



VAHCDO REVIEW

REVIEW

SPRING/SUMMER 2006

NEW HOUSING OPTIONS HELP FAMILIES IMPROVE

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **VAHCDO Annual Conference and Scholarship Luncheon**
May 14-16, Virginia Beach
- **Housing Choice Voucher Calculation Certification Seminar** July 11-13, Norfolk

It's never easy to take the steps toward economic independence. So many factors play a part in a family's ability to succeed. Knowing this, the **Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA)** recently completed the development of 30 new, privately-owned, two- and three- bedroom town homes for low-income families seeking to improve their quality of life and standard of living.

Located at the Villages at Lincoln, the Stepping Stone town homes serve as the first entry into the private housing market for families who have achieved some economic independence and learned to rely on themselves. The limited partnership that operates the Stepping Stone town homes utilized low-interest permanent loans from **VHDA** and the **Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD)** for funding the gap between tax credit equity and total project cost of \$4.8 million. This project was part of the master plan of the **Lincoln 2000 Hope VI Project** initiated by RRHA in 1999 that revitalized the Villages at Lincoln public housing development and the surrounding Washington Park neighborhood. The Villages at Lincoln also include ten lease-purchase single family homes for aspiring homeowners.



Stepping Stone town homes are the next step after RRHA's public housing Family Self-Sufficiency Program at the Villages which links families to services available in the Roanoke Valley that can assist with education, job training, and supportive services. Stepping Stone town homes target renters earning 50% of the area median income level in the Roanoke Valley with six units reserved for families earning 40%. Rents range from \$435 to \$500 for two-bedroom units and \$500 to \$600 for three-bedroom units. Each town home has a covered front porch, rear patio, central air, carpet, hardwood floors, dishwasher, garbage disposal, range, frost-free refrigerator, and oak kitchen cabinets. Six town homes meet the special needs of families whose members have physical, auditory, or visual disabilities. Stepping Stone residents also have access to an Opportunity Center at the Villages with training programs, a daycare program, and meeting rooms, and a neighborhood central park facility.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In March I had the opportunity to attend NAHRO's 2006 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. The objective of this annual conference is to "tell our story" directly to our representatives in the House and Senate as they try to make decisions about allocating funds in the next year's federal budget. NAHRO prepared us well with facts and figures, percentages and graphs; but our individual jobs, as representatives of our local communities, was to put a human face on the impact of **proposals to drastically reduce funding** for the safety net of programs that we administer in our localities.

As I write this it is still undecided how funding for our housing and community development efforts will fair. But it is clear that the funding "pie" is limited in size and we don't have a very strong base of support in DC to help us get a bigger slice. Certainly we need to advocate for adequate funding for our constituents, but we also need to prepare ourselves to **reduce our reliance on federal subsidies** and take advantage of every other resource that might be available to us. VAHCDO is identifying a number of possibilities and will be providing sessions at the Annual Conference in May about how to **tap into alternative funding sources**. This edition of VAHCDO Review focuses on creative partnerships and the use of alternative funding resources by VAHCDO member agencies across the Commonwealth.

HUD's new public housing project-based **asset management model** is becoming more of a reality everyday. The final rule is published but minimal guidance has been forthcoming. Right now we mainly have questions...how to reconfigure our units into "asset management projects"?...which operations to project-base and which ones to centralize?...how to assign staff under this new system?...how to support the new

"central office cost center"?...can we get all the systems in place before the October 2006 deadline to stop our losses at 5 percent?...there are dozens more. VAHCDO will bring **asset managers from both the public and private markets** to discuss successful asset management, as well as industry representatives to help guide us through this transition process.

