

Executive Summary

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is a primary strategy to address Raleigh’s “urgent housing affordability and homelessness crisis,” according to the City of Raleigh 2026-2030 Affordable Housing Plan. That strategy can be pursued through development of housing on faith properties.

Many, if not most, of Raleigh’s faith communities share the City’s concern about housing affordability. Moreover, these faith communities have excess land or structures that can be reimaged to accommodate housing.

In 2025, the City contracted with the nonprofit Sympara, a national leader in sacred/civic placemaking, to identify faith properties suitable for affordable housing development and to assess congregational readiness. The study identified nearly 600 acres of faith-owned properties that are potentially suitable for development of affordable housing. Faith properties in the City’s Affordable Housing Opportunity Area could support development of more than 2,000 units.

The study used criteria for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to evaluate site suitability plus measures developed by Sympara to assess congregational readiness. Twenty-seven congregations have perfect LIHTC scores. Fourteen congregations expressed some degree of interest in building affordable housing.

But congregations and their leaders need education on affordable housing finance and development to advance the work. This report includes a series of recommendations on how the City might build awareness and catalyze imagination for development of affordable housing on faith properties.



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The findings include the following:

- Sixty-four faith properties in Raleigh's Affordable Housing Opportunity Area (or in exempted locations) could potentially support development of 30+ units.
- Downtown Raleigh could be a significant location for affordable housing development on faith properties.
- Congregations are motivated to build affordable housing as a way to address both social impact and financial sustainability.

The recommendations include the following:

- Promote and expand City services to support development on faith properties.
- Invest in storytelling and immersive case studies of Raleigh faith properties where affordable housing has been built or is envisioned.
- Support a cohort for Raleigh congregations that want to explore building affordable housing.

As more municipalities look to faith property development as an affordable housing strategy, the City has an extraordinary opportunity to partner with faith communities that share the goal of a livable Raleigh for all.

