

HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES

As a compassionate community that values economic and social diversity, Alexandria has been and continues to be a leader within the Washington region in providing lower income individuals and families with affordable housing opportunities.

Alexandria was the first suburban jurisdiction to set up a Housing Authority, which began building public housing in the 1940s. Taking advantage of federal housing programs, Alexandria tripled the number of publicly subsidized rental units to over 3,000 by the mid-1980s.

Today, there are 4,230 such rental units in the City, including 1,150 units of public or publicly assisted housing administered by the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) and 2,984 privately owned units with federal Section 8 rent subsidies (both project-based and tenant-based), federal mortgage assistance, tax-exempt financing, tax credits, or local assistance. These 4,230 units account for 7.6% of occupied housing units in the City and 12.7% of renter-occupied housing, rates exceeding those of other Northern Virginia jurisdictions. Also, a large share (32%) of the City's non-subsidized rental units have rents below established fair-market rates. Alexandria also has more group home, homeless shelter, and other "special needs" beds per 10,000 residents than any other Northern Virginia jurisdiction.

Accompanying this growth in subsidized rental and special needs housing have been steadily increasing City expenditures for human services, including health care, mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse services.

The City Manager's 1994 Annual Report identified the imbalance between publicly assisted rental housing in Alexandria and its neighboring jurisdictions. The report highlighted the disparity between the actual distribution of assisted housing within the region and the principle of Fair Share, in which all jurisdictions accept their fair share of the region's needy population and the costs of providing the services they require. The report also focused on the 108% growth in City health and welfare expenditures



The Center for Employment Training opened its Duke Street training facility in November 1995. The Center trains welfare recipients in career job skills. Here, instructor Cleveland White shows Trainee Debbie Robinson how to operate a fork lift.

❖ Worked with ARHA to maintain, as a first priority, the 1,150 units of ARHA-owned and/or managed assisted housing as required by Resolution 830, the Council/ARHA agreement to replace any lost public or publicly assisted housing units on a one-for-one basis. In redeveloping Samuel Madden Homes, the ARHA Board will retain a majority of the 100 replacement units on the downtown site, with the remaining replacement units located throughout the City.

❖ Approved ARHA's request in 1995 to secure 36 federally assisted housing vouchers and certificates for use by existing public housing residents who must be temporarily relocated due to modernization work. These units may not be used to expand the number of assisted housing units in the City. To emphasize economic self-sufficiency, job development, and streamlining of housing and human service programs, the City has:

❖ Initiated welfare reform eight months ahead of the State's April 1 deadline, and reduced welfare rolls (Aid to Families with Dependent Children - AFDC) from a high of 1,743 cases in November 1994 to 1,346 in June 1996.

❖ Launched Alexandria Works! Led by Vice Mayor Pepper and Councilman Euille, this coalition of City officials, local business leaders, and charitable and

between FY 1981 and FY 1993 and on the 126% increase in welfare caseloads between 1988 and 1994, which was the highest in Virginia.

The 1994 Annual Report concluded that the City could not afford to sustain these rates of growth in housing and human services, particularly in light of the 1991-1994 decline of \$1.3 billion in the City's tax base. The report recommended redirecting City resources to programs designed to end dependency and to foster homeownership and self-sufficiency.

The main reasons for increasing homeownership in the City are to stabilize neighborhoods and public school enrollment. Approximately 46% of the City's population over the age of five turns over every five years, in part because 60% of Alexandria's homes are renter-occupied.

In October 1994, Council adopted a Fair Share Resolution, requiring the City to make the Fair Share principle "a major factor in considering new initiatives or program expansions in the assisted housing, health, and human services areas..." Since 1994, the City has taken a number of steps to foster self-sufficiency and to manage the demand for housing and human services. To increase homeownership while maintaining, but not expanding, publicly assisted rental housing, Council and City staff have taken the following actions:

- ❖ Co-sponsored Homeownership Fairs in 1995 and 1996.
- ❖ Worked with non-profit groups to create homeownership projects through new construction (Stevenson Court), or through conversion of rental properties (Potomac Village and Fayette Court); and encouraged homeownership projects in the predominantly rental neighborhood of Arlandria.
- ❖ Secured General Assembly approval to provide homeownership grants and loans to families with incomes of up to \$62,700 who wish to buy a home in the City. To implement the program, Council in 1995 approved \$300,000 from the City's Housing Trust Fund.

religious groups is working to ensure the success of welfare reform.

- ❖ Contracted with the Center for Employment Training (CET), a nationally recognized organization, to train AFDC recipients for skilled jobs in the local economy. CET's Duke Street training facility became operational in November 1995, and 40 CET trainees have been placed in jobs as of July 1.

- ❖ Established the Human Services Committee to recommend ways to streamline human service programs and to refocus them on developing work opportunities. The committee, which includes Councilman Euille and Council Member Rich, issued its report in February (full text is available on City's Internet Home Page: [/alexandria.html](#)). Among the follow-up actions taken by Council in March were:

- ❖ Consolidated 11 homeless and emergency assistance programs under the Department of Human Services (DHS) to more efficiently and effectively deliver emergency services;

- ❖ Added four job development and child care positions within DHS to provide staff support to Alexandria Works!;

- ❖ Contracted with the Alexandria Volunteer Bureau to operate the community work experience program and with the Alexandria United Way to coordinate support for welfare recipients as they move into the work force;

- ❖ Redirected \$70,000 in City funds to support a new year-round youth employment initiative, and approved staffing for the private sector Jobs for Alexandria Youth program;

- ❖ Requested a staff study of the cost effectiveness of continuing to operate two homeless shelters within the City;

- ❖ Requested the Commission on Aging to review a proposal to close ARCH, a City facility serving ten frail elderly people, and redirect funding to support expanded companion services for seniors; and

- ❖ Requested a staff study of senior transportation, including contracting out. Council will consider recommendations emerging from these studies during the course of budget deliberations in the spring of 1997.