



Helping Neighbors Build Strong Communities

VCU Student Committed to the Northside

Janell Baker, a Virginia LISC intern, didn't grow up on the Northside. She didn't go to school there or have family that lived there. But something sparked Baker's interest in the Northside.

"I admired the partnership between Councilwoman Ellen Robertson, VCU's MURP Studio I class and the community on creating the Quality of Life Plan," said Baker.

Baker read the North Highland Park Quality of Life plan because she wanted to attend VCU's Master of Urban and Regional Planning Graduate School.

"I thought the Quality of Life plan took a new, fresh approach to urban planning," said Baker.

She began volunteering with Robertson, helping to implement the plan, slowly understanding the value of community engagement for neighborhood planning.

"One of the biggest obstacles in neighborhood development is community engagement," said Baker. "So I worked a lot with volunteers and on project organization."

One of the big projects Baker worked on was the clean up of Ann Hardy Park, located in Highland Park a neighborhood on the Northside that has seen



Janell Baker stands next to the dumpster art project at Ann Hardy Park that was completed as part of the Quality of Life plan for this community. Baker said the project was meant to not only beautify the park but also to serve as a reminder to keep the park clean. Photo Credit/ Killeen King VA LISC

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We want to give a special thanks to our Celebrating Community Leaders Event Sponsors: Virginia Housing Development Authority, CRT/ tanaka, Wells Fargo, Dominion Virginia Power, Richmond Association of Realtors, Nationwide and Williams Mullen. Mark your calendars for September 26, 2013!!

Vacant Properties Loan Fund Update



This house located at 2610 Q Street in Church Hill is a property being rehabilitated by Better Housing Coalition, thanks to LISC and the City of Richmond's Vacant Property Loan Fund. The loan fund offers loans at a low interest rate to nonprofit and for profit applicants.

Quick Facts from National LISC

LISC opened its 71st **Financial Opportunity Center (FOC)** in 2012. Thousands of low-income families in some of America's most forgotten zip codes come to these centers to learn how to find and keep a good job, live on a budget, build good credit, apply for public benefits—in short, how to create a solid foundation for financial stability.

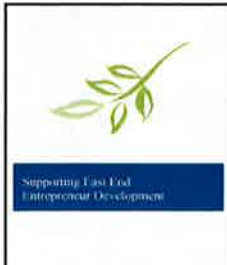
When LISC helps people find jobs and improve credit, **their net income increases on average \$550 a month.**

Initial data shows:

Higher net income among 75 percent of FOC participants,
Higher credit scores among 43 percent and
Higher net worth among 46 percent.

SEED Round 3 Open

Virginia LISC and Bon Secours kicked off the third round of the Supporting East End Entrepreneur Development (SEED) program at the end of May. The SEED program began in 2011, when Virginia LISC and Bon Secours partnered to bring business back to the 25th Street and Nine Mile corridor of Church Hill in Richmond's East End.



Grants of up to \$10,000 are awarded to businesses looking to start up or expand in that area. But not everyone is awarded grants. It is a competition. Those interested must fill out an application and submit a business plan to the Virginia LISC office **by August 29, 2013. Applications can be found online at www.virginialisc.org** LISC staff looks over the applications in September and selects a number of finalists. The finalists then present their business to a blue ribbon panel of judges. The panel decides the winners of the SEED program. **For more information on SEED, contact Killeen King at kking@lisc.org or at 804.358.7602 ext. 14.**

The Northside Continued

disinvestment for years.

But Baker's neighborhood work did not stop here. In February of 2013, she joined the Virginia LISC team as an intern. She first encountered LISC through her Intro to Urban Planning class where Virginia LISC's Community Partnerships Manager, Veronica Fleming, guest spoke.

"I realized LISC's involvement in neighborhood planning and also their interest in the Northside."



Baker now works closely with Fleming on developing LISC's interaction with the Northside and planning the projects LISC wants to accomplish, such as business corridor revitalization along Brookland Park Boulevard.



Virginia LISC also wants to join residents already engaged in a community safety initiative in the area.

Residents expressed concern about their safety and the safety of their children in the Northside's Quality of Life plan, and many residents expressed their experience with violent crimes first hand.

LISC is really excited to ramp up community development and neighborhood work and engagement on the Northside and is glad to have Baker's help and expertise.

"It's Northside's turn now to experience change and the ability to shine," said Baker. "I'm just happy I can be a part of that change."

LISC says farewell but not goodbye to Harris

LISC's Greta Harris has taken the position of President and CEO of Richmond's Better Housing Coalition, effective Aug. 5.

