Housing and Hope for Formerly Homeless

In 2018, Virginia LISC provided a $1.6m loan to Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH), to acquire a building they previously leased in the Carver neighborhood in Richmond. VSH’s goal was to own the property, expand it, and transform the building into upgraded permanent housing for former homeless individuals. In addition to the first loan, LISC also participated in a $9m construction loan to support the renovation and expansion of the building so that VSH could house additional residents. The once 47-unit building, will allow VSH to serve 80 formerly homeless and low-income individuals in studio apartments. Beyond developing affordable housing, VSH provides their residents with supportive services once they have moved in, as they know that homelessness is often just one of the challenges their residents face.

“Virginia Supportive Housing has been a long-time partner of Virginia LISC. When we collaborate with LISC on projects like New Clay House we know that we are doing business with an organization that shares our values and is also working to develop and maintain affordable housing for all in our region,” VSH’s executive director, Allison Bogdanović, said. The newly renovated and expanded building on W. Clay Street was officially completed in March and tenants have begun moving in.

One of the most basic needs that should be met for any individual is a safe and consistent place to call home. Without this need being met, individuals can face a myriad of other challenges like job instability and health crises. LISC began its work initially to address housing instability across the United States, and today, this remains an important focus of our mission. LISC’s support of housing organizations like VSH and projects like New Clay House, help maintain and expand affordable housing options in the communities Virginia LISC serves. We are proud to have played a role in helping VSH continue this important work.
Advancing Safety through LISC AmeriCorps

Together with two of our partners, Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC) and RVA League for Safer Streets (The League), LISC is excited to welcome our two new AmeriCorps members. Wad Khalafalla joins RVA League for Safer Streets and Atari Maddox will work with Richmond Peace Education Center.

LISC knows that small organizations with big missions need support to carry out their work, support that would allow them to accomplish work they otherwise might not have the time or resources to take on. As part of our effort to build capacity within the nonprofit partners we support, we link those partners to the LISC AmeriCorps program. “AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs, made up of three primary programs that each take a different approach to improving lives and fostering civic engagement.”

Wad is originally from Sudan and immigrated to the United States with her family as a refugee. When asked what inspired her to pursue a LISC AmeriCorps position with The League she said, “My experiences drive my passions. Public service, social services programs, and the effort of the community all played a role in my individual growth, and I have made it my mission to play a role in their manifestation.” In her role with The League, Wad will work to provide programmatic support by engaging participants, volunteers and community members to reduce and prevent crime in Richmond.

Atari has lived in several places in Virginia but calls Richmond home. She was attracted to the AmeriCorps program and role with RPEC and said, “I wanted to make a difference and I am interested in community engagement in the city of Richmond.” She is most excited about working with young people and the greater community in her role as the Youth and Community Outreach Associate at RPEC. In this position, Atari will actively support and strengthen the Richmond Peace Education Center’s Youth Peace Team programs in Gilpin Court, the East End, and other target sites.

As The League and RPEC have shared with us, both organizations are thrilled to have their AmeriCorps members on board. “We are excited to have our Americorps member, Atari Maddox, thanks to LISC’s support. Her presence is already having an impact here,” said RPEC’s Executive Director, Adria Scharf. The League’s Robert Morris said, “It is a huge help to have Wad with us. We have so much to do and with another person helping us get the work done, we can enjoy the work even more.”

Atari and Wad are great additions to this important work and we look forward to sharing updates about their AmeriCorps experience.
Pursuing Equity in Entrepreneurship

For the last eight years, Virginia LISC has been investing in Richmond small businesses. Our work, in partnership with Bon Secours and Capital One, through the Supporting East End Entrepreneur Development (SEED) program in Church Hill and our 6Biz program for Richmond’s Highland Park corridor in partnership with Capital One, has been a labor of love.

The opportunity to support and work with small business owners and entrepreneurs, helping them to make their visions for their businesses possible, has been incredibly rewarding. Since the start of this work, we have supported 40 unique businesses with one-on-one small business coaching and grant funding. We have also learned a lot from the process, including the importance of supporting existing small businesses in a community before inviting new-to-the community businesses into the program.

Minority entrepreneurs and business owners have long faced challenges and barriers to starting and sustaining their businesses. Because of a historically discriminatory system, minority business owners often have more trouble with things like securing business loans and increasing revenue. Sadly, those challenges persist today and are creating barriers for minority entrepreneurs in Richmond.

With this in mind and the lessons learned through our existing small business programming, we’re excited to be endeavoring to identify strategies to widen the on-ramp to entrepreneurship for minorities. We’re doing this by convening a workgroup, made up of community leaders, who will meet over six months to develop recommendations and strategies that focus on boosting entrepreneurial start-ups and success by people of color.

The work has already begun and with guidance from Forward Cities, a national network of 33 cities committed to inclusive economic growth, the workgroup will share the outcomes of this effort in the fall of 2019.

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**Virginia LISC's Impact in 2018**

**Lending for Economic Growth**
- $14m in loans
- 198 affordable housing units supported
- 120,000 square feet of commercial space

**Health & Safety**
- 196 teens/young adults served through LISC’s safety initiative

**Business Corridor Revitalization**
- 12 small businesses supported
- $150,000 in small business grants provided, along with small business coaching to small business grantees

**Family Financial Stability**
- 445 clients served at LISC’s Financial Opportunity Centers
- 92.13% of clients received 2 or more coaching services
- Clients who saw a change in their net worth experienced an average increase of $12,581.34

**Nonprofit Capacity Building**
- $250,000 (federal) and $110,000 (private) provided in capacity building grants to nonprofit partners
Supporting Leadership Development

Every year, Virginia LISC donates scholarship funds to the Emerging Nonprofit Leaders (ENLP) and Leadership Metro Richmond programs. These scholarships, which we named in honor of Jim Ukrop, are meant to give individuals in our communities the opportunity to gain leadership skills—individuals that may not otherwise have the means to participate in such programs. The inspiration behind the James E. Ukrop scholarships is our belief that neighborhood revitalization work is anchored in the knowledge that true and lasting community building starts from within.

In 2018 the scholarship for the Emerging Nonprofit Leaders program went to Stephen Vicoli. Stephen is the Transition Coordinator of CARITAS’s The Healing Place, a long-term peer-driven residential recovery program serving the Greater Richmond community. Stephen, himself a graduate of the program, helps The Healing Place clients work toward independent living after developing the tools to maintain their sobriety. “ENLP is giving me the tools and confidence to be a better leader, which is extremely useful in my role with the participants at The Healing Place. The men I work with look to me for support, mentorship and resources. So, being a better leader is in turn helping them,” Stephen said. LISC is very glad to be playing a small part in Stephen’s journey to empower his clients.

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