



ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Fairfax County

Program Title: Telestar Court

Program Category: Community Development, Economic Development, & Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Bryan Hill

Title: County Executive

Signature:  5CFC69274C2440E...

Executive Summary

In 2025, the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA), along with its partner, Conifer Realty, broke ground on renovations at Telestar Court in Falls Church, Virginia. The initiative is the first office-to-residential affordable housing conversion in Fairfax County, repurposing a vacant office building into 80 affordable homes for the community. The development is located in a high-cost area of the county, approximately one mile from a metro station and walkable to many amenities. The building previously served as an administrative office for the Inova Health Care Services, until their relocation within Fairfax County. Telestar Court serves as a model for office-to-housing conversions, particularly in areas with limited land and underutilized properties. Other creative aspects of the project include the utilization of federal funds awarded to Fairfax County under the American Rescue Plan Act, a ground lease allowing the property to be affordable for 99 years, Earthcraft Gold or equivalent certification, use of Universal Design in all units, and the repurposing of some of the site into a public park.

The Problem

Like other jurisdictions throughout the country and the Commonwealth, Fairfax County has an acute housing shortage. Housing options for households at all income levels, both rental and homeownership, are critical to sustain the economic competitiveness and affordability of Fairfax County. Job creation and retention, success for low- and moderate-income families, and a robust tax base are all inextricably tied to adequate and varied housing stock in our community.

Although everyone is impacted by the cost of housing in Fairfax County, the current housing crisis is particularly severe for households with income levels at 60% of AMI and below. The critical shortage of rental housing available for lower-income residents has led to households becoming extremely cost-burdened with few housing choices. Among renters earning less than \$75,000 per year, 87% are cost-burdened and spend at least 30% of their income on rent and utilities. Even more stark, 52% of households earning under \$75,000 spent over 50% of their income on rent and utilities, making them severely cost-burdened.

Along with a lack of affordable housing, the county also has a large stock of empty office space. Although recently declining, as of February 2026, there were 21.3 million square feet of vacant office space, resulting in a loss of potential tax revenue for the county. Taken together, these two trends make it harder for families to live in their community of choice, for businesses to attract and retain employees who want to live and work in the county, and for the county to maintain a robust commercial tax base.

The Solution

In response to the need for more affordable housing, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors established a goal of no net loss of affordable housing and the production of at least 10,000 net new affordable units for households earning up to 60% AMI. Achieving this goal will take the collective actions of many partners, including the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA), Fairfax County Government, the development and real estate finance communities, non-profit organizations, and more. As the key organization delivering affordable housing solutions, the FCRHA is working to achieve production and preservation goals through a variety of mechanisms, including developing affordable housing on FCRHA and County-owned land, encouraging acquisition partnerships on properties in high opportunity neighborhoods, and acquiring property and partnering with developers on redevelopment and preservation opportunities.

Acquiring under-utilized property and land is one way in which the FCHRA has contributed towards meeting the county's goal of 10,000 net new units. In May of 2025, the FCRHA and Merrifield Housing, LLC closed on Telestar Court. Located in a vibrant area of Fairfax County, Telestar Court is an adaptive reuse development that converts an existing four-story vacant office building into 80 affordable homes. Following renovations, one and two-bedroom units will be available to households up to 80% of the Average Median Income (AMI). The conversion of office space to affordable housing is the first-ever in Fairfax County, relying on innovation, partnerships, and leveraging resources in the community.

The office building was previously owned by Inova Health Care Services who was under contract to sell both the Telestar site as well as an adjacent parcel to a different entity at the same time. Despite this complexity, the FCRHA was able to negotiate agreements with Inova, Merrifield Housing, and a third entity purchasing the adjacent parcel to successfully close on the project.

The location of Telestar Court, which is rich with amenities, transportation, and employment, is a key feature of the development. Merrifield is home to the county's medical hub, anchored by Inova Hospital and other health care services on a 117-acre health campus. Merrifield is also home to the Mosiac District, an upscale mixed-use urban center with shopping and more, as well as easy access to public transportation, including Metro. These amenities and more are all located within a short distance of Telestar Court, which will provide affordable housing options to an area typically out of financial reach for many. Once completed, Telestar Court will offer modern amenities, including a public outdoor play area and park, walking paths, EV charging stations. Additionally, the building will meet Earth Craft certification standards for environmental sustainability.

The total development cost for Telestar Court is estimated at \$51 million, funded through a combination of tax credit equity, public financing, and private investment. The building was acquired in 2023 by the FCRHA using \$8.1 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds allocated by the Board of Supervisors. Using federal ARPA dollars for Telestar Court enabled the FCRHA and Fairfax County to strategically invest one-time funding into

the community, ensuring that families will be served for decades to come while not creating long-term budget obligations.

Thinking Outside the Box on Housing Solutions

At the core of the Telestar Court development is innovation. Recognizing the potential of an under-utilized space was just the first step in a long process demanding creative solutions. As stated by Lenore Stanton, Chair of the FCRHA:

“There are many challenges involved in an office-to-residential conversion, including design, code, financing, and ensuring affordability will be preserved for years to come. Through due diligence, stress testing, and very intensive analysis on the part of our staff and Conifer, we have been able to outline a successful solution that will achieve our goals.”

One of the creative aspects of the Telestar Court redevelopment is the ground lease between the FCRHA and Merrifield Housing. The ground lease ensures affordability of the homes for 99 years, with Merrifield Housing responsible for annual ground rent to the FCRHA. This aspect of the development ensures that families for years to come will have access to affordable housing in the heart of Fairfax County.

Partnerships

Key partnerships were formed to turn an idea into a reality, including the creation of Merrifield Housing, LLC, comprised of two private developers. Conifer is a full-service real estate company headquartered in upstate New York, owning and managing multifamily homes in the northeast. Joseph Browne Development Associates (JBDA) is a real estate

development company based in the Washington, D.C. area, specializing in affordable rental housing, and has overseen projects in Fairfax County, including affordable senior and multifamily housing. Building on their respective areas of expertise, Conifer and JBDA are co-managing members of Merrifield Housing LLC. This partnership allows Conifer, while well established in other areas of the country, to learn more about the Virginia market and particularly Fairfax County.

Along with the partnership between developers, the FCRHA has a strong partnership with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) due to it being staffed by Fairfax County employees. This organizational structure allows the FCRHA to quickly act on market-driven opportunities that require agility to remain competitive and to leverage funding from local, state, and federal sources. Importantly, the Fairfax County BOS is dedicated to creating and preserving affordable housing opportunities and, as such, is fully committed to ensuring that affordable housing is in all areas of the county. The political will, coupled with the exceptionally strong partnership between elected leaders and the FCRHA, was key to making Telestar Court a reality.

Results: A Model for Other Localities

The conversion of an office building into affordable residential homes is the first adaptive affordable housing reuse project in Fairfax County, marking a significant milestone for the FCRHA and the County. The creative use of under-utilized land or buildings offers the potential to help increase affordable housing opportunities in Fairfax County and other jurisdictions, particularly in densely populated areas with limited land to

develop. Fairfax County, like other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, cannot simply build its way out of the housing crisis but must seek creative opportunities for new or redeveloped housing. While specific conditions relating to the sale of the property and the use of federal one-time funds added complexity to the project, transferable lessons on leveraging funding, particularly as related to tax credit opportunities, are valuable to other jurisdictions. Fairfax County and the FCRHA will be able to use the opportunities and challenges identified through the Telestar Court project for other potential adaptive reuse opportunities in the future.