

Where Is Affordable Housing Being Developed in DC? Explore DCFPI's New Interactive Map

By Claire Zippel

The District has made substantial investments in affordable housing in recent years, though levels are still far short of what is needed. Where have those investments gone? And which income levels are being served? DCFPI's new [interactive map](#) lets you explore affordable housing that has been newly created or preserved since 2015. The map uses a unique, comprehensive dataset compiled by DCFPI.¹ With the release of the map, this detailed, project-level data is available in one place for the first time.

The interactive map reveals, among other things, that the District is not developing much affordable housing west of Rock Creek Park, and few affordable homes have been within reach of the lowest-income households who need it the most.

Very Few Affordable Homes Have Been Created West of Rock Creek Park

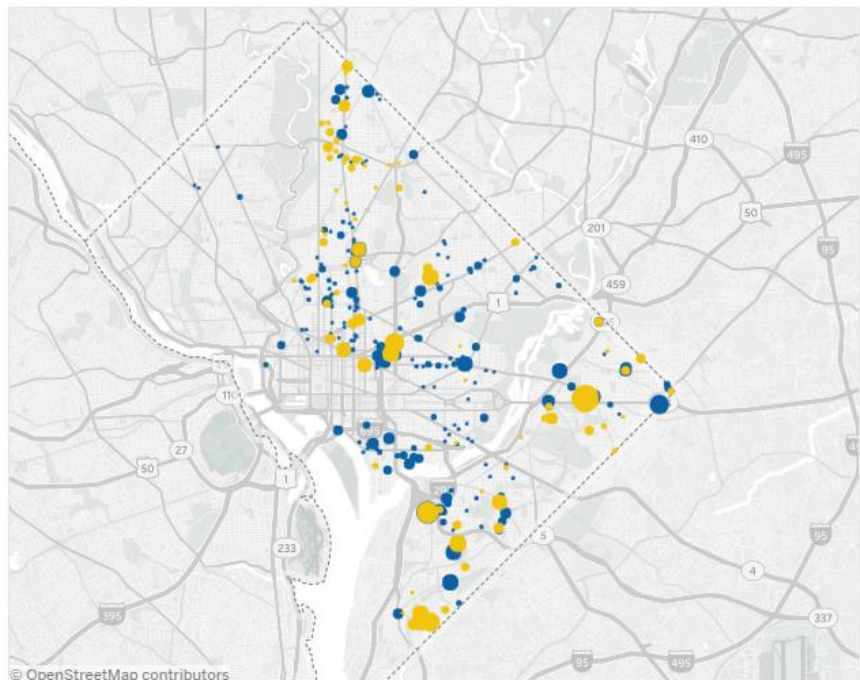
Less than 1 percent of recent new affordable housing—only 53 homes out of 9,285—is in Ward 3, which covers most of the area west of Rock Creek Park (*Figure 1*). All of those units were created through inclusionary zoning, a program that requires most new residential buildings to include some affordable homes (check out the *Inclusionary Zoning* filter). None were created through housing subsidy tools, such as the Housing Production Trust Fund, which provide low-cost loans to affordable buildings, or by [housing tax credits](#).

This means that the District's affordable housing investments have bypassed many of the DC

DC Affordable Housing Pipeline

Are affordable homes being built or preserved in your neighborhood? Hover over the map, click the search icon, and enter your zip code. Which of DC's planned affordable homes would be affordable to you? Filter using the *Affordability Level* dropdown. To calculate your income as a percent of area median income, or AMI, check out the "What is AMI?" tab above.

Type	Tenure	Affordability Level	Status
■ Preservation	(All) <input type="text"/>	(All) <input type="text"/>	(All) <input type="text"/>
■ New Construction			

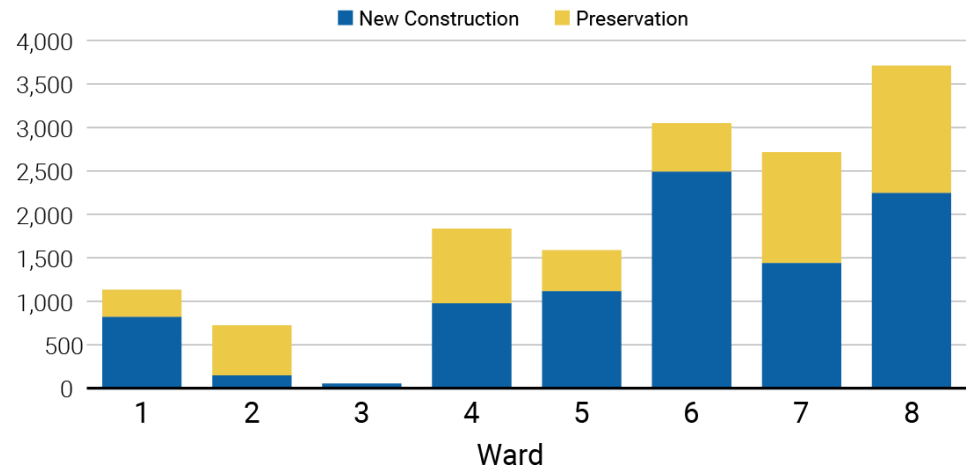


neighborhoods most desirable to many families, due to their high-performing schools, grocery store access, and plentiful recreational space. Locating more affordable homes in these neighborhoods should be a high priority for the District: [research shows](#) that growing up in a low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhood like those west of Rock Creek Park has beneficial effects on future earnings and likelihood of college attendance for children in low-income families.

