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SPARC Funds Support Norfolk Community Revitalization

Norfolk's Park Place neighborhood is an excellent example of how collaboration can dramatically impact community revitalization.

Metro Housing Group, a private for-profit developer, successfully partnered with the City of Norfolk, the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) and VHDA to make quality, affordable housing a reality in the city's Park Place neighborhood. The result is a combination of historic restoration and conversion of existing rental properties into condominiums that make today's Park Place a much sought after mixed-income community.

VHDA set aside \$6 million of SPARC (Sponsoring Partnerships And



Before

Revitalizing Communities) resources to support the community revitalization efforts of the Metro Housing Group.

Available to eligible first-time homebuyers, SPARC funds carry an interest rate that is 1/2 to 1 percent below VHDA's prevailing first-time homebuyer rates. VHDA's SPARC mortgage money, coupled with the City of Norfolk's local real estate tax abatement program and down payment/closing costs assistance available through NRHA, provides a wonderful opportunity for first-time buyers to purchase an affordable home in a transformed community. ■

— Toni Ostrowski

REACH Virginia Partners in Projects and Policy Initiatives with Significant Impact on Northern Virginia Communities

In *Old Town Alexandria*, the REACH Virginia team is playing an important role in facilitating and financing the development of Beasley Square, an 8-unit senior's facility located on church-donated land.

This true development partnership, involving Shiloh Baptist Church of Alexandria, Harambee Inc. (a 501 c non-profit formed out of Shiloh Baptist to do the development) and VHDA, was celebrated with a September 29 groundbreaking. When complete, this long awaited faith-based project will predominately serve low-income African American seniors who otherwise might have been forced to leave the city due to the high cost of housing.

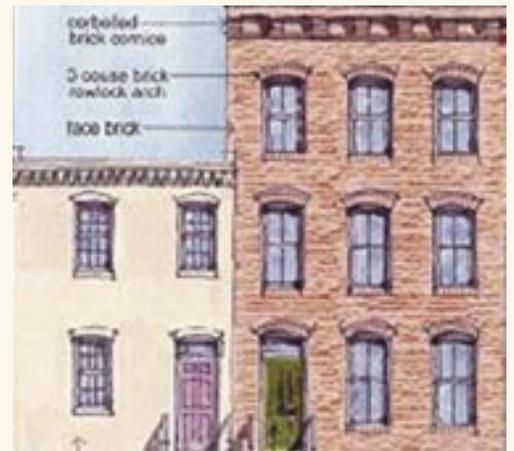
In addition, REACH Virginia is a working partner on the City of Alexandria's Affordable Housing Task Force. The task force is analyzing both current and future needs for affordable workforce housing in the city, and plans to make recommendations for approaches, initiatives and financing to Alexandria's City Council in early

2008. VHDA and REACH Virginia have been, and will continue to be, a major source of financial support in the significant effort being made by the city to preserve current units as well as develop new ones.

In *Fairfax County*, the Board of Supervisors is considering a new workforce housing approach recommended by the board-appointed High Rise Committee that includes REACH Virginia representation.

The High Rise Committee is part of an effort to ensure that affordable workforce housing is included in high-rise and high-density projects proposed in designated Development Centers located within the county. Often part of new mass transit facilities, these high-density development areas will be in high-rise buildings where, due to high costs, it is very difficult to provide workforce housing without significant public subsidy.

Fairfax County's approach is to require that 12 percent of the units be available to three tiers of income,



Artist rendering of Old Town Alexandria's Beasley Square project.

ranging from 80 to 120 percent of area median income for ownership units and up to 100 percent for rental properties. Developers will receive density increases compatible with development type. An additional recommendation is a "tool box" of other developer incentives.

In *Fauquier County*, the REACH Virginia team is actively providing assistance to a county Housing Task Force working to develop housing opportunities strategies, especially in the area of first-time homeownership. With VHDA's recent allocation of SPARC homeownership funds for new program introductions, the first phase of strategy development is underway. ■

— Mike Scheurer

Housing Virginia Named Conference Partner

Housing Virginia, a non-profit organization representing a collaboration of housing organizations that want to educate Virginians about the benefits of affordable communities, has been named as one of four partners in the production of the annual Governor's Housing Conference.

14-16 in Roanoke, Housing Virginia will join VHDA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in this important endeavor.