Limiting the power of **eminent domain** has been an increasingly hot topic since the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the case of *Kelo v. New London, Ct.* This issue was a major focus at VAHCDO's own Legal Seminar in December 2005. During the 2006 Virginia Legislative Session scores of bills were introduced in both the Virginia House and Senate to address the issue of eminent domain. Thanks to the significant efforts of RHAs in Norfolk, Newport News, Richmond, and Roanoke, one of those bills, HB 699, reflected the best interests of Virginia RHAs. With the additional assistance of Maureen Stinger, VAHCDO's Legislative Liaison, this bill was shepherded through the difficult legislative process and voted into law by the Virginia Legislature. Title 36 of the Code of Virginia, the so-called "Housing Authorities Law", now has a number of changes that affect how we do our redevelopment activities but still **preserves eminent domain as a vital tool** in these efforts.

Your VAHCDO Board members strive to bring you workshops and specialized training that meet your agency's needs, to advocate for our members interests at the state and federal level, and to bring Virginia agencies together to teach and learn from one another. Please let us know how we are doing and what suggestions you might have to improve our service to the membership.



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2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Eminent Domain Debated

Limiting the use of eminent domain has been a hot topic since the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the case of *Kelo v. New London, CT*. In *Kelo*, the Court ruled that the Constitution does not prohibit state legislation that specifically authorizes the use of eminent domain to promote economic development

Virginia's statutes, unlike Connecticut's, do not authorize the use of eminent domain for purely economic reasons, and Virginia courts have repeatedly ruled that local governments may not use eminent domain for purely economic reasons. Nevertheless, because of the public outcry caused by *Kelo*, legislators introduced scores of bills during the 2006 legislative session attempting to restrict local governments' use of eminent domain. Senate and House conferees on two major condemnation bills, HB94 (Suit) and SB395 (Stolle), were unable to reach an agreement and; thus, made no significant changes to local governments' use of eminent domain this year. The House conferees insisted on drastic restrictions on local government powers. The Senate conferees believed the proposed restrictions were too severe and would negatively affect the legitimate exercise of condemnation authority. The Senate and House Courts of Justices committees may create a joint subcommittee to study the issue of eminent domain and recommend a solution for the 2007 session of the General Assembly. The Housing Study Commission is another potential venue. Therefore, even though there is no major rewriting of the laws of eminent domain this year, the issue remains very much alive.

Revised Housing Authorities Law Enacted

In light of the eminent domain debate, Delegate Terrie Suit, chair of the Virginia Housing Commission, recognized the need to address Title 36, the "Housing Authorities Law." Thanks to the cooperative efforts of Delegate Suit, the RHAs in Norfolk, Newport News, Richmond, and Roanoke; VAHCDO's Legislative Liaison, Maureen Stinger; and attorney John "Chip" Dicks, HB699 was crafted, revised, debated, and amended to be as favorable to RHAs as possible. VAHCDO endorsed HB699, believing it best reflected the interests of Virginia RHAs and instructed Ms. Stinger to promote its passage. HB699 was shepherded through the difficult legislative process and voted into law by both Houses. Although the bill makes a number of changes that affect RHAs' activities, it preserves eminent domain as a vital tool for redevelopment.

Chip Dicks will present a summary of Title 36 changes at the VAHCDO Annual Conference in Virginia Beach, May 14-16, 2006.

Housing Trust Fund Bill Carried Forward

The Virginia Housing Commission unanimously endorsed the creation of a Housing Trust Fund. Delegate Terrie Suit sponsored HB 92 and Senator Mary Whipple sponsored the corollary SB277 to provide two cents from the recordation tax to the Housing Trust Fund. The contribution would yield approximately \$30-50 million annually for affordable housing. The Fund would also provide a match to localities that established local funds. VAHCDO's Board joined with other housing industry associations in supporting the Statewide Housing Trust Fund proposal. Although ultimately carried over to the 2007 session, the concept was well received by a broad cross-section of legislators and holds promise for future consideration.



"Although the bill makes a number of changes that affect RHAs' activities, it preserves eminent domain as a vital tool for redevelopment."