Harris worked at LISC for 16 years, in which time she served as Executive Director of Virginia LISC for nine years, before joining the national LISC team as a Program Vice President.

"She is loved and respected in the LISC family," said Virginia LISC's Executive Director Candice Streett.

As a Program Vice President, Harris spent three out of four weeks a month traveling to other LISC offices on the East Coast, providing strategic and managerial support to 7 of LISC's local offices. Although Harris enjoyed her time at LISC, she said she will be happy to settle down and stay in Richmond.

"Richmond Wins!" said Streett. "We are pleased to have Greta's talents return full time to our community development industry."

BHC has been the leading partner for Virginia LISC since the office opened in 1990.



Greta Harris worked with Virginia LISC for 16 years. Her expertise on the local and national levels helped her to implement change in many cities.

LISC's chief executive comments on tax credits in the *NYTimes*

15 Jul 2013 - Michael Rubinger, *NYTimes*

Excerpt:

What does it take to fix a neighborhood in decline?

Stand on the corner of Elm Street by Washington Park in Cincinnati, and you'll find the answer. It is one of the city's oldest and largest parks, in one of America's most economically distressed areas.

Fifteen years ago, it was just another eyesore in a neighborhood so plagued by crime that residents were afraid to walk the streets. Businesses had fled.

Not anymore. Today the park is green and clean. Diverse families and neighbors gather for concerts under the stars, yoga on the green, festivals and kickball. It is the centerpiece of a neighborhood coming back to life, and a short walk from renovated apartment houses and a rebounding district of shops and restaurants.

Washington Park is not an isolated example. Neighborhoods from the South Bronx to Houston to Oakland, Calif., to Woonsocket, R.I., are experiencing a similar rebirth.

How so? With two federal tax credits: one that currently supports 90 percent of affordable housing development nationwide, and another that is spurring investments in businesses, real estate projects and facilities like health clinics, charter schools and child care centers, all in low-income communities.

But these credits may be in peril. Congress is working on an overhaul of the tax code that seeks to eliminate deductions and credits, including these tried-and-true programs. Two weeks ago, the Democratic and Republican leaders of the Senate Finance Committee asked all senators to identify by July 26 which tax breaks, deductions and credits should be retained.

While the arguments for comprehensive tax reform are well known, eliminating these credits would be tragic. They bring much-needed capital to communities most investors

would never consider.

Passed by Congress in 1986 and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, the low-income housing tax credit gives the private sector an incentive to create and invest in affordable housing. It is widely viewed as one of the most effective federal housing programs ever.

The new-markets tax credit, created in 2000, was born of the same principles that gave rise to the housing credit: first, that the private sector needs incentives to invest in worthy projects that would otherwise be considered too risky; and second, that those incentives lead to greater accountability and superior project performance when compared with federal grant programs.

Read the full article in the [New York Times](#)

Take Action! Sign on to a letter to Congress to preserve these tax Credits.

Emerging Housing Developer Partners with LISC in Southside Richmond

Virginia LISC is excited to partner with an up and coming affordable housing developer to work on building 40 three-bedroom townhomes in Southside Richmond.

The construction firm Canterbury Enterprises has received a lot of acclaim recently for its success and business model.

“We really stress the importance of forming trusting relationships, responding to calls and delivering quality products and I think that’s what makes our company strong,” said company CEO Junior Burr.



Burr received the Metropolitan Business League’s Entrepreneur of the Year award this year. Three years earlier, Canterbury Enterprises and W.M. Jordan both received the Metro Business League’s Trailblazer Award.

“It’s really encouraging to partner with someone who is so passionate about their work and the community they serve,” said Virginia LISC’s Loan Officer John Bolton.

Virginia LISC provided acquisition and predevelopment financing for the project, which is named Townhomes at Warwick Place. The project was awarded Low-Income Housing Tax Credits this year, a first for Canterbury as lead developer. Rent will range from \$560 to \$900, depending on the targeted income level.

Each unit will include two and a half bathrooms and will range in

size from 1,312 to 1,290 square feet.

“This development will give people a chance to experience quality living conditions at an affordable price. Everyone deserves that,” said Burr.

The development is also in a location with access to a GRTC bus line. Within in a mile of the development is the largest Kroger in the mid-Atlantic region, a brand new high school and Chippenham Hospital.



Canterbury Enterprises

“We are thrilled that Canterbury and LISC are able to work together on this project, and we are already looking forward to the next opportunity to partner with LISC,” said Burr.

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