AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

November 22, 2026

Re: Crystal House Tenant Association Letter November 3, 3026, Conditions at Crystal House

Dear Arlington County Board,

The Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) received a deeply concerning letter from the newly formed Crystal House Tenant Association (CHTA) on November 3, 2026, which we shared with you and published in our November newsletter available here:

https://aurorahighlands.org/wp-content/uploads/November-2026-Newsletter.pdf

At its November 12, 2026 meeting, the AHCA unanimously voted to support the CHTA letter and its request that the serious administrative, management, maintenance, and physical conditions at Crystal House be addressed immediately.

Please see the attached questions.

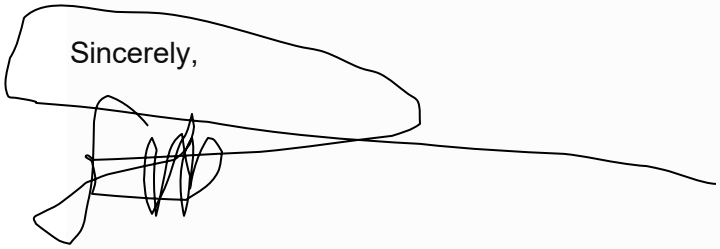
Please provide a substantive written response within 30 calendar days of receiving this letter. That response should identify the County departments and officials responsible for taking action, outline the specific steps the County intends to implement, and establish a timetable for implementation.

Please do not provide general acknowledgment that the County takes tenant concerns seriously. Please provide specific answers, concrete commitments, and measurable results. If the County believes it lacks the legal authority to take certain actions, identify those limitations, explain what changes are necessary, and describe how it will pursue them.

Affordable housing must mean more than affordable rent. It must mean safe, sanitary, secure, and properly maintained housing. Arlington County has an obligation to ensure that standard is met. The County's responsibility does not end when the ribbon is cut.

Thank you,

Sincerely,



Stacy Meyer, President

Affordable Housing Questions

Publicly subsidized housing in Arlington cannot be a second-class housing system in which private owners, consultants, non-profits and management companies benefit from public financing and equity while tenants are left without adequate protection or recourse.

Public investment must come with public accountability. Arlington County commits substantial public resources to affordable housing developments. Residents and taxpayers have every right to expect that these investments will be accompanied by meaningful oversight, enforceable maintenance standards, and accountability for the private entities receiving those benefits.

1. Large and Mostly Affordable Housing Buildings Are Not Ideal

   Many jurisdictions use inclusionary zoning to incorporate a percentage of affordable units, often 10–15%, into larger market-rate developments. This approach promotes mixed-income communities, reduce the concentration of lower-income households in individual buildings, and allows affordable housing residents to live alongside market-rate tenants – in market rate equivalent buildings maintained at market rate standards and not as second class citizens. Arlington used to employ this approach which works, but has more recently favored privately owned, entirely or heavily affordable developments such as Crystal House, as promoted by the constellation of entities that lobby for housing but that results in poor living conditions. Has analysis of the current system been done comparing results to the inclusionary zoning of the past?

2. Limited Oversight & Enforcement

   Arlington currently relies on various county agencies to respond to tenant complaints. That approach is clearly insufficient when problems are chronic, widespread, and dangerous. Other jurisdictions have established dedicated complaint hotlines, formal violation notices, mandatory repair deadlines, financial penalties, and public tracking systems to monitor troubled properties. For buildings with repeated or serious violations like Crystal House, stronger measures should be considered. What has Arlington done? And is it enough? Private ownership and management must never become an excuse for inadequate public oversight.

- Comprehensive, annual, unit-by-unit inspections.
- Mandatory corrective action plans with firm completion deadlines.
- Independent audits of maintenance records and management practices.
- More frequent inspections of properties identified as high-risk.
- Immediate attention to life-safety hazards.
- Meaningful penalties when owners and management companies fail to correct violations.
- Rent restrictions, rent freezes, or other appropriate tenant protections where legally authorized and warranted.
- Establish a transparent system that identifies troubled properties and tracks complaints, violations, corrective actions, and outstanding deficiencies. Residents should not have to repeatedly report the same problems without seeing meaningful results.

3. Work with State to Overcome Obstacles to Proper Management

   Arlington County frequently points to limitations imposed by the Commonwealth of Virginia as an explanation for its inability to adequately oversee affordable housing. If state law prevents the County from exercising the authority necessary to protect tenants, then the County must work with the General Assembly to change those laws and obtain the necessary enforcement tools. The County should also identify what enforcement authority it already possesses and use it fully. What has Arlington done in this area?

4. Prove Affordable Housing Is Properly Staffed, Funded and Can Be Properly Maintained Before Building It

   The County's position that it has limited authority to enforce health and life-safety requirements is unacceptable. How can Arlington County approve inappropriately sized affordable housing like the Melwood project which was approved over AHCA opposition, while allowing these conditions to fester at the Crystal House, 3 blocks away? How can the County promote oversized affordable housing developments such as Crystal House and Melwood as state-of-the-art projects, yet fail to ensure that residents receive housing that meets basic standards of safety, security, sanitation, and maintenance? More importantly, how could the County allow the problems at Crystal House to persist despite repeated tenant complaints of inadequate security, poor management, water leaks, cockroaches, and rats? These are not hypothetical concerns. No one should have to accept these conditions simply because they live in affordable housing. What is Arlington doing in this area?

5. Identify The Path Forward

   Arlington cannot continue expanding its affordable housing inventory while failing to adequately address serious problems in properties it already supports. There are two paths forward for consideration, please respond:

   First: Take immediate steps to establish a meaningful affordable housing oversight and enforcement program, including pursuing the necessary changes to state law. This program should include proactive inspections, transparent reporting, enforceable corrective action plans, and meaningful consequences for owners who fail to maintain safe and habitable properties.

   Second: Before approving additional major publicly subsidized affordable housing developments, especially those that are large, privately owned, 100% affordable, and opposed by the civic association, demonstrate that the County has the legal authority, staffing, resources, and enforcement mechanisms necessary to ensure that existing and future properties are properly managed and maintained.