



# Review

Fall 2006/Winter 2007

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- VAHCDO Annual Conference and Scholarship Luncheon May 13-15, Virginia Beach
- Tax Credit Compliance training March 20-21, 2007

## Newport News Redevelopment Project Wins 2006 Virginia Housing Award

The award for Best Housing Preservation/Revitalization Effort was presented to **Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NNRHA)** at the 2006 Governor's Housing Conference for its Orcutt Homes Redevelopment Project. Orcutt Homes was originally developed in 1941 to provide affordable housing for the many people coming to Newport News in defense-related activities. It contained a dense arrangement of townhouses formed in a barracks-type layout. Over time, the physical deterioration, age, and configuration of the development made it unsuitable for today's housing needs.



income.

Phase II of the plan involved construction of a 40-unit townhouse development for families. Orcutt Village consists of 20 duplexes with 40 three-bedroom units that feature patios, washer/dryer hook-ups, dishwashers, and garbage disposals. Five units are fully accessible for residents with mobility impairments. Play areas and tot-lots are also included in the development. Orcutt Village is located about two blocks from Ashe Manor so that both developments support the revitalization of the community.

This comprehensive approach to redevelopment has resulted in new, high quality affordable housing that allows both elderly residents and young families to live in a revitalized community that is safe, affordable, and attractive.



NNRHA planned to revitalize the area through a mixed-population housing development. The goal of the plan was to improve the quality of life for residents of the community and eliminate blighting influences. The **City of Newport News**, the **US Department of Housing and Urban Development**, and **Virginia Community Development Corporation** joined forces with NNRHA to promote a mixed-use, mixed-income community where residents can live in safety and comfort.

In Phase I of the redevelopment plan, the Effie and Wilbur Ashe Manor was built. This mid-rise building consists of 50 units built to accommodate the elderly and handicapped. The building is affordable for residents with incomes as low as 20 percent of the area median

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## President's Message

One thing is certain right now: these are **challenging times** to be a professional in the public and assisted housing industry. We are challenged to recreate our rental housing programs to become more like the private market but are restricted as to who we can offer apartments to and how much we can charge for rent. We are restricted from generating adequate income under a suspect funding formula that also suffers from the whims of the political process. We are challenged to comply with a host of regulations that claim to protect the public interest but, more often than not, divert our time and resources from providing service to assuring that we have adequate documentation. We are challenged every day to keep our personal motivation level high enough to face an uncertain future with more on our plates than has ever been there before.

Can we meet these challenges?.....The answer is a clear, resounding, "YES!"

We have the **capacity** to learn new ways of doing business, the **creativity** to find new sources of income, the **stamina** to comply with the regs and still provide excellent service, even if it takes extra hours to do it, and the **passion** to serve others just by reminding ourselves how this service enriches our lives.

VAHCDO has been and continues to be your partner in addressing these challenges by providing training to keep you up-to-date with current program requirements and offering workshops on new funding resources, creative development projects, and resident services programs. We bring national speakers to help us all learn about other approaches to resolving our common challenges.

VAHCDO is also your advocate. We continue to monitor and try to impact State legislative activities related to **the issue of eminent domain**. Preserving our ability to carryout redevelopment activities effectively is important to all housing authorities in the State. We have contracted again this year with a consulting firm to assist us in educating and representing our interests to our Virginia Legislators. We do our best to affect state policy on behalf of all redevelopment and housing authorities, but legislators need to hear from their local constituents – **You!**

And one of our most serious, immediate challenges is trying to operate our public housing programs under a new Operating Fund formula and a new asset management model with **only 76% of the funding that we are due!** We all have been coming to grips with difficult decisions about staffing and services that we can and cannot afford under this new system. But topping that off with receiving only three-fourths of eligible subsidy is an **unprecedented challenge**. If you have not yet talked to your congressmen and senators, now would be a good time. They need to hear what impact these historically low funding levels will have on the families we are trying to serve. Consider adding your voice to the national debate by attending NAHRO's Annual Legislative Conference, March 19-21, in Washington, DC.

