

Real Estate

In Fairlington, Va., multifamily living abounds, as do playgrounds and pooches

During World War II, the Arlington County community was the nation's largest defense housing project.

By Bridget Reed Morawski



Kate Ilahi removes her 3-year-old son's shoes as Austin plays at Fairlington Park in the Fairlington neighborhood of Arlington. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

Lori Criado doesn't live in Fairlington, Va., but she wishes she did. As a public school teacher working in the area, she's here nearly every day for work. But another reason she drives with her children from Fairfax County to the Arlington County neighborhood about every other week: the playgrounds.

"Arlington's playgrounds are really cool and have great equipment," she said. Her children enjoy other Arlington parks, as well, but the playground at the Fairlington Community Center — which also hosts a seasonal farmers market — is less crowded. Although Criado would prefer to live closer to the playgrounds, as parents of six children, she and her husband need more space than Fairlington homes offer in their

price range. She said that for families with fewer children, Fairlington would be a great place to live both because of its quality of life and neighborhood amenities.



Dog owners have plenty of places to walk their dogs in Fairlington. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

Fairlington is also welcoming to pet lovers. Seemingly every other person strolling through Fairlington on a recent, balmy afternoon was walking a dog. Utah Dog Park, a spacious dog run, was the destination for several pups and their owners.

Amy Torgersen has been coming to the dog park with her golden retriever, George Washington, since she moved here in July 2021 with her husband, who is in the military. While they may have to leave the area next summer because of his job, they take George to the dog park at least once a day.

The dog park “was one of the reasons we chose our townhome since he has lots of energy and needs lots of exercise,” Torgersen said. The couple wanted a quieter area that had walkability to interesting things to do, such as restaurants and outdoor spaces. Fairlington’s proximity to the popular Shirlington dining district was attractive.



Fairlington Community Center has six multipurpose rooms, art studios and a gymnasium. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

Although the neighborhood lacks a Metro station, Torgersen, who commutes to Washington, said getting downtown isn't difficult. She rides a bus to the Pentagon and then takes Metro into the city.

"Public transportation into D.C. is really easy from the apartment we found; it's convenient," Torgersen said.

Nevertheless, most residents rely on their cars. Some say they have never utilized public transit. Doug Swingle, who has lived in the neighborhood for seven years, says that in pre-pandemic life, he drove downtown to work. These days, he rarely ventures into the District.

"It's one of those crazy things where downtown almost feels like it's 100 miles away sometimes," Swingle said. When he's not in Fairlington, he said, he often meets friends in Alexandria's Old Town or North Arlington neighborhoods.



Fairlington was built for defense workers during World War II. With its 3,439 apartments, Fairlington was the nation's largest defense housing project. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

Fairlington was built for defense workers during World War II. According to the National Register of Historic Places registration form, in late 1941 and early 1942, Defense Homes Corporation purchased 322 acres in Arlington and Fairfax counties and began planning an apartment development. Houston architect Kenneth Franzheim was hired to design the housing. He was later joined by architect Alan B. Mills. Franzheim and Mills also collaborated on two other DHC projects — McLean Gardens and Naylor Gardens, both in Washington. They designed all three communities in the Colonial Revival style.

The name of the community was originally Seminary Heights, but it was changed after local citizens raised concerns about confusion with other neighborhoods nearby. The name Fairlington — a combination of Fairfax and Arlington — was chosen instead.

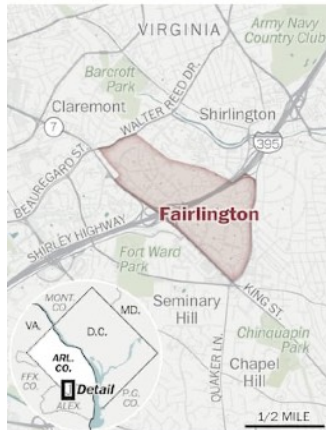


According to real estate agent Jim Talbert, 242 condos have sold in Fairlington in the past 12 months. The lowest-priced condo sold was a 700-square-foot, one-bedroom unit that sold for \$265,000. The most expensive condo sold was a three-bedroom, two-bathroom, 1,830-square-foot condo for \$690,000. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

With its 3,439 apartments, Fairlington was the nation's largest defense housing project. The residential buildings — townhouses and condominiums/apartments — face curving streets or are grouped to form U-shaped courtyards. The buildings are primarily brick, but some are cut stone. DHC managed Fairlington until it was sold to private owners in 1947. Starting in 1972, the apartment buildings began converting into condominiums. The community was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

Living there: Fairlington straddles Interstate 395 in southwestern Arlington County, with a small number of buildings in the city of Alexandria. It is bounded by King Street, N. Quaker Lane, 28th Street S., and Abingdon Elementary School.

Fairlington



NICK MOURTOUPALAS/THE WASHINGTON POST

There are no single-family homes in Fairlington. According to Jim Talbert, a real estate agent with Century 21 Redwood Realty, 242 condos have sold in Fairlington in the past 12 months. He said 22 homes are pending sale, for sale or about to be on the market. The lowest-priced condo sold in the past year was a 700-square-foot, one-bedroom unit that sold for \$265,000. The most expensive condo sold was a three-bedroom, two-bathroom, 1,830-square-foot condo for \$690,000.

The average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$1,919 in the past year. Some renters have access to tennis courts, basketball courts, pools and tot lots, depending on the condo association, Talbert said.



Lizzie Goodnow helps a customer while Megan Hurst pulls out a tray at Great Harvest Bread Co. in the Fairlington Centre in Alexandria. The store is just outside Fairlington's borders. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The Washington Post)

SCHOOLS: Abingdon Elementary, Gunston Middle and Wakefield High.

TRANSIT: Numerous Arlington, Alexandria and D.C. public bus routes connect to a nearby bus depot, the Shirlington Station. Interstate 395 is a major thoroughfare, which drivers can use to commute into D.C. or points south. The nearest Metro station, Braddock Road, which connects to the Blue and Yellow lines, is roughly three miles away. The nearest Virginia Railway Express is also three miles away in Alexandria.

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