



DHCD

# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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## Letter from the director



**Bill Shelton**  
Director

Welcome to the winter edition of the DHCD Community Connections newsletter.

We are pleased once again to have this opportunity to share some of the great work that is being done by our partners and staff throughout the Commonwealth, and provide updates on some of the current issues and challenges we are facing.

The recent 2007 Governor's Housing Conference was a tremendous success, drawing the highest attendance ever for its Roanoke

location. Many important housing issues were discussed at the conference, including affordable, accessible and energy efficient housing.

EarthCraft and green building were among the themes drawing more attention this year. The EasyLiving certification process, which encourages a standard much like the EarthCraft standard for building accessible homes was new and drew much attention. Many homebuilders attended sessions focused on these topics during the conference, and we expect these themes to continue to grow in the future.

A concern which remains the top subject both at the Governor's Housing Conference and as a state policy issue is affordable housing. A lack of affordable housing, coupled with increasing foreclosure rates in Virginia and across the nation, continues to make the headlines daily.

While Virginia still maintains a relatively low foreclosure rate as compared with other states, it has more than doubled from the first quarter of 2006. Nearly 4,000 of the 5,800 homes in foreclosure in the second quarter of 2007 were subprime loans.

Housing has been identified as a key state policy issue in both the Governor's Urban Policy Report and Virginia's Economic Development Strategic Plan, both of which are available online at <http://www.commerce.virginia.gov/>.

In another step toward addressing these issues, Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced the creation of Virginia's Foreclosure Prevention Task Force at the conference.

The task force, chaired by Secretary of Commerce and Trade Patrick O. Gottschalk, is comprised of many industry leaders including mortgage

industry representatives, housing consumer advocates, policy experts, and researchers.

DHCD is working closely with the task force to monitor Virginia's foreclosure situation, and assist by providing research and recommendations designed to minimize the impact that rising foreclosures may have on Virginia.

The task force first met on Dec. 14, 2007. A key outcome of this first meeting was the formation of three committees: Foreclosure Impact, Consumer Education and Counseling, and Regulatory Reform. As the committees and the task force continue to meet and make recommendations,

additional information will be provided in the *DHCD Community Connections*.

I encourage you to visit our Web site: [www.dhcd.virginia.gov](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov) to learn more about the programs and projects of our agency, and the good work being done across the Commonwealth.

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue of the *DHCD Community Connections*.

Sincerely,  
Bill Shelton, Director  
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development



## *Housing and Community Development News*

### Affordable Housing Production Unit moves to competitive application format

Last summer the Affordable Housing and Special Needs program, which provides funding for housing developers to produce affordable housing units, changed its funding structure from one which accepted open submissions for funding, to one which requires developers to submit quarterly competitive applications for funding.

"As with many government programs, we are working with limited resources with this program," said Shea Hollifield, deputy director of the Division of Housing at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

"In order to address these challenges, this year we modified the application process to ensure that the resources we provide are given to the most competitive projects."

The program, funded through the Federal HOME Investment Partnership Program, has been administered by DHCD since 1992, and provides nearly \$4 million in affordable housing production funds to developers each year. In 2006 approximately 540 of affordable housing units were created in Virginia through this program.

Applicants typically include housing developers, nonprofits, and state certified Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs).

The new competitive scoring and ranking process positions proposals based on housing needs, feasibility, and on the capacity of the organization submitting the proposal. Developers may submit proposals on a quarterly basis.

“Projects funded through this program are those which produce or preserve affordable housing units for low and moderate income homeowners and renters, including those with special needs,” said Hollifield. Special needs housing is identified for older adults, those with disabilities, or those who are experiencing chronic illness.

“We expect that with the new competitive application format we will be able to ensure the best use of the funding available to address affordable housing issues throughout the state.”

Each project must include a minimum of five units, and must be under common ownership, management, and financing. The minimum investment per unit is at least \$7,500, but no more than the actual costs or the 221 (d) (3) limits. The selected project will always be assisted with the minimum amount of HOME assistance needed.

As with any federal funds projects, Fair Housing and other federal provisions apply to all projects, including those funded through these programs. The type of assistance received through these programs is typically gap financing.

At all times the amount of HOME funds committed through these programs is the minimal amount needed. Assistance is generally structured as a 3 percent interest-only loan over a specified period of time.

“Projects funded through this program have a time period where affordability is mandatory,” said Hollifield. “They must be maintained as affordable according to the agreement between the developer and DHCD.”