Our challenges are great. But let's not forget that together **we have the capacity, the creativity, the stamina, and the passion to meet these challenges**. As always, the VAHCDO Board is anxious to hear your comments and suggestions. Have a great New Year!

Dave Baldwin



**But let's not forget that together we have the capacity, the creativity, the stamina, and the passion to meet these challenges.**

## Upcoming 2007 Legislative Session

VAHCDO's leaders have joined with several organizations representing local governments to oppose efforts by a number of legislators to enact legislation and put forward constitutional amendments which would cripple the ability of localities and their redevelopment and housing authorities to eliminate blight in Virginia's communities.

In 2006 the Virginia Legislature enacted a comprehensive revision of the Housing Authorities Law. The General Assembly established a rigorous standard for the use of eminent domain by narrowing the definition of "blight" – it must endanger the public health, safety, or welfare. Legislators also established substantial notice, procedural, and approval requirements before any private property can be taken. A housing authority simply cannot condemn private property without the support, the resources and the definitive action of the local government.

Virginia's housing authorities are units of local government that engage in slum clearance and blight removal through the undertaking of housing projects, conservation projects, and redevelopment projects. They exist to promote safe and sanitary housing conditions in the Commonwealth; they do not exist to perform industrial or economic development. A recent survey of property acquisition activities among Virginia's housing authorities indicated that during the past 10 years, housing authorities have completed more than 1,426 property acquisitions. More than 83 percent of those acquisitions were completed without the use of eminent domain. Among the 241 acquisitions where condemnation suits were filed, 114 were filed to clear clouded titles, and 91 were settled before trial, leaving only 2.5 percent (36) of all acquisitions

involving disputed takings of private property. It should also be noted that of those housing authorities responding to the survey, 11 out of 18 have not used eminent domain to acquire property during the past 10 years.

The Virginia Association of Housing and Community Development Officials (VAHCDO):

- Supports current Virginia law that does not permit government entities to exercise eminent domain for purely economic development reasons;
- Supports that the right to private property is a fundamental right in the Commonwealth;
- Concurs that the definition of "public use" for which eminent domain may be used does not include taking private property for the primary purpose of conferring financial gain to a private person or enhancing tax revenues; and

Proposes that the importance and complexity of these issues demand that an in-depth study of eminent domain be conducted, preferably by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), *before* further legislative action.

Virginia's Redevelopment and Housing Authorities exist to serve the citizens of their communities by providing affordable housing opportunities and by assisting local governments in their efforts to eradicate blight. Eminent domain is one tool that is only sparingly used under the strict control of State enabling legislation to provide this service, but it is a vital tool that assures that the needs of the community can be addressed.



**Eminent domain is one tool that is only sparingly used under the strict control of State enabling legislation**

## VAHCDO's Strategic Planning Effort Moves Forward

In October 2006 the VAHCDO Board initiated a strategic planning process. In a workshop facilitated by Ron Reger, VHDA Organizational Development Manager, the Board identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that face the VAHCDO organization and its member agencies. The Board also drafted a new VAHCDO Mission Statement. The results of this workshop were presented to Virginia's housing authority Executive Directors at the Annual Legal Seminar in December 2006 for their input in determining

which areas are most important to our collective success.

We will be seeking additional input from the larger VAHCDO membership during this year's Winter Workshop, January 28-30, 2007. When the highest priority areas are determined, the VAHCDO Board will develop strategies to address those areas most important to our future. It is our goal to present a Strategic Plan to the membership by the 2007 Annual Conference in May.

### Draft VAHCDO Mission Statement

Provide advocacy, networking, and training for our members to improve the quality, processes, and people involved in housing and community development.

