



NEWS RELEASE

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SHENANDOAH COUNTY AWARDED AARP GRANT

Woodstock, Virginia – As Shenandoah County embarks on a comprehensive housing study, it is also taking fast, practical steps to address real needs today. Shenandoah County has been awarded a competitive AARP Community Challenge grant (\$20,000) to launch the **Shenandoah Housing Design Challenge**—a countywide design competition focused on **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** to generate creative, buildable housing solutions, funded by AARP.

This initiative invites architects, designers, students, and professionals to submit small, flexible, beautiful ADU concepts based on actual properties submitted by local homeowners. While the competition may not yield full construction-ready plans, it will offer a powerful starting point through a library of quality, community-informed designs.

“This competition is about connecting big ideas to real places,” said Lemuel Hancock, Shenandoah County Director of Community Development. “We’re not just planning—we’re making it easier for people to take action. With the right tools and vision, homeowners can be part of the housing solution.”

The effort aligns with strategies in the **Shenandoah 2045 Comprehensive Plan**, specifically:

- **5.1.7:** Create a library of pre-approved housing plans
- **5.2.4:** Enable housing for all ages
- **5.3.6:** Incentivize infill housing and better land use

Homeowners participating in the challenge will receive professional design support, while the wider community will benefit from age-friendly, income-accessible housing models tailored to Shenandoah’s context and character.

Key Timeline:

- **June–July 2025: Planning & Outreach**
Recruitment of homeowner case study sites; engagement of local partners; promotional campaign rollout
- **Early August, 2025: Competition Launch**
Open call for entries, design brief released, kickoff events
- **September–October 2025: Design Phase**
Designer workshops, technical assistance, and submission window
- **October–November 2025: Judging & Showcase**
Community showcase, public voting, and prize announcements

This initiative represents a tangible step forward in addressing Shenandoah County’s housing needs—starting not with abstract plans, but with real lots, real people, and real solutions.

About the AARP Community Challenge

The AARP Community Challenge is a grant program to make tangible improvements in communities that jump-start long-term change. It is part of AARP's nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods, and rural areas to become great places to live for people of all ages. To learn more, visit [AARP.org/livable](https://www.aarp.org/livable).

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