

# News from Virginia LISC

*Helping Neighbors Build Strong Communities*

## New Library in Petersburg

2012 has been a busy year for Virginia LISC, and one marked by a number of projects and capital investments throughout Richmond and Petersburg neighborhoods.

Perhaps one of the most prodigious projects of the year was the Petersburg Library.

"The Petersburg Library will serve as a center for information and lifelong learning," said Candice Streett, Executive Director of Virginia LISC. "Access to quality education is a defining characteristic of sustainable communities."

The development consists of the construction of a new 45,000 square-foot library to replace the existing library that is housed in a home built in 1859.

Virginia LISC helped finance the building efforts through a \$2 million Bridge Loan that allowed the Petersburg Library Foundation to start building the library this past spring, while they continued to fundraise. Virginia LISC also provided \$2.1 million in equity financing, through New Market Tax Credits.

National LISC chose this project among dozens submitted from around the country.



The completed library will have new computers that residents can use.

"Without this national allocation of the tax credits, this project would not have been able to move forward," said Streett.

The library, which will serve 30,000 patrons each month, is a great step in the revitalization of Petersburg, a community that has faced tremendous

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There are approximately 2,814 properties in the Richmond's Vacant Property Registry. Of those, nearly 90 percent, or 2,300, are residential properties.

# SEED Program Winners Take Over Church Hill

Seven businesses will serve Richmond's Church Hill neighborhood, thanks to a grant program created by Virginia LISC and Bon Secours.

The two organizations partnered in 2011 to create the East End Entrepreneur and Development, or SEED, Program, which provides up to \$10,000 in grant money to people



Executive Director, Candice Streett presents Rohrer with his SEED award.

looking to either expand or start a new business. Virginia LISC provides business expertise

through Barb Upchurch, a marketing professional at Blueberry Marketing.

"The SEED Program is important because every bit we can do to get business to Church Hill brings us one step closer to a thriving community," said David Rohrer, co-owner of WPA Bakery.

WPA Bakery is one of the businesses that won a grant from the

2012 SEED Program.

Other winners included, All Around Painting, Dutch & Co., Era Vintage, Proper Pie Co., Sub Rosa Bakery and J. Burton Hauling and Disposal. The latter three are second-year winners.

"The SEED Program gives us a big leg up in the most crucial part of the development process—the beginning," said Phillip Perrow, co-owner of Dutch & Co. restaurant.

## Petersburg Library

disinvestment during the past two decades.

"City leaders view this project as strategically important to progress on education initiatives and workforce development for Petersburg residents," said Streett.

The library will have extended learning opportunities, such as adult literacy workshops and business classes as well as early education and children's programs, said Wayne Crocker, director of the Petersburg Library.

These types of workshops are essential for Petersburg, where 43 percent of the population is estimated to be illiterate, and 20 percent lives below the poverty line.

New computers will also be available for residents who do not have computers at home.

"We are going to have the nicest facility in the area," said Bob Walker, chairman of the Petersburg Library Foundation.

"The library will help residents take advantage of all of the employment opportunities coming to the area like logistic services and advance manufacturing," said Streett.

## Vacant Properties Loans Help Richmond

Those who drive down Hull Street notice them. They are on Chamberlayne and Laburnum avenues too. In fact, they can be spotted on most streets in Richmond City. The fact of the matter is vacant homes have cropped up all around the city.

That's why Virginia LISC and the City of Richmond have partnered to create the Richmond Neighborhood Stabilization Investment Loan Fund, a loan created to help rehabilitate and sell or lease abandoned residential properties.

"There is a large inventory of vacant properties in the City of Richmond, and this is one way to address the issue," said John Bolton, Program Loan Officer for Virginia LISC.

There are approximately 2,814 properties in the Richmond's Vacant Property Registry. Of those, nearly 90 percent, or 2,300, are residential properties.

The highest concentration of these abandoned homes can be found in neighborhoods like Church Hill and Highland Park and in subdivisions next to Hull Street and Brooklyn Park Boulevard.

Virginia LISC hopes that the vacant properties loan will help turn these neighborhoods into healthy, sustainable communities.

Both for-profits and nonprofits can apply for a loan of up to \$300,000. It has a 4.25 percent interest rate and matures after three years.

Applicants will be evaluated on certain criteria. For example, Virginia LISC and Richmond City will want to see that the project supports neighborhood or corridor revitalization. The project should also demonstrate leverage of other investments and promote other city priorities such as energy conservation.

The City of Richmond put \$500,000 toward the Richmond Neighborhood Stabilization Investment Loan Fund and Virginia LISC gave \$1 million.

So far, Southside Community Development & Housing Corporation and Project Homes have each received \$300,000 in revolving loans. The revolving funds will rehabilitate eight to ten homes. L&Z Historic has preliminary approval for \$200,000, which will go toward two single-family, rental homes in Carver neighborhood.

This \$800,000 that LISC and the City of Richmond have approved translates into \$2.5 million in total development costs said Bolton.