Affordability agreements are enforced through a restrictive covenant deed on the units. If the affordability period agreement is breached, the assistance received through these programs must be returned to DHCD.

Local and state governments, also known as Participating Jurisdictions (PJs) are responsible for conducting needs assessments, establishing priorities and goals, and developing and managing the programs that will help meet these goals.

For more information please go to the Consolidated Plan Action Plan, located [online](#).

## Piedmont Housing Alliance creates affordable housing through innovation, determination

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) creates partnerships across the state in its mission to create safe, affordable, and prosperous communities in which to live, work and do business in Virginia.

In Charlottesville, one of DHCD’s nonprofit partners, the Piedmont Housing Alliance (PHA), is known for using innovative and “out-of-the-box” thinking to achieve its mission.

The nonprofit, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, is a housing organization providing homeownership counseling, fair housing education, community development financing, and homeownership and rental housing development opportunities. PHA serves the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, Greene, and Nelson, and the City of Charlottesville.

Led by Executive Director Stu Armstrong for the past 11 years, PHA is continuing to innovate and find new ways of achieving its mission and goals. With an entrepreneurial spirit and a background in organizational behavior and development, Armstrong prides the agency on its

innovative entrepreneurial approach.

“From day one we were doing mixed-income housing,” said Armstrong. “To us, that’s the key to stabilizing a neighborhood and providing homes for low-to-moderate income homeowners and assisting them in achieving social stabilization and improved financial health.”



PHA Executive Director Stu Armstrong

As a DHCD certified Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), PHA has been completing strategic revitalization and new construction projects for the Charlottesville area since 1997.

“When we started our first project, Star Hill, there were four boarded up houses,” said Armstrong.

“When we finished we had completed five houses, three of them were market-rate and the other two were for our clients.”

By creating a mix of market-rate and affordable housing, PHA is able to make the numbers work for them to be able to create additional affordable housing projects. After Star

Hill, PHA completed six homes in another mixed-income community on Hinton Avenue. Once completed the effort resulted in a significant decrease in crime, an improved streetscape, and new investment from other homeowners and landlords.

Shea Hollifield, DHCD's deputy director for housing, believes PHA is a very effective partner.

According to Hollifield, "PHA focuses on a holistic community approach. They look at how their work will



impact the housing conditions and affordability as well as the overall impact on the neighborhood. This is a good match for DHCD's comprehensive focus on housing and community development."

PHA continues to innovate, recently creating a for-profit subsidiary corporation, Central Virginia Development Solutions, Inc.(CVDS, Inc.)

"As a 501-C 3, according to the IRS code, we can't develop housing where less than 75 percent of the households will be occupied by families earning at or below 80 percent of the area median income," said Armstrong. "By creating CVDS, Inc. we can now develop up to 75 percent of new units targeted to middle-income households and 25 percent for low-income, where appropriate within the marketplace."

Armstrong sites the corporation's first project as a prime example of why this is necessary.

Located walking distance to the University of Virginia (UVA) hospital in Charlottesville, the King and Grove Street project is planned to be an upscale mixed-use, mixed-income urban condominium complex.

"By developing and selling homes using the mixed-income model, we're able to harvest the economic

energy of the middle class to pay for the mission work of social programming we do for lower income workers and families," said Armstrong.

In addition to creating and preserving affordable housing, PHA's Regional Home Ownership Center (RHOC) provides comprehensive homeownership, reverse mortgage, predatory lending, foreclosure, and general financial awareness counseling.

Last year, RHOC served more than 700 clients. As part of the symptoms of the subprime issue, the RHOC's "rescue team" helped 63 families or households avoid losing their homes to foreclosure.

Armstrong notes that the number of individuals seeking foreclosure counseling rose 174 percent this past fiscal year over last year.

Additionally, PHA provides down payment, closing cost and other financial assistance to first-time homebuyers by working with programs such as DHCD's HOMEownership Down Payment Assistance Program (HOME), the Virginia Individual Development Accounts (VIDA) program, and the Virginia Housing Development Authority's (VHDA) below-market SPARC fixed-rate mortgages.

"By leveraging these programs over the last several years with the New Thomas Jefferson Community Workforce Housing Fund, PHA's RHOC just celebrated it 400th first-time homebuyer!" said Armstrong.

"Homeownership is a cornerstone of neighborhood revitalization, but it is very important to make sure that people are well prepared for this big step," said Hollifield.



"Housing counseling services like those provided by PHA are an essential component, and the financial assistance that VIDA and HOME bring to the table help with the financial aspects of the process."