Provide linkages to state, local, and federal governments and to professional organizations to initiate policy development in a manner that strengthens our capacity to serve the communities of Virginia.

## VAHCDO Scholarships Awarded

The Scholarship Award luncheon marked the concluding event of the May 2006 VAHCDO Annual Meeting. The scholarship award program is coordinated by a committee chaired by Doris P. Jackson-Crocker of **Richmond RHA**, and includes VAHCDO's Senior Vice President Brenda Willis of the **Chesapeake RHA**, Sylvia Copeland-Murphy of the **Newport News RHA**, and Dalton Dale Nixon of **Hampton RHA**.

The program began with the recognition of the 2006 Hall of Fame past VAHCDO recipients. Sharonda Cousins, a junior at Virginia Tech majoring in Finance, and Ebony Ellis, an Old Dominion University graduate with a degree in Criminal Justice, shared with the 2006 VAHCDO recipients the unique

challenges of college life.

The Scholarship Committee and sponsors recognized the five 2006 scholarship award recipients which included two young women and three young men.

As scholarship winners, these youths from our public housing and housing choice voucher programs *dare to be great* as they, "*rise above the odds and overcome amazing obstacles!*" The recipients have distinguished themselves as leaders in their schools and communities. They each received a \$2,000 scholarship (\$500 per semester for four years). To date, VAHCDO scholarship dollars total approximately \$195,000 and have helped more than 90 students.

### 2005-2007

#### Board of Directors President

David E. Baldwin, *Bristol*

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*Virginia Beach*  
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*Newport News*

#### Exhibit Chairperson

Valerie Hill Neal,  
*Newport News*

#### Scholarship Chairperson

Doris P. Jackson-Crocker,  
*Richmond*

## VAHCDO Scholarship Recipients



**Christopher D. Banks, sponsored by the Newport News RHA,**

plans to attend Christopher Newport University and major in Foreign Service or Business. His cumulative GPA is 3.25.

*“The doorway to success is through education. College is the key to the future of your choice and time, patience, and money must be dedicated to achieving it.”*



**Leon Edwin Prather, II, sponsored by the Newport News RHA,**

plans to attend Christopher Newport University and major in Music. His cumulative GPA is 4.26.

*“I will continue my faith and work with the community of believers. I need this to get me through this struggle.”*



**Keosha Dawnelle Cosby, sponsored by the Richmond RHA,**

plans to attend Howard University and major in Psychology with a minor in Business. Keosha has a cumulative GPA of 3.7 and is ranked second in her graduating class.

*“Growing up in such a rough neighborhood, I always said someday I would give back to my community. Volunteering at the elementary school has made me feel good because it gives me hope for the future.”*



**Cynthia Q. Brooks, sponsored by the Richmond RHA,**

plans to attend James Madison University and major in Psychology. She has a 3.5 cumulative and is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in her class.

*“Life is all about making changes and sacrifices. I plan to use my education as a catalyst to enhance my prospective career goals.”*



**Terrill L. Jones, sponsored by the Hopewell RHA,**

plans to attend Virginia State University with the aspirations of becoming an electrical engineer. Terrill's cumulative GPA is 3.0.

*“My goal is to re-open the family electric company, find potential community youth with athletic abilities and help them find potential career opportunities.”*

## Environmentally-friendly Development in Wytheville

The Cassell Pines Housing Development, the first tax-credit project in Southwest Virginia to receive the EarthCraft certification, is located in a quiet, residential neighborhood in Wytheville, Virginia. The development includes 6 one-bedroom and 12 two-bedroom apartments in 5 natural resource-conserving buildings. Five of the apartments are totally accessible for persons with disabilities. The **Wytheville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (WRHA)**, **Community Housing Partners (CHP)**, and the architectural and engineering firm of **J. A. Gibson & Associates** consulted with the **Virginia Community Development Corporation (Virginia CDC)**, **VHDA**, and **GreenVisions Consulting** during the design phase to ensure that the project would meet building objectives.