UPCOMING VAHCDO SPONSORED TRAINING

The Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel in Norfolk is the site for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Rent Calculation Certification seminar scheduled for July 11–13, 2006.

This 3-day training presented by Nan McKay and Associates will cover topics including Overview of HUD 50058 Form, Annual Income, Earned Income Disallowance for Persons with Disabilities, Adjusted Income Calculation and Subsidy/Family Share Calculation and more. VAHCDO is sponsoring this 3-day seminar for \$625.00 per participant which includes the cost of the certification examination. For more information, contact Valerie Hill Neal or Carl V. Williamson at 757-928-2620 or

vneal@nnrha.org. Later this year VAHCDO is planning additional training seminars including:

- Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS)
- Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act/Fair Housing Seminar
- Interviewing and Fraud Control
- Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Financial Management
- Annual Legal Seminar

VAHCDO INITIATES STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORT

The VAHCDO Board has appointed Mike Hawkins, Immediate Past President, to chair a working group to develop a strategic plan for the organization. Other VAHCDO Board Members involved in the strategic planning working group include Senior Vice President, Brenda Willis, and Vice President for Public Affairs and Membership, Rick Hanson. During the next several months, the working group will be examining the critical issues, opportunities, and challenges facing VAHCDO and its member agencies. This process will include interviews, surveys, and discussions involving members to help evaluate VAHCDO's current relevance to its

member agencies and how to maintain and strengthen that relevance in the future.

Among the issues the working group anticipates focusing on will be: 1) VAHCDO's role in state housing policy formulation and legislative education initiatives, and 2) membership services, such as training and recruitment of new agency members (particularly in Northern Virginia). If you have comments or suggestions regarding the strategic planning effort, please contact Mike Hawkins at (804) 343-5654 or mike.hawkins@vhda.com.

2005-2007

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ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY HOUSING REPLACES BLIGHTED PROPERTY

The Chesapeake Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA) dedicated its newest affordable housing community, Oakdale Square, this Spring. CRHA bought the once-blighted, 87-unit, Madison Arms at public auction in March 2002 and has devoted over 3 years and \$6.5 million in financing to its demolition and replacement with 40 upgraded, affordable housing units intended for low- to moderate-income working families.

CRHA staff and the surrounding community are delighted with the rebirth of this property. The distinctive

Low Income Housing Tax Credit community is one of the first in Virginia to utilize environmentally-friendly “green build” practices. Buildings were designed incorporating 99% of the US Green Building Council’s high performance construction standards, including energy-efficient insulation, water-saving toilets, low VOC paints, right-sized HVAC equipment, upgraded windows, low-impact site design, and a green play area and playground equipment which allows for significant utility, maintenance, and operating cost savings.



GRANT SUPPORTS WORKFORCE HOUSING INITIATIVE

The **Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA)** has received a \$175,000 grant from **Capital One Financial** to fund a self sustaining Abandoned House Rehabilitation Program. This program was designed to supplement investments made under the Neighborhoods in Bloom initiative; address scattered vacant, blighted properties; and provide homeownership opportunities to Richmond’s community service workers.

The Abandoned House Rehabilitation Program is the first offered under the new Workforce Housing initiative. Properties developed under this Initiative will be marketed to police personnel, firefighters, teachers employed by the City of Richmond and other moderate household incomes.

“Capital One is proud to partner with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority as it plays a

critical role in revitalizing homes and preserving the historical significance of homes in the Richmond area,” said Adele Johnson, Community Relations Manager at Capital One. “Capital One is committed to helping community development organizations such as RRHA and local residents to not only rebuild the brick and mortar structures of local neighborhoods, but also to help revitalize the social and economic well being of the community.”

In its first year, RRHA will acquire two vacant, abandoned properties in the Jackson Ward Neighborhoods in Bloom area to be sold at cost to two families that agree to rehabilitate and occupy the structures. RRHA will retain all sale proceeds and use them to acquire and sell more vacant, abandoned properties that are suitable for rehabilitation. The revolving fund feature will enable the program to sustain itself from year to year.

