

Workforce housing plan gets go-ahead

■ Program is aimed at providing affordable housing for two-worker families

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The County Council unanimously approved an eight-year workforce housing plan on Tuesday estimated to create about 2,500 more units for families who earn average incomes but struggle to afford the average home in Montgomery County.

The council also agreed to revisit the program in 2014.

The plan, sponsored by Councilman Steven A. Silverman (D-At large) of Silver Spring, would require 10 percent more affordable housing units in most new developments around the county's Metro stations.

Designed for sale or rent to two-income families with incomes at or below 120 percent of the median income for the area—or about \$100,000 a year—the units are targeted to address a need not met by a county law that requires the construction of moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) in large residential developments.

Councilman Thomas E. Perez

(D-Dist. 5) of Takoma Park warned that measure will help, but not solve the affordable housing problem.

He recalled that the council's decision to end provisions that allowed builders to buy out of MPDU requirements have not produced many more MPDUs. Many builders have balked and avoided building the units, saying that economics and the real estate market make it unprofitable to build them.

Under the workforce housing plan, any resale within 20 years would require a portion of a workforce housing unit's appreciation to be returned to the county's Housing Initiative Fund or the unit to be offered for sale to the county.

Regulations yet to be adopted will set many of the terms.

The provisions are similar to those that govern the MPDU program.

To qualify to buy an MPDU, an applicant's income may not exceed roughly 70 percent of annual median household income—about \$58,000—in the Washington area; to rent, the applicant's income must not exceed 65 percent of the median, or about \$54,000 a year.

Under the workforce housing plan, developers would not receive any additional market rate units to offset the costs, but would receive a workforce unit bonus. With the bonus, developers could exceed the unit limits established under existing master plans, a possibility that Park and Planning officials oppose.



Silverman