Cassell Pines incorporates the concepts of "green building" and universal design in a housing development that utilizes environmental components, satisfies the demand for low and moderate income housing, and enhances the surrounding neighborhood. The Cassell Pines site is designed for accessibility and reflects Low Impact Development principles. EarthCraft qualities were used as a model in the construction of Cassell Pines. For example, all units include 14 SEER high-efficiency heat pumps and Hardiplank fiberboard exterior siding, which is low maintenance and flame and insect resistant. The apartments also include low VOC paint, blown-in cellulose insulation, Low E windows, and Energy Star ranges, refrigerators, washers, and dryers. Brick accent walls and columns are being added to the exteriors to enhance the appearance of the development, where each tenant will also have an individual yard. The

affordability of the project was maintained for households with 40 and 60 percent of area median income with rents ranging from \$249 to \$401 per month—well below the FMR and voucher standards for the locality. As in all affordable housing projects, funding was a major hurdle to overcome. After years of planning, the finances were in place, and the project went forward. Financial partnerships for Cassell Pines included WRHA, Virginia CDC (Tax Credit Equity), VHDA (Tax Credits and Home Funding), **DHCD**, the **Appalachian Regional Commission**, the **Town of Wytheville**, and the **Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta**.

The Cassell Pines Housing Development was envisioned as a uniquely designed, environmentally-friendly, energy efficient, and affordable development for Wytheville's citizens. The results are even better than anticipated.

"We're disproving the old saying that saving energy will cost you money," observed WRHA Executive Director, Randy Martin. Cassell Pines is a perfect, in-the-ground demonstration of how HUD and its partners can use new technologies to achieve the kinds of reductions in energy use and; thus, energy costs outlined in its Energy Action Plan.



**envisioned as a uniquely designed, environmentally friendly, energy efficient, and affordable development**



## Hampton's Neighborhood Partnership Opens Doors

In the summer of 2005, **Hampton Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA)** completed the Celey Homes Development which includes seven single family homes on the corner of Celey Street and Shell Road in Hampton. Each home has either three or four bedrooms and ranges in size from 1,500 to over 1,700 square feet.

Before determining which homes to build, HRHA partnered with several City departments and neighborhood leaders. In accordance with the Olde Wythe Neighborhood Plan, they took great care to incorporate design changes that respect the traditional character and diversity of the Olde Wythe Neighborhood. These designs were presented to the Planning Commissioners and City Council and were unanimously approved. Members of the Planning Commission commended HRHA for both the design and the quality of materials used. Interiors feature crown molding and an appliance package that includes a dishwasher, stove, and built-in microwave. Exterior features include brick foundations and deep front porches. Sidewalks linking the new



construction with the existing homes in the area were included in further support of the neighborhood plan. After a competitive bidding process, HRHA contracted with **D. K. Nunnally** to construct the homes.

Once completed, the homes were sold through a partnership with **Long and Foster Realty** as part of HRHA's long-standing goal of opening doors to new opportunities in the area of homeownership. HRHA offers down payment and closing cost assistance on an as-needed basis to the purchasers of these homes to promote homeownership in Hampton and assist low income homebuyers. Specific guidelines apply, and interested low income homebuyers are referred to Long and Foster Realty for details.

**HRHA took great care to incorporate design changes that respect the traditional character and diversity of the Olde Wythe Neighborhood**

## Neighborhoods Share New Computer Lab

The **Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NNRHA)** celebrated the opening of the Marshall Courts Neighborhood Network Computer Lab with a ribbon cutting and open house on September 28, 2006. The computer lab, consisting of 21 computer stations will provide educational opportunities and assistance to adults as well as young people in the Southeast Community of Newport News. The computer lab was made possible by a \$398,050 Neighborhood Networks grant NNRHA received from **HUD**,

Approximately 250 school age children and 275 young adults live in the Marshall Courts and Orcutt Homes neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the new lab. NNRHA is partnering with **Thomas Nelson Community College** to provide college preparatory programs, college enrollment, and access to the Distance Learning curriculum. Other partners, **Girls, Inc.** and **The Community Empowerment Center** (Gethsemane Baptist Church), will provide tutoring, homework assistance, and SOL tutoring.



