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Architects' rendering of Potomac Yards mixed-use project

## Potomac Yards Catalyst for Change as REACH Virginia Increases Involvement in Northern Virginia

Potomac Yards, an innovative mixed-use project getting underway in the City of Alexandria, is one of the latest efforts by VHDA's REACH Virginia team to serve as a catalyst for the development of affordable workforce housing in Northern Virginia.

A mixed-income new construction rental development, Potomac Yards

will consist of 44 affordable apartment units and 20 market-rate units built over a new fire station. This development is part of the overall Potomac Yards project being developed on a former railroad yard and, when complete, will include more than two million square feet of commercial/retail space and approximately 1,600 residential units.

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## Downtown Petersburg's High Street Lofts – A Blend of Business and Affordable Homeownership

"High Street Lofts, located only a few blocks from downtown Petersburg, provides VHDA with an excellent opportunity to finance a great homeownership project that will help local revitalization efforts," said Community Housing Officer Costa Canavos, who represents VHDA's

outreach to local governments. Canavos explained the three-phase project involves turning the old Seward Luggage building, located in one of the city's historic districts, into one- and two-bedroom condominiums as well as street-level commercial spaces.

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REACH *Virginia* is also significantly involved in providing both technical and financial assistance for proposed housing developments that include Beasley Square (also located in the City of Alexandria), the Windy Hill Foundation in Middleburg and Linton Hall in Prince William County. In addition REACH *Virginia* continues its close association with other Northern Virginia private and non-profit housing advocates that want to provide affordable workforce housing in the region. Recently this partnership resulted in VHDA financing housing units owned by Reston Interfaith and Good Shepherd Housing, both located in Fairfax County.

Another way REACH *Virginia* helps plan for – and implement – affordable housing initiatives

in this high-cost region of the Commonwealth is through strong partnerships with local jurisdictions. REACH *Virginia* team members actively participate on the City of Alexandria Housing Task Force, Arlington Housing Cooperative Study Group, Fairfax County Housing Advisory Committee, Loudoun County Housing Advisory Committee, Fauquier County Housing Task Force and Fairfax County High Rise Task Force.

Team members are also part of the Homelessness Implementation Task Forces for both Prince William and Fairfax Counties, and enthusiastically work with the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association to assist the homeless through HomeAid of Northern Virginia.

Other Northern Virginia activities include VHDA's sponsorship and participation in an Affordable Housing Week promotion held recently in cooperation with the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance.

The week long series of events, recognized and promoted by all Northern Virginia jurisdictions, included the introduction of a new video featuring VHDA Executive Director Susan Dewey and other housing partners. Currently being viewed throughout the region, the video links the importance of affordable workforce housing to the continued economic strength of Northern Virginia. ■

— Mike Scheurer

### **High Street Lofts** – from Page 1

The developer, Miller and Associates of Richmond, who has completed Phase I, approached VHDA for construction financing for Phases II and III. Phase II started this spring. "The original design of the mixed-use and mixed-income homeownership pilot model requires 20 percent of the residential units be sold to borrowers who qualify for financing under VHDA's First-time Homebuyer program sales price and income limit restrictions. The remaining 80 percent of the units will not be subject to sales price and income limits," Canavos said. "VHDA is providing the short-term construction financing for the development with the assumption



*Construction of Phase II of High Street Lofts, located in downtown Petersburg, is now underway.*

that purchasers of the affordable units may utilize VHDA financing." Combining programs such as VHDA's Conventional 103 and FHA Plus mortgages with Round 6 SPARC (Sponsoring Partnerships and Revitalizing Communities) funding, will enable the developer

to offer VHDA financing for the affordable units. In addition, VHDA's Flexible Alternative loans will provide affordable options for repeat homebuyers or for those households whose incomes exceed VHDA First-time Homebuyer limits.

"We're very excited about this project for several reasons," Canavos said. "First, it's an exciting opportunity to help with revitalization efforts in downtown Petersburg plus adapt to market demands and the needs of local jurisdictions. Second, it gives VHDA the ability not only to offer affordable rental housing in a mixed-use setting, but also to provide a vehicle for affordable for-sale units in that same setting," he added. ■

## VHDA Recognizes Role of Faith- and Community-based Organizations in Sustaining Communities



*Home renovate by Faith Temple CDC and purchased by a first-time homebuyer with VHDA financing.*

The heart and soul of America is revealed every day in the work of faith- and community-based organizations. VHDA recognizes and encourages the vital role these organizations play in

strengthening neighborhoods and improving the lives of people they touch. That's why VHDA's REACH *Virginia* team is partnering with several organizations in Fredericksburg, Yorktown, Richmond and Hampton that have purchased land within their community to help tackle the challenges of affordable housing development.