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NORFOLK USES A DIFFERENT REDEVELOPMENT FORMULA

Recently, the Norfolk City Council approved an amendment to the city's General Plan as well as a rezoning for the East Beach Harbor Mixed Use Waterfront District. This action was intended to foster redevelopment of a 15-acre corridor south of Pretty Lake Avenue. This district is adjacent to the 100-acre East Ocean View Conservation and Redevelopment District, the site of East Beach a "traditional neighborhood development" where 700 upscale residences are currently being developed. Beginning in the 1980s, the **Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA)** acquired and demolished 1400 dwelling units in East Ocean View. In the summer of 2003, infrastructure construction began, and in 2004, residential construction started on the first homes in the East Beach community.

Dilapidated and abandoned buildings, a waterfront construction storage yard, a boat storage facility, industrial buildings and several marinas are located south of East Beach between Pretty Lake Avenue and the shoreline. City Councilman Randy Wright recognized that this area creates the first impression for visitors as they arrive by way of an elevated bridge over Pretty Lake. Concerned that the area creates a negative impression, he asked the NRHA to improve the area.

No money was allocated to acquire property or to invest in public improvements. Unlike East Beach where the land was acquired and assembled for redevelopment, this area would require the cooperation

of virtually all of the landowners to make significant improvements.

NRHA assembled all of the landowners and shared with them the vision of a well coordinated development plan in which each landowner could develop his/her own property in a manner and in a time frame that suited their business plans. If the group would unanimously agree to participate in a planning exercise that would identify design goals, objectives, and guidelines, NRHA would pay for the planning and facilitate the rezoning.

NRHA conducted a series of meetings with property owners to ascertain their visions of the potential development opportunities for their sites. It became clear that all envisioned a mixed use, residential-retail-restaurant development while maintaining their marina operations.

NRHA hired **Urban Design Associates (UDA)** to translate the verbal descriptions into graphic representations and to articulate design guidelines. The **City of Norfolk Planning Department** brought in its zoning experts to translate the graphics and guidelines into zoning regulations. The regulations were drafted, discussed, debated, and amended until there was consensus among the participants and finally adopted by the City Council. The new zoning entitles the property owners to build 4- to 6-story condominiums with the potential for the development of about 400 dwelling units with structured parking and several restaurants and some retail.

"NRHA conducted a series of meetings with property owners to ascertain their visions of the potential development opportunities for their sites."



East Beach Harbor Mixed Use Waterfront District Development Guidelines—Illustrative Drawing

SECOND GRANT ENABLES YOUTHBUILD PROJECT TO EXPAND

The **Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority** received its second \$400,000 grant from **HUD** in less than a year to perpetuate its YouthBuild program, which provides opportunities for at-risk young people to better their future in the field of construction.

Under this grant, young people age 16 to 24 will partner with **People Incorporated of Southwest Virginia** to rehabilitate three homes in the Bristol area and build a new home with the **Holston Habitat for Humanity**. Youth will also help BRHA construct four duplex units in the new Sapling Grove Development on Oakview Avenue in Bristol, Va.

Under the first grant allotment, youth have been rehabbing some of BRHA’s public housing units during the past

several months, as well renovating a single-family home for eventual sale to a low-income family.

Young people participating in YouthBuild spend six to twelve months working toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning construction skills. They divide their time between the construction site and the classroom and receive leadership training, counseling and graduate support.

“We were surprised and very pleased that this additional funding came through,” Executive Director Dave Baldwin said. “By combining the two grants, we expect to help as many as 40 young people find a way to improve their education and gain beneficial skills for future employment in the construction industry.”



“Youth divide their time between the construction site and the classroom.”