"PHA has done a great job of blending resources to help people become successful home owners," added Hollifield. Armstrong likes to describe PHA as "vertically integrated."

“We are like a car dealership – they sell, finance and fix the car. We are a certified CHDO and housing counseling agency, we teach people how to buy houses, we build houses, and help them finance the house – even those we didn’t build.”

The agency is also innovating in the area of green building, partnering with the UVA Schools of Architecture, Engineering and Applied Science to design and build a series of 400 to 1,400 square foot ecological, modular and affordable housing units.

The project – known as ecoMOD1, has already been named Best Residential Project for 2006 by the Virginia Sustainable Building Network, and is having an influence on the modular housing industry.

“We were already one of the first CHDO’s to build Energy Star certified and EarthCraft homes in Virginia,” said Armstrong.

“By partnering with UVA to create innovative environmental building techniques and materials within a modular context, and then requesting these materials and techniques be used in the homes we purchase from a mainstream modular builder, Mod-u-kraft, PHA’s ‘building green’ values are spreading to a much broader market outside of its traditional service area.”

Additionally, PHA is embarking on a new partnership with the Charlottesville Albemarle Technology Vocational School (CATEC), where high school students learn trades such as framing, trimming, plumbing, and more to enhance green building within its curriculum.

“We are hoping to use the learning from our UVA partnership to influence the design and construction of small green modules that could be built through vocational schools like CATEC throughout our region,” said Armstrong. “By way of this innovative vision, we will instill a ‘build-it-green’ value system amongst the next generation of home builders.”

PHA will continue to innovate and find new ways to create and assist individuals to obtain affordable housing. By building partnership such as those with DHCD, VHDA, UVA, CATEC, Modu-Craft, local governments, USDA Rural development and others, PHA aims to continue to find out-of-the-box approaches to creating and expanding affordable housing opportunities and initiatives.

“We are fortunate that our partners, especially DHCD, have also embraced innovation,” said Armstrong. “Without innovation, there’s only status quo and complacency. By being open to creative ideas, DHCD has been instrumental in helping us achieve our goals – through their technical assistance programs and training, scholarships, capacity building and more, the help they have provided us has been tremendous, just tremendous.”

For more information about the Piedmont Housing Alliance, visit: <http://www.piedmonthousingalliance.org/>.

## By the numbers

In 11 years Piedmont Housing Alliance (PHA) has racked up impressive statistics. Here are just a few of its most recent activities;

- In Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 PHA served approximately 1,477 individuals, with 85 percent of them earning less than 60 percent of the Charlottesville Metropolitan Statistical Area Median Income.
- PHA achieved a new milestone by celebrating its 400<sup>th</sup> first-time homebuyer – with 78 new first-time homebuyers being assisted in FY 2006, and 66 in FY 2007. PHA’s goal is to help 500 families purchase a home by the end of 2008.
- In FY 2007, PHA’s Regional Home Ownership Center (RHOC) helped 63 individuals save their homes through delinquency, default, and foreclosure counseling. PHA has counseled another 14 clients on obtaining a reverse mortgage.
- In the last fiscal year, PHA provided more than \$650,000 in down payment assistance, and \$7 million in VHDA below-market SPARC fixed-rate mortgage loans. Next year, PHA expects to increase to more than \$850,000 in down payment assistance and \$5 million in VHDA SPARC fixed-rate loans.
- In FY 2007, PHA provided more than \$71,500 in grant funds to repair and rehabilitate owner-occupied homes in Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, Greene, and Nelson Counties. This partnership with Rural Development provides an average of \$2,500 per client. PHA expects to provide an additional \$70,000 in repair funds to the region this fall.
- In FY 2007, PHA’s RHOC conducted 44 financial literacy classes and trained 466 participants.

## Livable Homes Tax Credit helps seniors age in place, provides assistance for accessible housing

According to the Virginia Department of Aging, by the year 2025 more than 25 percent of Virginia's population will be over the age of 60. At the same time, the number of Virginians aged 85 and older will increase five times faster than the state's total population growth.

For Virginia's senior population and those with disabilities, the focus on accessible housing is increasing.

Beginning in January, 2008, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will administer the Virginia Livable Home Tax Credit (LHTC) program, designed to improve accessibility and universal visibility for Virginia's residential units.

"This program is designed to help people with disabilities, or those planning to age-in-place to more easily afford accessible housing," said Shea Hollifield, deputy director of the Division of Housing for DHCD.

The program provides tax credits, up to \$500, for the purchase of a new residence, and up to 25 percent in tax credits for the cost of retrofitting existing units, not to exceed \$500.