In Hampton, Faith Temple Community Development Corporation (CDC) began providing affordable housing in their community when it purchased a house, renovated it and then sold it to a first-time homebuyer who received

VHDA financing. The goal of the CDC, born from the vision of Bishop John C. Fuller, Senior Pastor of the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ, is to develop affordable housing that revitalizes economically distressed neighborhoods in the City of Hampton. Bishop Fuller and many others within the church envision an organization to support and extend Faith Temple programs that serve community needs, particularly those associated with family and community development. Faith Temple's current plans include a 21-unit single family mixed-income housing development, which might include several units for seniors. ■

— *Monica Jefferson*

## Bruce DeSimone Fills Critical 'Seniors Outreach' Liaison Position

As Virginians age in place there is an increasing challenge to provide supportive services blended with housing "sticks and bricks." The need for affordable and appropriate housing for seniors, and especially the frail elderly, was recognized by VHDA when the REACH *Virginia* team created its Outreach to Senior Citizens liaison position and in December 2006, hired Bruce DeSimone to fill it.

DeSimone joined a team of other dedicated professionals who are making housing and community development happen for Virginia's traditionally underserved stakeholders. DeSimone comes to VHDA with a background of more than 25 years of Virginia single and multifamily housing experience, about 15 of which were with an area agency on aging.

According to DeSimone, one outreach and liaison highlight for this year is a Seniors Housing Best Practices Symposium. Scheduled to be held at VHDA's Richmond headquarters on September

19, the symposium is co-sponsored by the Virginia Department for the Aging and the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Representatives from the 25 state area agencies on aging, as well as other aging organizations, are expected to join housing providers and share information about successful supportive housing models that could be duplicated elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

Outreach activities to senior citizens in 2007 also include extensive meetings with public, non-profit and for profit seniors housing and service providers around Virginia to assess regional needs, and determine if some VHDA resources should be modified to help address them.

In addition, DeSimone is working with both novice and experienced seniors housing developers to create feasible projects that could make use of either conventional or subsidized VHDA financing. ■

## Village Square Will Help Bring Revitalization to the Town of Floyd

Floyd, often described as a “little mountain artist community,” is not your traditional Southwest Virginia town. Recognized in *USA Today* as a community on Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail, Floyd is part of a national revitalization trend that encourages small towns to stay vibrant by playing on their cultural and environmental strengths. In Floyd, that puts the focus on nurturing local arts and history.

A few years ago, Woody Crenshaw, sponsor of the Village Square project, organized a group of artisans, small business owners and families. Their



Architects' rendering of Village Square project located in downtown Floyd

mission was to revitalize Floyd’s town center by attracting small local businesses into its downtown core, rather than try to attract big business from outside. The town has invested a \$1 million federal community development grant through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development on job

creation and its downtown. Current plans for Village Square promote renovating two buildings in downtown Floyd. This project, which includes two commercial units and eight residential units, is the first mixed-use deal VHDA has financed in Southwest Virginia. Through Virginia Community Capital (the state community development bank), and VHDA’s financing, the citizens of Floyd intend to preserve the unique local culture and promote the long-term sustainability of their community. ■

— Monique S. Johnson

## SPARC Funds Help Culpeper Emergency Shelter Reopen

“There is real trauma associated with going into a homeless shelter,” said Sam Aitken, Executive Director of the Culpeper Community Development Corporation (CCDC). “It is important,” he added, “to have a new facility, something that will pick up the spirits of the residents.”

The CCDC reopened their emergency shelter this past April. The new building replaces a facility built in 1900 that was demolished last fall because it was beyond repair. Located on the same 501 N. West Street site, the new shelter includes

15 beds for homeless families. Funding for this vital community project included a 30-year \$200,000 VHDA SPARC loan with a 4.75 percent interest rate.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development assisted with a \$25,000 grant, while the remainder of the funds to make this \$360,000 project a reality were raised through the CCDC’s operations and private resources.

“The CCDC is delighted to, once again, provide a decent and safe place for people to live,” said Aitken.

