

Arlington affordable-housing efforts lauded

by SCOTT McCAFFREY, Staff Writer, Dec 5, 2016

Though born in controversy, Arlington's Affordable Housing Study Working Group managed to win over most critics during its three-year effort, and on Dec. 4 was among the honorees at the eighth annual Ellen M. Bozman Affordable Housing Awards, presented by the Alliance for Housing Solutions.

"It's great to live in a community where affordable housing is a bipartisan issue. Arlington can serve as an inspiration to the country as to how we can make it work," said Michael Spotts, who served as vice chair of the 18-member task force.

The body's work evolved into an Affordable Housing Master Plan, adopted unanimously by the County Board last year.

Two others were honored with Bozman Awards in connection with adoption of the plan: Mary Hynes, who served on the County Board and helped shepherd the process, and Marsha Allgeier, a longtime county staff leader who helped to oversee development of the plan.



Michael Spotts, vice chair of the Arlington Affordable Housing Study Working Group, speak at the 2016 Ellen M. Bozman Affordable Housing Awards, held Dec. 4, 2016, at Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington. Looking on are Robert Bushkoff, Mary Hynes and Marsha Allgeier.

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Arlington affordable-housing efforts lauded, continued

It was “one of the most gratifying experiences of my life,” said Allgeier, who praised what she called the “perfect marriage . . . [of] the realism and idealism” that resulted. *continued*

The awards are named to honor the late Ellen Bozman, who served a record 24 years on the Arlington County Board and was a co-founder of the Alliance for Housing Solutions. The annual program and reception drew 150 civic leaders to Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington.

“It is wonderful,” said Alliance for Housing Solutions executive director Michelle Winters as she looked out at the assemblage. Winters came on board six months ago, succeeding Mary Rouleau.

Hynes, who served as County Board chairman in 2015 when the master plan was adopted, echoed a recurring theme that affordable housing is a shared community value.

“It’s really great to be here in this amazing company,” she said. “It’s like preaching to the choir: Some of us sing high and some of us sing low, but we all know the song . . . and we all need to keep singing.”

Hynes noted that the decision to set up the task force was not unanimous, only squeaking by on a 3-2 vote. But, she said, the group “took the right amount of time” and “laid a foundation” to build on going forward.

“Each of them brought a different passion to the table,” Spotts said of the task-force members. But, he said, “we all had the same vision.”

Mary Margaret Whipple, who serves as board president of the Alliance for Housing Solutions, saluted departing board members Kathryn Scruggs and Peg Hogan, each rotating off after nine years of service.

“Their commitment and passion for affordable housing has made a real difference,” Whipple said. “Every contribution means a lot to us – we really appreciate it.”