units at The Fields for people earning less than 60% AMI. The Fields has 96 homes that are committed affordable through 2026. The City is working with Wesley Properties to find a solution that allow The Fields to stay committed affordable past that year. Additionally, the City works with the housing non-profit the NHP Foundation to keep Winter Hill Apartments committed affordable for seniors and disabled persons. Winter Hill has a total of 80 homes that are committed affordable rentals. Most residences of Winter Hill Apartments hold HUD Housing Choice Vouchers, which is explained below.