Housing Virginia believes housing that is affordable to people at all income levels is the basic building block for individual

growth, community revitalization and economic development. The organization represents REALTORS®, lenders, homebuilders and developers, nonprofits and state and local governments in seeking to dispel misperceptions about affordable housing. ■

— Christine Lowrie

Beginning with the 2007 event, which will be held November

Innovative VIDA PLUS Savings Program is Designed to Increase Homeownership Opportunities

As part of our efforts to promote homeownership opportunities for low-income Virginians, VHDA committed \$997,500 in REACH *Virginia* funds to match a federal Assets for Independence (AFI) grant awarded to a coalition of state agencies dedicated to increasing homeownership opportunities for Virginians.

The program, known as VIDA PLUS, was born in 2006 when the Office of Community Service in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$997,500 to VHDA, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the Virginia Community Action Partnership.

The goal of VIDA PLUS is to help 425 low-income families/individuals build assets through a special savings program by using part or all of their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) refund. During the program's five-year term, VIDA PLUS enables

participants to triple their money and become eligible to purchase a home. The target population are those with an income below 200 percent of the poverty level, including emerging market households.

As of mid-September, the program had 58 enrolled with 25 additional applications in the review process, for a total of 83 potential program participants. In addition, VIDA PLUS has doubled the number of participating banks and credit unions around the Commonwealth, from the initial 22 to 44, and now covers 70 percent of the Commonwealth.

Significant benefits for VIDA PLUS participants include the opportunity to acquire the knowledge to make rational personal financial plans and decisions from both mid-term and long-term perspectives.

They also acquire skills as a direct result of financial literacy courses that educate participants about tax credits, such as Earned Income Tax



Credit, and assists participants in filing their returns.

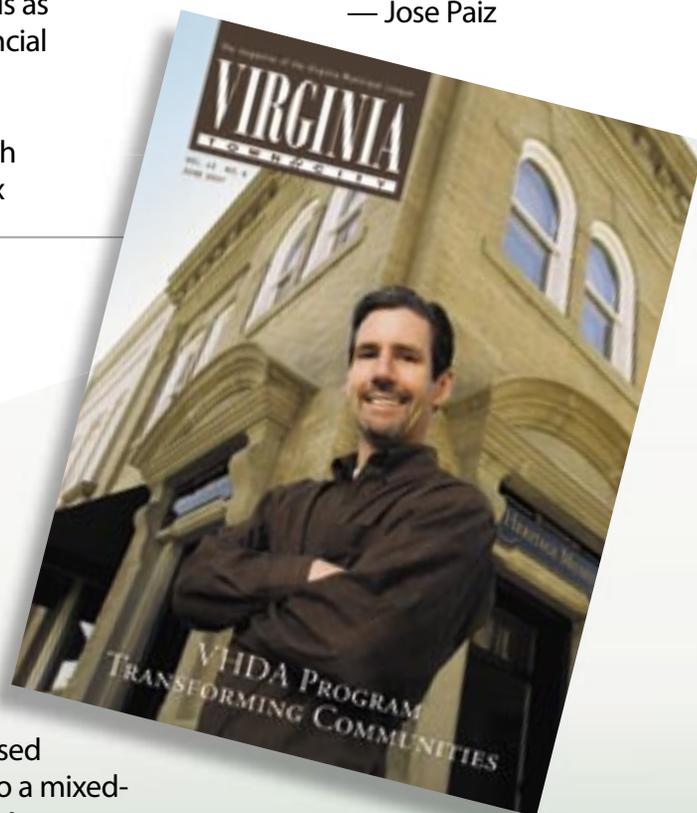
VHDA has played a significant role in supporting VIDA PLUS by:

- Establishing 888-VIDA-WIN, a toll free line manned by VHDA's bilingual Contact Center staff.
- Promoting the use of Earned Income Tax Credit refunds to fund accounts.
- Assisting the DHCD and VDSS in developing recruitment tools and informational brochures in both English and Spanish.
- Facilitating linkages, through REACH *Virginia* outreach, to organizations that promote homeownership and serve low-income families. ■

— Jose Paiz

REACH *Virginia* Featured in *Virginia Town & City Magazine*

REACH *Virginia* was recently recognized by the Virginia Municipal League in their *Virginia Town & City* magazine. The impact of the REACH *Virginia* initiative, which finances mixed-use and mixed-income projects, as well as first-time homeownership programs, is now visible in such diverse communities as Alexandria, Chesapeake, Floyd, Petersburg, Roanoke and Waynesboro. The Waynesboro project, the focus of the magazine's July issue, used REACH *Virginia* funds to transform a former bank building into a mixed-use/mixed-income property, with the Waynesboro Heritage Museum on the first floor and six rental apartments upstairs. ■ — Mike Hawkins



Read the article at vhda.com/reachnews.