NEW HOMES DEVELOPED IN HISTORIC SUFFOLK CONSERVATION AREA

Located just south of downtown Suffolk, the Hall Place community, is a well-preserved, historic neighborhood, originally home to many of the City’s early industrialist and professionals. During the 1960’s and 70’s, the neighborhood went through a long period of decline and has experienced a gradual rebirth.

In an effort to help restore and preserve the neighborhood, a conservation plan was designed and approved. The plan emphasizes improvements to aging owner occupied homes, neglected rental properties, and poor edge conditions. The plan also provides for land reuses consistent with the City of Suffolk’s 2018 Comprehensive Plan, and coincides

with the objectives of the Hall Place Neighborhood civic league and other concerned citizens in the community.

In March, **Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority** in partnership with the **Southeastern Tidewater Opportunity Project Inc. (STOP)** broke ground for the construction of 4 single-family homes to be developed in this historic neighborhood. These moderately priced homes will be offered to first-time homebuyers who fall within the low to moderate-income category as defined by HUD. These buyers will be provided low interest mortgage financing from **VHDA’s SPARC** program and SRHA will also provide downpayment assistance utilizing **HOME** funds from **HUD**.



Groundbreaking ceremony for the Hall Place Development Project. Shown are SRHA Executive Director, Clarissa E. McAdoo, along with Mayor Bobby Ralph, SRHA Board of Commissioners, and members of the Suffolk City Council.

WACHOVIA AND RRHA LAUNCH FINANCIAL LITERACY PARTNERSHIP

The **Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA)** partnered with **Wachovia** to deliver the Money Smart and *eCommunitiesfirst* financial literacy curriculums. The free programs, delivered through classroom sessions, will educate and empower families in the Richmond community to become economically independent.

“We have always believed that partnership is powerful, and working with Wachovia will open so many doors for our residents,” said RRHA Executive Director Sheila Hill-Christian.”

“Wachovia is committed to improving the communities where we operate, and teaching community members how to manage their money is a key component of that commitment,” said Penny Johnson, Wachovia's Community Development Officer for Central and Eastern Virginia. “Financial literacy is essential to becoming financially independent and achieving the dream of home ownership, which in turn creates financial stability and even wealth.”

The FDIC's award-winning Money Smart curriculum will help adults

develop their money management skills, understand basic financial services, and build confidence about effectively using banking services. Wachovia was the first major bank to partner with the FDIC to deliver the curriculum in communities.

Wachovia created *eCommunitiesfirst* to encourage financial literacy in an ever-growing online marketplace. The curriculum consists of six lessons – in both English and Spanish – covering basic PC and Internet skills and the practical application of these skills. These one day sessions, will include topics such as:

- Preparing a personal budget
- Assessing the costs and benefits of consumer and home loans
- Basics of borrowing
- How to save effectively
- Consumer rights
- Keeping track of one's money
- How credit histories affect one's credit future
- How to use a PC
- How to navigate the Internet



“The free programs . . . educate and empower families in the Richmond community to become economically independent.”

WHO'S WHO IN HAMPTON'S PUBLIC HOUSING

Ramon Kearney, a 13-year-old Lincoln Park resident, has been appointed as the youngest member of the Board of Directors for the Community Builders Network (CBN) of Virginia. He serves as the unit representative for the District 5 of the Community Builders Network. He has been installed as the youngest president of the Hampton/Newport News Chapter of the Community Builders Network.

Ramon is an eighth grade honor student at Lindsay Middle School where he volunteers as a peer counselor for youth with family members deployed overseas in the military. He has participated in legislative conferences representing 4-H, CBN and Youthink in recent months. Additionally, Ramon is a member of an award-winning robotics team that came in second place in a state wide 4-H contest last year.



Ramon Kearny congratulated by Virginia House Delegate Mamie Bacote

RESTORING AN HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD



An extreme make-over is under way in Roanoke's historic Old Southwest neighborhood. What had been a run-down assortment of older homes is now being transformed into a showcase that combines original architecture with modern amenities.