Those interested in the loan can contact John Bolton at 804.358.7602 ext. 16 or at [jbolton@lisc.org](mailto:jbolton@lisc.org).

# LISC Delves into Projects in Fulton with Full Force

Richmond's Greater Fulton neighborhood may not be the wealthiest, most famous or most traveled neighborhood in Richmond, but it has something that many neighborhoods don't these days: a community that cares.

Greater Fulton's residents not only talk about the changes they want in their neighborhood, they make those changes happen.

And Virginia LISC is happy to help them with those projects.

"LISC assembles resources and directs them to resident-identified priorities," said Virginia LISC's Executive Director Candice Streett. "Greater Fulton residents are clear about what they want their future to look like."

Virginia LISC funds the Greater Fulton's Future Initiative, a quality-of-life planning and community development effort. In this program, residents and community partners divided into different teams to address improvements in the community.

One exciting project that Virginia LISC and Fulton's Neighborhood Resource Center partnered together to create is the Financial Opportunity Center that will be located in the NRC on Williamsburg Road.

## Financial Opportunity Center

The Financial Opportunity Center is a program that bundles financial services together to ensure a stable financial outcome for participants.

The FOC is a national LISC program, a best-practice approach designed to build long-term, financial stability. LISC launched its national network of Financial Opportunity Centers in 2004. Now 65 centers, operating in 25 cities offer employment programs that address job placement, career improvement, financial coaching and public benefits.

"What makes the FOC program innovative is that it takes three core services—access to jobs, public benefits and access to a good financial counselor—and provides those services together, in a 'bundled' package for each participant," said Virginia LISC's Community Partnerships Manager, Veronica Fleming. Typically these services are provided separately.



Greater Fulton's Neighborhood Resource Center will house the FOC. The building also is home to a Montessori Preschool and a daycare center. Photo Credit/ Frances Stanley, VA LISC

This will be the first FOC in Richmond, and it will be in a community that needs it. Out of the 1,800 housing units in the neighborhood, only 49 percent are owner-occupied and the median home value is \$96,983. The population of Greater Fulton is 4,898. Fifteen percent of the labor force is unemployed and 26 percent of the labor force has not earned a high school diploma.

National data indicates that residents able to take advantage of multiple, integrated services are far more likely to retain employment, improve their careers and increase their income over time.

Greater Fulton's Neighborhood Resource Center is the lead agency in this effort and establishes the Financial Opportunity Center as an expansion to its existing successful Job Support Program. The NRC serves as many as 100 individuals a month who utilize the center's volunteer support, employment coaches, job listings and computers. The Financial Opportunity Center, called **NRCworks**, will open in mid-January of 2013, and will target 40 clients to receive intensive, comprehensive, bundled services by December.

LISC, Wells Fargo, the Robins Foundation, the Community Foundation, the Brookfield Foundation and United Way are providing initial support.

## Construction in the Commercial Corridor

When the Greater Fulton's Future members came together and discussed what changes they would like to see in their neighborhood, they came up with an influx of suggestions.

Residents saw problems in the way the neighborhood looked. Sidewalks were overgrown and streets needed repaving.

"Basically everyone just came together and told me they wanted to see things change," said Jason Sawyer, who is the Neighborhood Resource

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## Fulton Continued

Center's coordinator of the LISC-funded Greater Fulton's Future.

To address all the improvements that they wanted to see happen, Greater Fulton's Future divided into seven teams to focus on different areas.

The Economic Development Team took charge of the construction people wanted to see happen in the commercial corridor.

Construction in Fulton started in November. Construction workers are putting in new curb cuts on the sidewalks, placing banners on the street lights, repaving parts of roads, repairing sidewalks, painting crosswalks and adding bike racks to the neighborhood.

The construction will be done by January 1.

In the meantime, Sawyer and Fulton residents have already

turned their attention to the next change they want to see.



Workers put in first curb cuts in Nov.  
Photo Credit/ Frances Stanley

### Healthy Corners Initiative

Food deserts have seeped into inner-city Richmond, and Fulton is no exception.

But Greater Fulton residents refuse to let the lack of transportation and access to healthy food take control of the community.

They have begun planning ways to make their neighborhood an oasis of fresh produce in a city-wide food desert.

"We are looking for a way to bring produce to a place where people can access it," said Sawyer.

How are Fulton residents going to get healthy food when there is no grocery store in walking distance and the public transportation is subpar? The answer is simple—convenience stores.

Greater Fulton's Future, the Richmond City Health Department, City Councilwoman Cynthia Newbille and community members are talking to various farms and organizations like Tricycle Gardens to find fresh produce and have it brought to the convenience stores in the neighborhood. They have already talked to the four convenience stores in Fulton, and all seemed interested, said Sawyer.

"We need to give healthy food to people instead of food that will make them sick," he said. "This is an issue that is integral to building sustainable, communities."

Between the FOC coming to Fulton, the construction to beautify the neighborhood and the Healthy Corners Initiative, Fulton is well on its way to becoming a prime example of a sustainable, healthy community, and LISC is glad to be a part of the process.

## Local Advisory Committee

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