## Broad Creek's Vision Being Realized

The Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) was recognized with three 2006 Awards of Merit by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO). Two of these awards were for activities related to the Broad Creek development: the 2005 Homearama and the Resident Relocation Program. These programs were recognized as a national model for public/private partnerships.

Broad Creek is a mixed-use, mixed-income redevelopment project supported by a \$35 million HOPE VI grant. The development is being built just northeast of Norfolk State University on the site of two former public housing neighborhoods: Roberts Village and Bowling Green, which were torn down starting in 2001. It required the relocation of 553 households which was undertaken in a superior manner by NRHA and recognized as a model program by NAHRO.

Homearama 2005 at Broad Creek successfully showcased the region's first mixed-use, mixed-income community to more than 70,000 visitors. Now in its final phase moving across Princess Anne Road, the development continues to set the standard for well-designed homes in an array of price ranges. Homearama, produced by the Tidewater Builders Association (TBA), is an annual 16-day single site display of fully furnished and fully landscaped custom showcase homes that demonstrate the latest in home construction, design, furnishings and technological innovations. NRHA was recognized for its ability to provide an innovative solution to the wide-spread

misconceptions about mixed-income neighborhoods among realtors and potential home buyers.

One year after Homearama 2005, Broad Creek is making significant strides. The first phase of market-rate homes have sold briskly. Prices have ranged from \$145,000 to \$565,000.

The 300 multifamily rental units in Broad Creek were completed in the fall of 2006. Development of the next phase of Broad Creek will begin in May 2007 and is expected to contain 200 housing units, a neighborhood retail area and a community square.

Despite the success of Broad Creek, much revitalization work remains to be done. In that regard, NRHA will continue to seek federal funding to revitalize the 138-unit Moton Circle public housing community. Additionally, NRHA proposes to reposition its Mission College Community, as well as add 40 units to its Franklin Arms seniors complex. Revitalization of the Douglas Park neighborhood, adjacent to Moton Circle and Mission College, is another important piece of the puzzle.

Other initiatives underway in Broad Creek include a possible \$90 million Salvation Army Kroc Center (where a city library may be collocated), two stations along the city's proposed 7.5 mile light rail project, as well as a retail center at the intersection of Ballentine and Virginia Beach Boulevards.



The 2005 Homearama and the Resident Relocation Program were recognized as a national model for public/private partnerships.



## Gateway at SoNo to Revitalize South Norfolk

The **City of Chesapeake**, **Harris Judah LLC**, and the **Chesapeake Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA)** are partnering with **VHDA** in an exciting pilot project utilizing VHDA's recently authorized mixed-use/mixed-income financing. The City of Chesapeake currently owns a vacant site in the City's South Norfolk community and issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a developer to redevelop the site. Harris Judah LLC, a developer based in South Norfolk, was selected as the developer for the project. The developer plans to develop the

Gateway at SoNo, a six-acre mixed-use/mixed-income project with 133 residential for-sale condos, loft apartments, and approximately 56,000 square feet of for-sale retail/office space.

VHDA will be providing the short-term construction financing for all three phases, estimated at \$31 million. VHDA decided to finance this project as a pilot project requiring 20% of the residential units to qualify for financing under VHDA's first-time homebuyer program, which will also involve assistance from the Chesapeake Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2007.



