

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**A DOLLAR OF DESIGN HAS A TWO-FOLD RETURN**

**Value Created through Design and Density to Support County's Diversity**

With land scarcity and cost premiums, Arlington must embrace ever more creative planning options through design excellence and appropriate density to provide the balanced housing and social diversity necessary to sustain our community values.

Examples of shared land use and affordable housing through creative design solutions from the United States and abroad were analyzed and presented by architect and planner Michael Foster, FAIA at an event co-sponsored by the Alliance for Housing Solutions, the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing and the Northern Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects on September 20, 2012 at the Parc Rosslyn in Rosslyn, Virginia.

Founder and President of MTF Architecture in Arlington, Virginia, Foster is an award-winning designer specializing in strategic planning, urban land use, and architecture, including mixed use and the integration of affordable housing. MTF Architecture designed the mixed-use; mixed-income project now called vPoint in Clarendon, and is working on other innovative land use projects in DC, Maryland, and Virginia as well as throughout the Country.

Recipient of the National ULI Smart Growth Award and several design awards, vPoint involved a comprehensive re-zoning and re-design of an existing church. It currently houses a new sanctuary, classrooms, and church offices, with a renovated day care center serving over 185 children, and added 70 new affordable units and 46 new market-rate units one block from Metro.

Foster's Message: Architects and planners play a critical role in achieving design excellence to bring tremendous value to both government and private land owners in addition to the surrounding community. Well-designed density can help achieve needed diversity for urban communities serve all. Diversity through well designed density is a key to achieve affordable housing as a true economic and social asset.

"The days of isolated affordable housing like the Pruitt Igoe model of warehousing residents are long behind us, said Foster." "But in Arlington, we still have the great challenge of limited real estate area and high costs. Arlington's excellent transit infrastructure and demanding social values must be complemented by elevating design expectations to pursue reasonable density. Our planning and design efforts today will prove critical to sustain the level of services, environment, and quality of community."

“Architects of affordable housing need to be able to explain to financial underwriters that every dollar of design has a two-fold return. One example is Paris, which has far greater density than Houston...which city do you think places a greater value on design?” Foster asked.

The recently-adopted Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Plan relies on extra (“bonus”) density to provide a significant portion of the affordable units that the County hopes to preserve or create along the Pike. Bonus density has also been used in other parts of the County to create affordable units.

But Arlington neighborhoods have pushed back, requiring revisions that resulted in fewer affordable units, and that impact design quality.

Foster’s presentation complements the work of Dr. Lisa Sturtevant of George Mason’s Center for Regional Analysis. The Center’s analysis shows that the County’s housing mix needs to change significantly to keep up with job growth; roughly 60% of current workers in Arlington are housed in multifamily buildings, but 90% of the new workers will need such units.

“We really are more “urban” than “village” now, and density is a key to both our continued diversity and economic prosperity,” said Mary Rouleau, the Alliance’s Executive Director.

“Density creates the walkable, amenity-rich neighborhoods which, according to recent research, are increasingly preferred by many segments of our community, including young workers, single-person households, and retirees,” she added.

The “Design Matters” presentation is one of several events organized by AHS and other organizations as part of Affordable Housing Education Week (September 15-21, 2012).

*Founded in 2003 by civic leaders concerned that Arlington was rapidly becoming a community in which only affluent families could afford to live, the Alliance for Housing Solutions works to increase the supply of affordable housing in Arlington County and Northern Virginia.*