

Building the Foundation: A Blueprint for Creating Affordable Housing for DC's Lowest-Income Residents

By Claire Zippel

For the District's extremely low-income residents, affordable housing can serve as a [foundation](#) for overall stability and well-being. Yet the District's recent efforts to create and preserve affordable homes, while important, have not substantially expanded the availability of housing affordable to the city's lowest-income residents—those with incomes below 30 percent of the area median, or \$33,000 for a family of four. DCFPI's latest [report](#) contextualizes the District's present investments and outlines a ten-year blueprint to address severe rent burden among the city's extremely low-income residents.

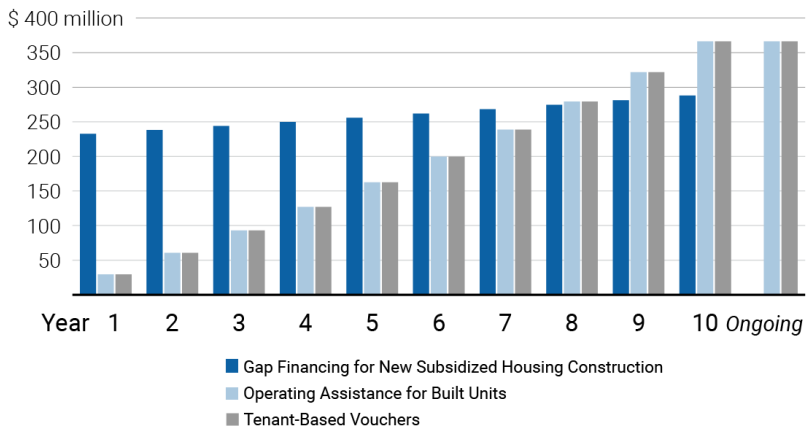
According to the report, [Building the Foundation: A Blueprint for Creating Affordable Housing for DC's Lowest-Income Residents](#), the full subsidy cost to the District to create 30,000 units of deeply affordable housing would be \$2.6 billion in construction subsidies over ten years, with \$732 million per year required for ongoing operating assistance once all affordable units have been created. The District currently has 27,000 households with extremely low incomes who are paying more than half their income for rent each month.

The cost of the ten-year blueprint to address severe rent burden among the city's lowest-income residents is on par with what the District spends on other key city services, such as public education and police and emergency services. Yet the magnitude of the required investment suggests that the District would need to pursue forward-thinking strategies to maximize its subsidy dollars, such as the aggressive utilization of public land, and consider progressively raising revenue to dedicate to deeply affordable housing.

Addressing the lack of housing affordable to the city's extremely-low income households should be a top priority for the District. The lack of deeply affordable housing impacts nearly [every aspect of life](#) for DC households working to make ends meet on extremely low incomes. The District's slow progress expanding access to deeply affordable housing is holding the city back in tackling other pressing challenges, such as unequal student outcomes, racial inequity, and homelessness.

Ten-Year Blueprint to Address Severe Housing Burden Among DC's Extremely Low-Income Renters

Subsidy cost to the District to create 30,000 units of deeply affordable housing.



Note: Blueprint would create one-half of needed units with new construction and the other one-half with tenant-based vouchers. All figures assume annual inflation of 2.4 percent.

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Read the full report, *Building the Foundation: A Blueprint for Creating Affordable Housing for DC's Lowest-Income Residents*, [here](#).

And, to learn about the affordable housing investments in the proposed fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget, check out DCFPI's analysis, [What's in the Proposed Fiscal Year 2019 Budget for Affordable Housing?](#)