## Property Management Moves to Private-Sector Practices

Hundreds of housing authorities across the country are either ignoring, scrambling, or being proactive to comply with the **US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD)** mandate to adopt private-sector property management practices. The new HUD regulations require **Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA)** to operate its 14 public housing rental properties more like a private business. This change, known as "Asset Management," involves shifting management responsibilities from the central office to the property site. These functions can include taking and processing tenant applications, maintenance, and on-site storage. On-site managers will be the primary persons responsible for the day-to-day operation of their property, supervising assigned maintenance and resident services staff, as well as ensuring compliance with HUD requirements.

New financial and organizational systems are being put in place to support these property

managers. "This is a new model for us, which involves some risk," said NRHA Executive Director, Shurl Montgomery. "We realize this will be dramatic, but it must be done. We're facing the challenge head on--and we're optimistic." "A transition to the private-sector model offers us the flexibility to grow and change with the real estate market and become a more sustainable organization," he said.

According to the Institute for Real Estate Management in Chicago, "NRHA has positioned itself in the forefront of this initiative by establishing a comprehensive training program that has prepared employees to become Accredited Residential Managers (ARM), the most recognized credential for residential real estate managers." NRHA Asset Manager Donna Mills said, "We are confident that implementation of Asset Management will lead to better management and oversight of our communities, while enabling us to be more responsive to our clients."

**"A transition to the private-sector model offers us the flexibility to grow and change with the real estate market and become a more sustainable organization,"**



## Housing Exec Gets Lifetime Achievement Award

### Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (WRHA)

Executive Director Charles McConnell was one of two people receiving very special statewide honors from the **Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)** on August 24<sup>th</sup>. During the 2006 Housing and Rehabilitation Conference awards luncheon in Richmond, McConnell was presented with the Carl Rasnic Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is presented each year to someone who has dedicated his or her career to housing and housing rehabilitation and has made extraordinary contributions to the people he or she serves with a history of successfully implementing projects and contributing to the Virginia housing rehabilitation network.

DHCD Associate Director of Community Development Todd Christensen, who presented the awards, said McConnell, "literally moved a mountain and changed the course of a river" during his career. McConnell's lifetime work has included relocation and

rehabilitation of more than 200 homes and the implementation of numerous projects including the "If I had a Hammer" project which provided on-the-job training and education to local residents and which was replicated across the state. Additionally, McConnell was recognized for the Wise House project, the downtown Coeburn revitalization project, and his involvement in the Round the Mountain crafts initiative and the Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Music Trail. McConnell currently serves on the board of the **Virginia Housing Development Association (VHDA)** and is leading the rehabilitation of the town of Derby.

"It overwhelmed me to receive this award," said McConnell. "It is an honor to be recognized among this group—this family—of folks involved in housing rehabilitation, who are working to learn together and help each other help those less fortunate to have safe and comfortable homes."



## Upcoming VAHCDO Sponsored Training

A Tax Credit Compliance training workshop and certification exam is scheduled for March 20-21, 2007, and will be held in the Hampton Roads area. This two-day training presented by Quadel Consulting is designed for front-line staff and managers responsible for day-to-day and annual compliance with LIHTC program rules. The training will lead the site manager through compliance steps using a system of forms and monitoring tools covering all critical compliance areas, including applicant/tenant eligibility, income verification

and calculation, leasing, and re-certification. VAHCDO is sponsoring this two-day training for \$475 which includes the cost of the certification exam.

For further information contact Valerie Hill Neal or Carl V. Williamson at 757-928-2620 or [vneal@nnrha.org](mailto:vneal@nnrha.org).

### VAHCDO Review

Spring/Summer  
2007 Issue

Articles which spotlight innovative projects and programs undertaken by VAHCDO member agencies and their partners are wanted for future VAHCDO Review issues.

E-mail articles, photographs, and illustrations to Rick Hanson, VAHCDO VP for Public Affairs, [rhanson@james-city.va.us](mailto:rhanson@james-city.va.us). Please send photographs and other images separately as JPEG files, if possible.

Please submit materials for the Spring/Summer 2007 issue by March 15, 2007.