Formed in 1988, today the CCDC serves between 1,400 and 1,900 people annually. In addition to providing emergency shelter, it also lends a hand to those in Planning District 9 (Culpeper, Madison, Orange, Fauquier and Rappahannock Counties) through two transitional housing projects and the 33-unit Ann Wingfield apartment complex for seniors. The CCDC also provides assistance with homeownership opportunities and administers the regional Homeless Intervention Program (HIP). ■

— Chris Hilbert

## South Boston's Sunnybrooke Subdivision Breaks Ground for Second Phase of Construction

Under the direction of Executive Director Earl Howerton and Financial Director Earlene Powell, the Southside Outreach Group recently held a ceremonial groundbreaking for Section II of the Sunnybrooke subdivision located in the Town of South Boston in Halifax County. Sunnybrooke, received the "Best Housing Development" award at the 2006 Governor's Housing Conference. "No longer will we refer to these important civic employees as

low- to moderate-income families, but will respectfully address them as income-eligible families," said Howerton during a speech in which he stated it was important to recognize that the individuals who purchase these new homes are community workers, including firefighters, police officers and teachers. Section II development plans include building 10 more houses in Sunnybrooke, which will bring



*Sunnybrooke, phase I.*

the total number of single family homes within the subdivision to 22. The three-bedroom model features approximately 1,100 square feet at an average sales price of \$110,000 and will be sold to families at or below 80 percent of area median income. Because the intent of Southside's homeownership program is not only to provide affordable housing, but also to create family wealth, the group will provide enough subsidies to reduce the mortgage to an average of \$80,000.

As part of Southside's comprehensive homeownership education program, potential homebuyers attend a series of monthly group sessions, along with one-on-one counseling that will assist them in becoming successful homebuyers.

To help facilitate the expansion of affordable housing opportunities, the Southside Outreach Group will use a \$500,000 SPARC 6 allocation from VHDA leveraged with resources from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Halifax County/Town of South Boston, American National Bank, Housing Assistance Council, Rural Development and Tri-County Community Federal Credit Union. ■

— Shawn Washington



*Southside Outreach Group holds ceremonial groundbreaking for phase 2 of the Sunnybrooke subdivision in South Boston.*

## Potential SPARC Applicants Receive Valuable Training

VHDA's announcement of Round 6 of the SPARC homeownership program in mid-February was followed by four regional training sessions held in mid-March and early April to help ensure SPARC resources are used fully utilized throughout Virginia's geographic regions.

Conducted by Senior Community Housing Officer Toni Ostrowski, training sessions in Richmond, Virginia Beach, Northern Virginia and Roanoke provided a great opportunity for more than 200 potential applicants to review the new SPARC guidelines/procedures, as well as network with VHDA originating lenders and review best practices for past SPARC allocations.

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## REACH Virginia Partnering with Housing Virginia to Give Workforce Housing Efforts a Jump Start

Housing Virginia was launched three years ago when a diverse group of homebuilders, lenders, Realtors®, for-profit developers, non-profit community development corporations, secondary mortgage market organizations (like Fannie Mae) and state and local government representatives met with VHDA to incorporate a new 501(C)3 organization. The goal of this organization is to dispel misperceptions about affordable housing and educate the public about the benefits of mixed income, mixed-use communities.

Chris Lowrie was hired in April as VHDA's Program Manager for Housing Virginia. Lowrie brings to the position 20 years of experience in cause-related marketing and in the development of healthy communities in Virginia. She will be instrumental in the non-profit's strategic plan to assist markets across the Commonwealth that are experiencing a shortage of workforce homes and apartments – a major factor in the escalating price of existing and new-built units.

As part of its strategic efforts, Housing Virginia will work to educate decision makers, stakeholders and the general public throughout the Commonwealth about the ways affordable housing benefits the larger community. These benefits include driving economic development, revitalizing neighborhoods and supporting the local workforce, so people

can live closer to where they work. In addition, quality affordable housing enriches neighborhoods by providing diversity, increasing the value of surrounding housing and, as research indicates, improving the quality and experience of auxiliary services, such as education, health and safety.

