

1 **R-3s Resolution on Congregations and Affordable Housing**
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3 **Resolved**, that this 229th Annual Convention joins with those calling for legislation to establish
4 “by right” development of affordable housing on land owned by any church,
5 congregation, or faith community, or religious institution within the Commonwealth of
6 Virginia; and be it further
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8 **Resolved**, that this 229th Annual Convention urges congregations, clergy, and lay people to
9 contact their State Senators and Delegates to urge enactment of such legislation;
10 and be it further
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12 **Resolved**, that this 229th Annual Convention requests the Board of the Virginia Diocesan Homes
13 (VDH) to report back on options for the development of affordable housing upon land
14 owned by the Episcopal Church, its congregations, and its other institutions within the
15 Diocese of Virginia, and submit the report to the 230th Annual Convention; and be it
16 further
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18 **Resolved**, that the Secretary of the Diocese send copies of this Resolution to each member of
19 the General Assembly and to the Governor.
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21 *Originally submitted by: The Rev. Benjamin P. Campbell, St. Paul’s, Richmond*
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23 *Substitute by the Resolutions Committee*
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26 **Background:**
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28 A [December 14, 2021, article in Virginia Mercury](#) reported that Virginia’s Joint Legislative and
29 Audit Review Commission had found that nearly 30 percent of Virginia households are “cost-
30 burdened,” a measure that refers to people who spend more than 30 percent of their income on
31 housing. Of those households, nearly half of them were severely cost-burdened, meaning they’re
32 spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing. Black and Hispanic Virginians were
33 disproportionately represented among those households, who were also more likely to rent than
34 own their homes and had a median income of \$32,000. At that time, Virginia needed at least
35 200,000 more affordable rental units. [More recent reports](#) show that the problem is getting
36 worse, not better.
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38 In Virginia, “by-right zoning” refers to the right of a property owner to develop their land
39 without the need for a special permit or zoning change. This means that the owner can use their
40 land for any purpose that is permitted by the local zoning ordinance, without having to go
41 through additional regulatory processes. One example of by-right legislation in the
42 Commonwealth of Virginia allows for use of property for a small group home. Similarly,
43 Virginia law blocks Homeowner Associations from preventing the installation of solar panels on
44 privately owned property, subject to a few specific limitations. VA Code Section 55.1-1820.1.
45 Establishing a “by right” use of church property for affordable housing would eliminate the time
46 and cost of rezoning the property as well as the need for public review and comment about this
47 use. An affordable housing project developed on church property would still need to meet other
48 local requirements, such as a site plan review and development standards.