"While we realize that \$500 will not come close to the costs associated with retro-fitting or purchasing accessible housing, it's a great starting point," said Hollifield. "Once the program gains ground there may be opportunities to increase the amount of the tax credits."

This September, staff from the Division of Housing held input sessions throughout the state in preparation for developing program guidelines for the LHTC. Recommendations from these sessions were posted for public comment and the final guidelines are now available on DHCD's Web site, [www.dhcd.virginia.gov](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov).

"We are excited to be administering this program," said Hollifield. "We hope that with the new regulations and efforts to spread the word about this program, it can grow and be very beneficial to Virginians who need accessible housing."

The first applications for the program will be accepted in February, 2009, for work completed during the 2008 tax year, after the program has been initiated.

Accessible housing standards vary depending on whether the unit is new or if an existing unit is being retro-fitted to provide accessibility.

**Accessibility features** that meet existing standards include:

- Accessible route to a zero-step entrance on a firm surface that is no steeper than 1:12 from a driveway or public sidewalk;
- Zero-step entrance;
- Doors with at least 32 inches of clear width;
- Hallways and passages with at least 36 inches of clear width;
- Accessible light switches, electrical outlets, and environmental controls;
- Accessible bathroom; and
- Accessible and usable kitchen facilities.

Additionally, grants are available for universal visitability upgrades.

Universal visitability standards are similar to those of accessible housing standards, providing at least a one zero-step entrance by an accessible route on a firm surface no steeper than 1:12 slope proceeding from a driveway or public sidewalk.

Universal visitability also includes: an accessible bathroom (can be a half bath/powder room) on the same floor as the zero-step entrance; doors with

at least 32 inches of clear width and hallways/passage ways of at least 36 inches of clear width to the accessible bathroom and eating area.

"Visitability provides accessibility for persons who currently have disabilities as well as ensuring that our housing stock is appropriate for the future when increasing numbers of citizens age and develop mobility limitations," Hollifield noted.

Eligibility is not dependent on income. Anyone filing Virginia individual income tax refunds who has incurred costs for the purchase of new residential units with accessibility or



universal visitability features is eligible for the program under the following guidelines:

- Eligible purchase or retrofitting expenses cannot be claimed by more than one taxpayer;
- New residential units must include three features of the *universal visitability* standards, or include at least three *accessibility features*;
- Existing units being retrofitted must include at least one *accessibility feature*;

- All accessibility and universal visitability features must be completed in conformity with the provisions of Virginia's Uniform Statewide Building Code;
- Documentation must be submitted with the application. In the case of the purchase of a new residential unit, a copy of the executed sales contract must be attached; and
- For retrofitting, a scope of work, work specifications, construction contracts, invoices and/or cancelled checks documenting the type of work, cost and payment must be provided.

Accessibility features that are provided in order to comply with existing Fair Housing, Equal Opportunity, Americans with Disabilities Act, or other local, state or federal requirements are not eligible for tax credits.

Additionally, accessibility features that are funded through the Granting Freedom Program, Indoor Plumbing Rehabilitation program, Community Development Block Grant program, or other local, state or federal programs are not eligible for tax credits.

Any portion of costs borne by the tax credit applicant under matching requirements of these programs may be eligible for tax credits. Costs for accessibility or visitability features must be incurred by the applicant in order to claim the tax credit.

Tax credits that exceed the eligible individual's tax liability may be carried forward for up to five years. If the total amount of tax credits issued under this program exceeds \$1 million in a fiscal year, DHCD will pro-rate the amount of credits among the eligible applicants.

## Commonwealth Scholars program comes to Dickenson County

The Dickenson County School system has been awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Flex-E Grant by Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Office of Community Capacity Building (OCCB).

The grant funds will be used to implement a pilot of the Commonwealth Scholars program for Dickenson County eighth graders.

Commonwealth Scholars is a national program and project of the Virginia Career Education Foundation (VCEF). The program encourages students, beginning in the eighth grade, to take on a rigorous course load that goes beyond minimum graduation requirements for a Standard Diploma.

The program utilizes business leaders as volunteers to encourage students to complete the program, which is designed to prepare them for college and future careers. The goal is to help the students gain one of the most critical skills they will ever use in work and life: the ability to tackle challenging work.

"Commonwealth Scholars is a good fit with the direction we want to go in our schools," said Dickenson County Superintendent of Schools Judy Compton.