Former Elementary School Will Soon be Loft Apartments

The former Thomas Jefferson Elementary school, located in downtown Suffolk beside the city's newly constructed Cultural Arts Center, is on its way to becoming attractive loft apartments overlooking historic Clay Street.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to restore this historic landmark into a vibrant living environment," said Mickey Garcia, president of Garcia Development LLC and the developer of the 16,000 square foot project. MEB General Contractors is also involved in the building's renovation.



renovating the former principal's office into an office space that will also be available to lease.

construction financing. In addition, because Garcia is maintaining the historic integrity of the building, he



There will be a total of 16 apartments with 20 percent of those units reserved for households making 150 percent or less of area median income; the remaining 80 percent of the units are non-income restricted. In addition, plans call for

Initial outreach to Garcia by the REACH Virginia team led to his decision to apply for permanent financing under VHDA's mixed-use/mixed-income financing program. Monarch Bank is providing the

is also receiving historic tax credits. Construction on this wonderful adaptive re-use project is scheduled to be complete in December 2007. ■

— Costa Canavos

Jackson Ward's Renewal Continues at 516 Second Street

Today, only a brick façade exists at 516 N. Second Street in Richmond's historic Jackson Ward. But soon that façade will be transformed into a mixed-use/mixed-income property that preserves the fabric of this significant downtown neighborhood, while providing affordable workforce housing and increasing commercial presence.

"Walker Row has a mission to revitalize Jackson Ward and recreate the vibrant neighborhood that was once there. This project at 516 Second Street is a continuation of the area's new urbanism

effort," said Ron Stallings, owner of Walker Row Partnership and the project's developer. Stallings has been credited by some in the community as the single largest contributor to the ongoing renovation of Jackson Ward.

The project includes 12 rental units on the upper stories, with six units reserved for households making 50 percent or less of area median income. The other six units will rent to households making 150 percent or less of area median income. An Asian-inspired coffee bistro, that was Stallings idea, will fill the

commercial space on the first floor. "I love a good cup of coffee," Stallings explained. "But there isn't good coffee around here." He added that he believes the open-air floor plan of the bistro will provide a much needed relaxation spot that will attract local business professionals and area residents.

Located across the street from the Department of Housing and Community Development, the project is scheduled to be completed by Fall of 2008. ■

— Monique Johnson & Ndidia Ugwu

Wealth Starts @ Home College Tour Enters its Second Year

Last fall, in an effort to increase emerging market homeownership opportunities, VHDA's REACH *Virginia* team initiated a partnership with Virginia's historically black colleges and universities. The result of this partnership is a tour designed to educate young African Americans, and others, about homeownership and its role in building wealth.

The tour, which initially focused on historically black colleges and universities, has been expanded for 2007 to include Virginia Commonwealth University, Christopher Newport University, Tidewater Community College and Old Dominion University. In addition, VHDA has contracted with Titanium

Productions, a SWAM (Small, Women And Minority) vendor to coordinate the tour's campus events.

"Not only is homeownership the principal ingredient of the American dream, for most African Americans homeownership is their first step towards accumulating wealth," explained Monica Jefferson, VHDA Community Housing Officer.

"Our *Wealth Starts @ Home* college tour is the center of a new outreach and education program we hope will encourage students to look beyond just earning money and



The Wealth Starts @ Home team, from left to right: Michelle Larkin of Titanium Productions, Event Coordinator; Shawn Washington, VHDA Community Outreach Program Coordinator; Gerard Jameson, VHDA Intern; Monica Jefferson, Community Housing Officer; and LeJacques Parks of Titanium Productions, Event Coordinator.

help them create a personal action plan for building lifetime wealth."

