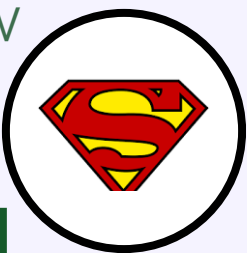




BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



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TOPIC

Equitable rental costs in Alexandria so it's affordable for different groups to live.

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

My issue is about the rental costs in Alexandria and in making them more equitable so that Alexandria is a more affordable place for families of different groups to live. The city has made several changes in plans and policies regarding this topic which has brought improvement, however, this problem still requires more input and support both by the local government as well as the Alexandria community. This issue greatly effects people in Alexandria who struggle to afford, or pay a large amount of their income towards rent.

RESULT

The intended result for this is for rental costs to be more equitable and affordable for different groups. Right now over 40% of renters in Alexandria are effected by housing burden, so under that would specifically be a positive result.

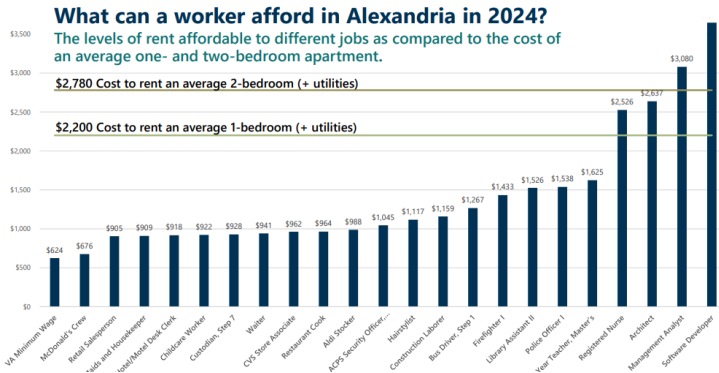


<40%

Renters in Alexandria

SIGNIFICANCE

These results matter because it's important for people in Alexandria of any income to be able to find an affordable place to live. It's also necessary for these people to have enough money to pay for other necessities like food and to be able to take care of their families while also paying for housing.



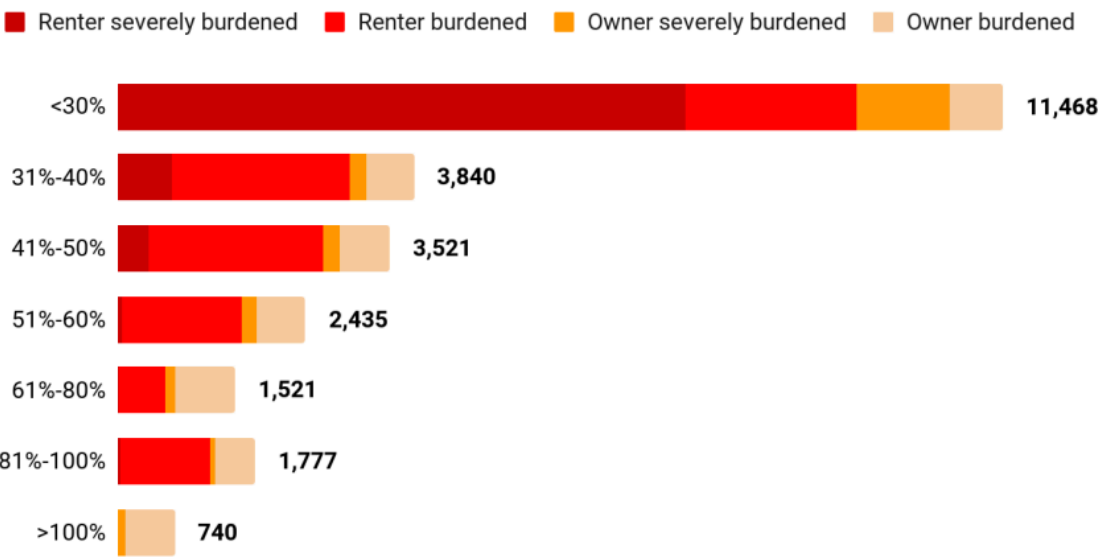
This graph shows how the varying income of different jobs in Alexandria compares the average cost for rent. It demonstrates how many jobs don't make enough to be able to afford rent.

CYCP GOAL AND STRATEGIC AREA

This aligns with the goal of all children, youth, and families being physically safe and healthy. This is because families being able to afford somewhere to live, it ensures a safe environment and also allows for families to have money to take care of their children and keep them healthy.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The plan currently implemented is the Housing 2040 Master Plan which was approved in 2013. This implemented new goals and strategies for housing in Alexandria. As of the 2024 Housing Needs Analysis, there has been some improvement but there continues to be a severe housing burdern on renters, especially those with incomes under 30% of the AMI (Area Median Income). As shown in this recent data from the 2024 Housing Master Plan update, over 40% of renters suffer from severe housing burden, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs.



IMPLEMENTATION

There are several strategies and ideas that would be beneficial in helping solve this problem. Some of them have already been implemented in the 2040 Housing Master Plan and just need to be supported and enforced more, while others could be a valuable addition to the plan. One from the housing tools board is housing tools such as trust funds to help financially support affordable housing through developer contributions and loan repayments. This would allow more money to people who can't afford rent on their own. Another that could be implemented is rent control for properties, so that people can have consistent costs that could be easier to pay.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partners playing a role in supporting change for this issue include Housing Alexandria, a non-profit organization that works with Alexandria housing. Also the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority which is a public agency with goals in managing public housing.



PERFORMANCE EFFORT

We are not really getting the results intended with the plan. This is because according to the 2024 report, prices have increased in the past years, meaning the plan has not been working to accomplish it's intended purpose. It showed that the average rent has gone up in recent years as well as the housing burden for renters in Alexandria.

PERFORMANCE EFFECT

Consequences of this performance is that people are still subject to high rental costs and not being able to afford housing in Alexandria. This also means though, that there is a basis for ideas to help this plan do better by knowing what did and didn't work in the past years. Barriers for this are limited funds as well as a need for support from the community as well as from outside organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many different ways in which this problem could be improved, however, I do have policy recommendations. One is to waive condominium fees for those who make under 30% of the AMI (Area Median Income) so that there are minimal cost fluctuations that would cause someone to be unable to make rent. These unanticipated fluctuations have a large impact on how much housing costs, and can reach \$500-\$800+ a month. This is especially important for those who cannot afford to pay unexpected and rising costs, since these fees have gone up in recent years. My other recommendation is to have rent controlled properties. This is so that rent increases and higher property fees won't force people to leave their homes because they don't have the money to pay it. These prices have also gone up in recent years, so having them controlled would mean more people being able to consistently afford rent.

| Change in average July rents, adjusted for utilities | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Studio | 4.2% | 9.3% |
| 1-bedroom | 6.7% | 7.3% |
| 2-bedroom | 6.6% | 8.2% |
| 3-bedroom | 9.4% | 8.1% |

ONLINE

There are online sources available to visit in order to learn more about this topic, including the Housing Projects page on the Alexandria City website, the Housing 2040 Master Plan with the linked presentation, and the websites for other partners like Housing Alexandria. These all provide information on project plans and current statistics.

IN PERSON

For in person resources to learn more about this topic someone could visit the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority building or the Department of Community and Human Services in Alexandria. These have information about housing plans in Alexandria.

CITATIONS

-Housing 2040 master plan. City of Alexandria, VA.
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/HousingPlan>

-Quantitative Housing Needs Analysis Presentation.
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/Housing%202040%20Quantitative%20Housing%20Needs%20Analysis%20091824.pdf>

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https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/housing2040financialtoolsboard_031825.pdf