"It is more critical than ever that our schools and businesses work together to encourage and support students beginning well before they reach high school to prepare them for post-secondary education and the world of work. It is their future and they are our future."

On Oct. 23, 2007, the county's middle schools received banners with Commonwealth Scholars emblem. The school system has developed tutoring and mentoring plans in collaboration with University of Virginia-Wise and with the county's Office on Youth.

The Commonwealth Scholars core course of study features a Work Ready-College Ready curriculum. For example, students must complete Algebra 2 and Physics. The Alliance for Education reported in June that Virginia would save close to \$92 million annually in community college remediation costs if high schools graduated all students ready for college.

The Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce featured Commonwealth Scholars at their annual banquet on Nov. 16, 2007. More than 300 business and community leaders attended.

"Students who complete the Commonwealth Scholars course of study will be better prepared with the skills, knowledge, and discipline necessary to compete in the global marketplace, said Governor Timothy M. Kaine.

The Flex-E Grant Program is designed to help rural communities such as Dickenson County jump-start their local economies. Grants are small investments to address technical assistance, leadership and civic capacity needs in the ARC-designated "distressed" county.



## Capacity building initiative benefits nonprofits and local governments in southwest and southside Virginia

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)'s Office of Community Capacity Building (OCCB) has been awarded funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Rural Development) to improve the organizational capacity and effectiveness of eight organizations in Southwest and Southside Virginia.

As part of the program, called the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI), OCCB will work with selected organizations for three years to enhance their ability to undertake affordable housing or community economic development projects.

The four participants from southside Virginia include: SCORE, Inc., the Telamon Gretna field office, the Town of Lawrenceville and Brunswick County. Participants from southwest include: The Crooked Road, 'Round the Mountain, The Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Mountain Music Center, and Giles County Housing and Community Development, Inc.

Celebratory kick-offs were held in Abingdon and Lawrenceville in June.

As part of the kick-off, each recipient organization participated in an individualized assessment process to gauge strengths and challenges. Based on their assessment results, each organization will develop a customized work plan to improve upon priority areas that will best leverage positive impact and results.

Other components of the program include training, technical assistance, and funding to supplement capacity building activities.

"We know that strong organizations build strong communities.," said Associate Director of OCCB Michelle Jones.

"The RCDI program is a great opportunity to leverage OCCB resources and expand our work to build the capacity of the nonprofit and local government sectors in two traditionally underserved and economically challenged regions of the Commonwealth."

## DHCD staff inspect industrialized buildings in-state and across the country

Did you know that more than 5,000 industrialized buildings were manufactured and certified for placement in Virginia during the past year?

Industrialized, or manufactured buildings - commonly called modular buildings, are more common than you think.

"While site constructed buildings account for a large majority of the new building stock in Virginia, the number of factory built structures is increasing every year," says Eric Leatherby, state building code senior engineer for the Division of Building and Fire Regulation.



These factory-built structures encompass a wide range of uses.

Nearly 60 percent are used for residential purposes – including single family homes, duplexes, townhouses, and apartments. The remaining 40 percent are commercial units serving as offices, construction trailers, schools, classrooms, restaurants, convenience stores, prisons, equipment shelters and kiosks.

Industrialized buildings are built to the same building codes and standards as site-built structures.

The Virginia Industrialized Building Safety Regulations (IBSR) establishes statewide standards for the construction and installation of industrialized buildings. The IBSR is administered through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)'s State Building Code Administrative Office (SBCAO) in the Division of Building and Fire Regulation.

### The inspection process

Nearly 80 percent of these buildings are manufactured out of state, including North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Some are manufactured as far away as California.

This makes the job of inspecting the manufacturing facilities more complicated for staff at DHCD.

That's why Virginia, like many other states, utilizes a third party system to ensure that the design and construction of these buildings is in compliance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Third party agencies, known as Compliance Assurance Agencies (CAA), are generally private engineering firms approved by the state to perform building plan design reviews and factory inspections of industrialized buildings.

"Without the third party system the SBCAO would have to employ a staff large enough to review more than 5,000 plans a year, and conduct inspections in facilities located from Maine to California," said Leatherby.

Currently there are 12 CAA's approved by the SBCAO, which inspect 5,000 to 6,000 units on behalf of Virginia each year.

The CAA reviews and approves building plans, and then continues the process by conducting building inspections through each phase of construction. Generally industrialized building assembly lines contain 12 or more construction stations – including flooring, walls, roofing, electrical, insulation, drywall, roofing, siding, etc.

Once completed, the CAA applies its certification label, as well as the Virginia certification seal to the building.