For a schedule of tour dates, visit vhda.com/reach and click on Outreach & Liaison. Or contact Monica Jefferson at 804-343-5736. ■

HUD Mixed-Income Housing Training Workshops Cover a Lot of Territory Over Two Days

The importance of comprehensive revitalization, innovative planning and mixed-income housing development approaches, specific rules and financing requirements for mixed-income housing, and lessons learned from successful mixed-income developments were among the important topics covered by recent HUD training workshops co-hosted by VHDA and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Some 55 individuals from state and local agencies, as well as various non-profit organizations, attended the two-day course that included workshops on Mixed-Income, the HOME program and HOME and Neighborhoods training. Participants explored how housing development strategies can spur neighborhood revitalization, as well as how mixed-income housing—developed using public and private financing—can be integrated into those neighborhood strategies. The training also provided an opportunity to discuss the role of VHDA



Workshop participants explore how housing development strategies spur neighborhood revitalization.

programs in leveraging HOME funds in support of neighborhood revitalization and mixed-income housing opportunities. The workshop sessions were taught by ICF International trainer Bonnie Lester. Synergistic relationships with HUD and DHCD enable VHDA to develop and support training workshops that create capacity building opportunities for VHDA stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth. Working with Leroy Brown of HUD's Richmond Field Office, VHDA's REACH *Virginia* team anticipates hosting additional, as well as more advanced, courses throughout the year. ■

— Shawn Washington

2007 Virginia Seniors Housing Symposium Serves as Forum for Best Practices Discussion

On September 19, more than 50 providers of services to the elderly and other interested individuals gathered at VHDA for the 2007 Virginia Seniors Housing Symposium—“Affordable Housing PLUS SERVICES – Some Best Practices.” Joining VHDA as event co-sponsors were the Virginia Department for the Aging and the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Dr. Bill Fuller, a Senior Community Housing Officer with VHDA’s REACH Virginia team, opened the session with an overview of the State of Housing and Services. Dr. Fuller was followed by the keynote speaker, Dr. A. Ray Pentecost III, AIA, ACHA, who is a Vice President and Director of Healthcare Architecture for Clark Nexsen, an architecture and engineering firm headquartered in Norfolk. Dr. Pentecost shared his insights on how incorporating Universal Design features into seniors housing and other buildings can greatly improve the quality of life for the users of such structures. He also startled the audience with statistics on the high rate of healthcare illiteracy among older adults when it comes to understanding medication and medical instructions.

Following Dr. Pentecost’s keynote address, several panelists presented information on a variety of other important topics related to putting housing and services together for Virginia seniors, including:

- Bay Aging’s integrated housing, services and transportation model serving the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula
- an award-winning ElderSpirit co-housing community located in Abingdon
- the Senior Outreach to Services (S.O.S.) model case management program serving seniors living in Peninsula-area assisted housing
- Fairfax County’s Cluster Care program that enlists volunteers to cost-effectively provide needed services
- the Hampton-Newport News CSB’s perceptions of the overlapping missions of agencies on aging and community services boards when it comes to the mental health of an aging population

“Thanks for putting housing and services together.” “Interesting that VHDA is so successful in bringing together varying service providers.” and “Let’s do more!” were a few of the comments shared by symposium attendees. ■



Kathy Vesley-Massey, Chief Operating Officer for Bay Aging, shares her insights with symposium attendees on how her organization has broken down silos to blend aging services with public transit, single and multifamily housing repair, rehabilitation and new construction to provide a “continuum of care” for older adults.

Getting the Word Out About Mixed-use/Mixed-income Financing

Below is the latest in a series of ads running in the Virginia Municipal League’s Virginia Town & City magazine. The ads raise awareness of funding that encourage revitalization in communities across Virginia.

The advertisement features a butterfly graphic in the top right corner. On the left, a small inset photo labeled 'Before' shows a cluttered, dilapidated interior space. On the right, a larger photo labeled 'After' shows a bright, modern living room with a white sofa, a coffee table, and a woman sitting on the sofa. The text 'Start a metamorphosis of your own.' is written in a cursive font. Below the photos, there is a yellow banner with the text 'After - The Lofts on Church Avenue, Roanoke, Virginia'. At the bottom, there is a white box with text about transforming blight into neighborhoods bright with promise, contact information for Costa Canavos, and the VHDA logo.

Start a *metamorphosis* of your own.