A total of 17 turn-of-the-century houses on the 400 block of Day Avenue, once known as Miller's Hill, are being renovated by the **Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA)** and the **City of Roanoke**. These stately, three- and four-bedroom homes will be sold on the market for between \$250,000 and \$300,000, offering unique and convenient housing near downtown Roanoke. The first one, at 433 Day Avenue, has been completed.

"The restoration of these beautiful homes is more than just cosmetic," said Ben Fink, chairman of the RRHA Board of Commissioners. "We are transforming an entire city block as both a tribute to the past and as a vision to the future."

Each of the 17 houses in the \$6.38 million restoration project will be returned to their status as owner-occupied, single-

family homes. Once divided into 70 apartments, these homes, built in 1908, are being carefully restored to preserve their historic integrity and architectural authenticity. The restored homes will have modern, energy-efficient components and fixtures installed, all while using building materials that complement the original construction of the homes.

"We believe the restoration will create a unique living environment to attract new home buyers or first-time buyers into the city," said Roanoke Mayor C. Nelson Harris. "A vibrant city needs high-quality housing for families, and this project bridges some of the most historically significant homes in Roanoke with the increasing desire to live in or near downtown."

RRHA and the City of Roanoke are partnering with a number of companies to design, construct, finance, and market the properties, including **Hill Studio Architects, Breakell, Inc., general contractors; MKB Realtors, Virginia Housing Development Authority** and three banks – **FNB Salem Bank and Trust, BB&T, and First Citizens Bank.**



"We are transforming an entire city block as both a tribute to the past and as a vision to the future."



A DREAM COME TRUE

The **Norton Redevelopment & Housing Authority (NRHA)** is a small Authority within the City of Norton nestled in the foothills of the coalfields of Southwest Virginia. With only 218 units of Public Housing and 110 Housing Choice Vouchers, NRHA serves the needs of low to moderate residents.

In the mid-1990s, NRHA began to dream of adding porches to some of its developments, mainly Ramsey-Southside and Pine Hill. When the Capital Fund started in 1999, NRHA initiated its dream within its 5-year plan. Happily, as of today, all of the buildings within the Ramsey-Southside Development have porches, and NRHA has accepted bids on the last 11 units within the Pine Hill Development. The tenants are very well pleased with the outcome and NRHA.



**VAHCDO Review
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Articles of interest to VAHCDO members are welcome. When emailing, provide articles as Word attachments, if possible. Photographs should be submitted separately as JPEG or TIFF files.

Send contributions to Rick Hanson, VP for Public Affairs/ Membership, rhanson@james-city.va.us.

Deadline for submissions is September 15, 2006.

ROANOKE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY CHIEF TO RETIRE IN MAY 2006

John Baker, executive director of the **Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority** for the past nine years will retire in May.

During his tenure, Baker has seen a national shift in housing authorities toward making public housing one piece of helping the poor to self-sufficiency.

Locally, he's overseen three major and diverse projects: a \$16 million rehabilitation of the Lincoln Terrace housing development, now called Villages at Lincoln; the purchase of land and relocation of businesses from the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area, site of the planned biomedical business park near Victory Stadium; the development of Eight Jefferson Place, in which the old N&W General Office building was converted to unique, market-rate apartments, and the Miller's Hill/Day Avenue project, the restoration of an entire block of historic homes in the heart of Roanoke.

The Indiana native and his wife plan to stay in Roanoke and just take it easy. Before coming to Roanoke, Baker worked for the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority for 30 years. He also spent three years in the Navy.

For his part, Baker said what he's most proud of is something less visible than major building projects – it's the collaboration among many human service agencies in Roanoke for the benefit of their clients. "It's happened before, but not with the coordination that happens these days," he said. "We were the catalyst for that."

"John is well-recognized for his understanding of all sides of an issue, his compassion for helping people become self-sufficient, and his persistence in completing projects," said RRHA Board of Commissioners Chairman Ben Fink.