FIGURE 1.

Less Than 1 Percent of DC’s New Affordable Housing Is In Ward 3

Affordable units completed since 2015, under construction, or in the pipeline.



Source: Affordable housing pipeline database compiled by DCFPI. Excludes public housing replacement units. Data is as of 9/6/2018.

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Cost is a factor in why DC’s subsidy tools have funded affordable housing in Ward 3. There is an obvious [tension](#) between expanding affordable housing in high-opportunity, high-cost areas, and trying to build the most affordable housing with available funds. While the District’s housing subsidies are awarded to projects based on multiple criteria, including housing costs, other criteria that prioritize less-expensive projects work against this. The District must strike a better balance going forward.

[Restrictive zoning](#) and neighborhood opposition to multifamily construction have [impeded](#) new housing development west of the Park. This prevents even inclusionary zoning units from being created by market-rate construction and makes it less likely that subsidized affordable housing—which often relies on scale for efficiency—will be built. As the District considers changes to the Comprehensive Plan, the city’s land use plan, it should be attentive to how restrictive zoning thwarts the city’s ability to create affordable homes in the high-opportunity neighborhoods west of Rock Creek Park.

Only A Small Portion of Affordable Units Are Within Reach for DC’s Lowest-Income Residents

As we’ve written [before](#), DC’s recent affordable housing efforts have largely left the city’s extremely low-income residents behind. While three-quarters of renters facing severe housing cost burden in DC are extremely low-income (below 30 percent of area median income, or \$33,000 for a family of four), less than a third of new rental units produced by DC’s housing programs have been affordable to this group.² This is clear when the map is filtered to display only units affordable to households below 30 percent of area median income, or AMI (*Figure 2*). Instead, most new affordable housing units have been for households with higher income levels, largely 50 percent or 60 percent of the area median income. (To learn more about AMI, check out the *What is AMI?* tab.) It’s worth noting that 29 percent of the units that are serving the

lowest-income households are public housing slated for redevelopment (use the *Replacement Public Housing* filter to see), and do not represent new deeply affordable units.

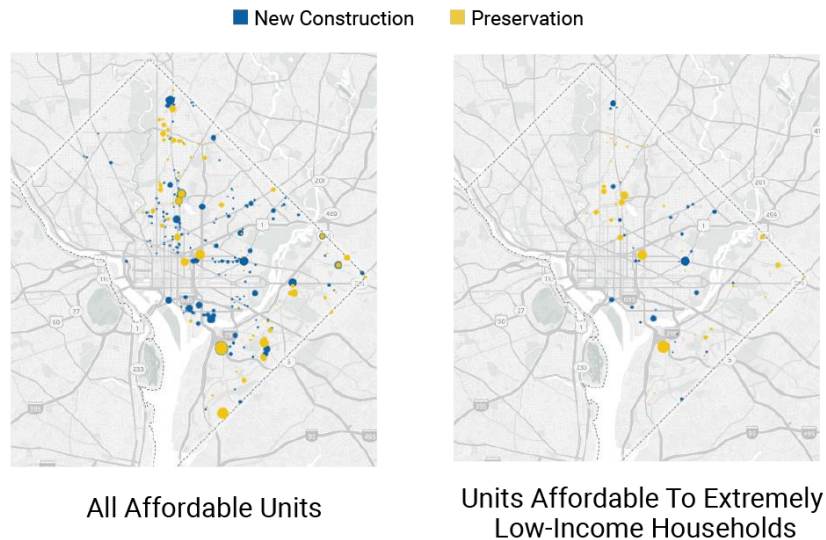
While it's laudable that the city is creating and preserving thousands of affordable homes, the District must be more strategic about where, and to whom, its housing investments are directed. DC's affordable housing tools have the potential to unlock access to high-opportunity

neighborhoods and help extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. To fulfill this potential, the city must increase funding for rental assistance—the tool that makes subsidized buildings affordable to the lowest-income residents—and revisit land use restrictions and funding criteria that thwart the development of affordable homes in high-opportunity areas.

FIGURE 2.

All Affordable Units Vs. Deeply Affordable Units

Affordable units completed since 2015, under construction, or in the pipeline.



Source: Affordable housing pipeline database compiled by DCFPI. Data is as of 9/6/2018.

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¹ See the *About This Map* tooltip at the bottom of the interactive for more information.

² This figure includes tenant-based vouchers. Vouchers are not shown on the map, as addresses are confidential.