After - The Lofts on Church Avenue, Roanoke, Virginia

Transform blight into neighborhoods bright with promise. Join the growing number of Virginia communities using VHDA resources to seize opportunities for true revitalization. With our financing expertise and go-the-extra-mile flexibility, your plans for building a brighter future can begin to take flight.

To learn how VHDA financing can help you transform blight into neighborhoods bright with promise, call Community Housing Officer Costa Canavos at 804-343-5735 or email costa.canavos@vhda.com.

 Virginia Housing Development Authority | 877-VHDA-123 | vhda.com

Former Skating Rink Undergoing Transformation into Apartments for Permanent Supportive Housing

A former skating rink on a commercial corridor is getting a second chance as Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH) works to convert it into the Cloverleaf Apartments. When the transformation is complete, these efficiency apartments will provide permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless—defined as an individual who has experienced four episodes of homelessness in the past three years or someone who has been continually homeless for one year.

This 60-unit single room occupancy (SRO) complex is only the second regional SRO in the nation to be approved by HUD. It will follow the model of Gosnold Apartments in Norfolk, which was also developed by VSH. The localities involved in the project include Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Norfolk.

“Cloverleaf Apartments will not only address the critical need for permanent supportive housing in South Hampton Roads, but will

also serve as a model for regional cooperation that can be replicated in other areas of Virginia,” said Chris Hilbert, VHDA’s Senior Community Housing Officer.

This project was awarded Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) by VHDA in June 2007. The use of EarthCraft “green” building standards helped the project receive the highest point total in the Non-profit Developer Pool and the third highest ranking among this year’s applicants.

In addition to VHDA’s \$905,000 SPARC Multifamily loan, the LIHTC equity syndicator, National Equity Fund, will provide over \$3.6 million in capital. Other funding sources for this \$7.2 million project include \$500,000 from Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development’s Commonwealth Priority Housing Fund and various

grants from the localities involved, as well as funds from foundations.

“VHDA’s flexibility made the numbers work,” said Candice Streett, VSH Deputy Director of Housing. “As a result, 60 formerly homeless single adults will soon have an affordable apartment with supportive services to help them improve their lives.” ■

Before



After



Dunn Lorryng Court—Supported Placement Housing Financed by VHDA

What happens when disabilities threaten our independence and require us to rely on others for help with the ordinary routines of life? One answer, as America moves from institutional to community-based care, is supported placement housing. Supported placement housing, the newest model funded by VHDA, is a unique housing and service combination that grew out of specialized foster care waiver programs.

“VHDA designs very broad, flexible programs so we can adapt easily to encompass new ways of thinking about

housing,” said Senior Community Housing Officer Dr. Bill Fuller. “Supported, or sponsored, placement grew out of VHDA asking, ‘Why can’t we use waivers to ...?’”

Waivers, designed to allow service to follow the person as they leave the institution and move to the community, fund many of the services for people in state institutions. Those same waivers have been used to help people leave group homes and move into homes where they become members of the family. Licensed programs, such as Supportive Services of

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Virginia (SSV), support the families; VHDA's flexible mortgage loans help homeowners provide the housing.

"Supported placement housing is just one of many alternative living placements that are emerging for people who traditionally have spent their adult lives in state institutions. VHDA is playing an important role by making these alternatives affordable and accessible," said Dr. Fuller. "The housing models for people with disabilities are becoming more diverse than ever, and VHDA is fully engaged in the Olmstead implementation efforts now being addressed by over 25 agencies under four Secretariats."

In July 2007, VHDA financed its first supported placement home, Dunn Loring Court, through the Cabrera family. The Caberras received a \$295,000 loan to purchase a new home and add universally designed features. In addition, the Caberras receive

a monthly waiver stipend to provide services for John and Peter (not their real names) that include:

- room and board
- 24 hour supervision and training
- transportation to and from medical appointments
- training and assistance with daily living skills

John and Peter moved in with the Cabrera family in their home on Dunn Loring Court from a group home operated by SSV. For John and Peter, who hadn't done well living in a group home setting where individual attention can be scarce, supported placement housing in a small family setting was the right answer.

Funding this type of special needs housing is one way VHDA increases affordable housing opportunities for people with disabilities and the frail elderly. This program provides funding for housing that falls outside the typical home loan parameters. ■

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