The need to create an organization like Housing Virginia was based, in part, on research by *The State of the Nation's Housing*, a publication released annually by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies since 1988. The news about housing affordability in the 2006 study was not encouraging. After adjusting for inflation, housing prices increased a record 9.4 percent in 2005. Among the nation's 149 largest metropolitan areas, the number in which median housing prices are at least four times the median housing income increased from 13 in 2001 to 49 in 2005. Those metropolitan areas with at least six times median income increased from four to 14. Decreasing multi-family rental production, (down 22,000 units from 2004) and the conversion of at least 195,000 rental units to condominiums in 2005, has further impacted the housing opportunities for America's working, moderate-income families. ■

— Toni Ostrowski

## First Urban Marketplace Event Co-Chaired by REACH Virginia

REACH Virginia team members Costa Canavos and Monique S. Johnson co-chaired the first Urban Marketplace conference held this past May at the Science Museum of Richmond. Presented by the Richmond District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), Urban Marketplace promoted investment opportunities and development strategies for revitalizing urban and suburban markets by bringing together stakeholders interested overcoming the challenges of infill development.

### Potential SPARC - from Page 5

In conjunction with the SPARC training, other REACH Virginia team members conducted Affordable Homeownership Development 101 classes designed to provide a framework for housing advocates to create successful homeownership programs in their localities. Approximately 50 individuals, representing local governments, redevelopment and housing authorities, non-profit housing entities and for-profit developers, attended these classes.

"By using the tools provided through training, VHDA partners can increase their capacity to analyze project feasibility," said Ostrowski, "and more effectively layer and leverage funding sources." ■

The half-day conference attracted 250 attendees from the private, public and non-profit sectors. These enthusiastic stakeholders shared experiences and best practices, and laid a foundation for future collaborative efforts. Highlights of the event included luncheon speaker Richard Hausler of Kettler. Kettler specializes in the planning and development of urban multifamily housing and is a leader in the development of nationally acclaimed planned communities. L. Preston Bryant, Jr., Secretary of Natural Resources, discussed the importance of investing in Virginia's historic resources and using tax credit incentives to encourage urban community investment. The presentations showcased partnerships for successful urban development, and breakout sessions focused on mixed-use mixed-income projects, financing, development strategies and current local government initiatives. ■



*Urban Marketplace participants, (front row, left to right): Richard Hausler, The Honorable L. Preston Bryant and John Grier; (second row, left to right): Monique Johnson and Costa Canavos.*

## VHDA uses Annual Seminars and Toolbox to Promote Housing with Universal Design

Every year since 2004, VHDA has sponsored at least two universal design seminars in various regions across the Commonwealth. Entitled "Creative Housing for the 21st Century," the seminar is designed to provide an understanding of the principles of universal design and its practical applications.

The intent of universal design is to make a home usable by all family members, whether or not they are disabled, and recognize that human abilities change over time. While accessible requirements specified by codes or standards are only for some buildings and only benefit some people (usually those with mobility limitations), universal design targets all people and is applied to all buildings. Learning more about the nuts and bolts of universal design and then putting that information to work

in building the affordable housing of tomorrow, makes those who participate in Creative Housing for the 21st Century seminars valuable partners in VHDA's goal to provide housing opportunities to low- and moderate-income Virginians.

As part of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), VHDA offers additional points to applicants whose design professionals attend our universal design training. Since VHDA is a registered provider with the American Institute of Architects Continuing Education System, architects receive CEUs for attending the training.

Faculty instruction for the seminar includes Dick Duncan, MRP, Director of Training at the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University

and Ray Pentecost III, PhD, Vice President and Director of Healthcare Architecture with Clark Nexsen Architecture and Engineering.

As part of the education effort, VHDA introduced its Universal Design Toolbox in November of 2006.

*See back page*



*Ndida Ugwu (left) and Fahkteh Dastgheib, students in Virginia Commonwealth University's Urban Planning program, are the newest addition to the REACH Virginia team. Their combination of education, experience and research skills will enable these Community Housing interns to provide valuable assistance with jurisdictional and housing policy research, marketing strategy, market analysis and project planning for Virginia's diverse communities.*



VHDA's REACH Virginia team members (left to right, seated): Chris Hilbert, Mike Hawkins, Bill Fuller with Abby, Monique Johnson and Jose Paiz; (left to right, standing): Monica Jefferson, Gail Braham, Gerard Jameson, Shawn Washington, Bruce DeSimone, Costa Canavos, Toni Ostrowski, Mike Scheurer and Christine Lowrie.

The Universal Design Toolbox provides architects, designers, developers, contractors and homeowners with practical tools for applying universal design techniques. These tools include a DVD on "Universal Design Done Affordably," a construction plan book and a Practical Guide Checklist that makes it easier to incorporate universal design when remodeling, building or buying a home.

For more information on VHDA's Universal Design Toolbox or Creative Housing for the 21st Century seminars, please contact Gail Braham. ■

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