"The CAA label and state seal act as verification to local building officials that the structure was built in compliance with the USBC," said Leatherby.



Locally, the building official is then responsible for ensuring the structure is set-up in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions.

## State monitoring

DHCD staff provide oversight of the CAA's by monitoring their design review and building inspection duties.

DHCD staff review approximately 33 percent of the building plans that have been approved by the CAA's for compliance with applicable building codes.

"If code violations are found on plans approved by a CAA, they will receive a deviation letter and they must re-submit the plans with corrections," said Leatherby.

DHCD staff also perform approximately 60 factory audits each year at various manufacturing facilities both in and out of Virginia. Audits are generally performed at the factories which build the largest number of structures for Virginia, which is determined through tracking certification seals.



Leatherby and other DHCD staff travel to North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and as far away as Georgia and Indiana to perform these audits.

"Although there is quite a bit of traveling involved with this program, the trips are spread out so I'm not away from home for long periods," says Leatherby.

"The travel also allows me to meet face to face with the manufacturers and the CAA's which helps us communicate better when I'm in the office."

During the audits, staff evaluate the effectiveness of both the CAA and the manufacturer's quality control program, reviewing inspection reports and production files. Inspection reports are reviewed to confirm that production violations are being properly documented and that corrective actions to remedy the violations are addressed.

"We also check to see that testing of components such as plumbing and electrical systems are being routinely witnessed, and that all phases of the production line are being inspected," said Leatherby.

Next, staff review quality control inspection lists at each production station to ensure they are being utilized, and buildings are inspected to verify that they are being constructed in accordance with approved plans.

"We check the testing equipment for proper calibration and verify that building materials are being properly stored and protected from the elements."

After each audit, a report is prepared and discussed with the manufacturer, as well as sent to the CAA for review and comment.

## A growing trend

As industrialized buildings increasingly become an attractive and viable alternative to site-built homes and buildings, their numbers in Virginia continue to grow. Since 2002, the number of industrialized buildings has grown from 3,300 built for Virginia, to more than 5,200 in 2006.

If the trend continues, Leatherby and his peers will continue to perform inspections to ensure the safety of these buildings for all Virginians.

# Developing building and fire regulations takes organized workgroup consensus

Every two to three years, the Division of Building and Fire Regulation (DBFR), located within the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is tasked with assisting the state Board of Housing and Community Development in developing and amending Virginia's building and fire regulations.

"With more than six regulations and several hundred potential amendments involved, and many different stakeholders concerned with these changes, it is quite a task each year," says Vernon Hodge, technical services manager in the Technical Assistance Services Office (TASO) of the DBFR.

"Every year we continually work on the code change process as it evolves and as the issues become more complex."

During the code change cycle, the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC), the Virginia Industrialized Building Safety Regulations, the Virginia Manufactured Homes Safety Regulations, the Virginia Amusement Device Regulations, and other similar regulations, collectively known as Virginia's building and fire regulations, are updated.

DBFR works with the board and stakeholders throughout the process to facilitate the regulation updates, using the newest available nationally-recognized model codes and standards.

## History

"From the first time the USBC was adopted in Virginia in 1973, and the SFPC in 1987, the process for developing the building and fire regulations has been under continuous evolution," said Hodge.

In the past, model codes promulgated through the Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA) organization, and more recently the International Code Council (ICC), known as the I-Codes, and the standards of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have traditionally been used as the basis for the state building and fire regulations, in conjunction with other nationally-recognized standards.

Previously, updating the codes required little more than a public hearing for the USBC and notification to every building official in the state. In the 1990's, the process became more comprehensive with the passage of new

laws and policies governing the promulgation of regulations and concerning their fiscal impact on regulated parties.

"Building and fire regulations are different in that they rely on nationally recognized model codes and standards, which have already gone through extensive development and scrutiny," said Hodge.

In recognition of this difference between typical state regulations and the department's building and fire regulations, the state laws governing the processing of regulations were amended in 2006 to permit Virginia's building and fire regulations to be adopted with less analysis and justification than is required for other state agency regulations.

This enabled division staff and the Board of Housing and Community Development to develop a custom-tailored process for building and fire regulations.

The new process was implemented in 2006 with the latest round of activity to update Virginia's building and fire regulations, known as the 2006 Code Change Cycle. This cycle incorporates the 2006 editions of the I-Codes into the building and fire regulations.

## Consensus building

To assure that those affected by the codes have an opportunity to participate in the code update process, DBFR established a number of workgroups, chiefly by subject matter, in the codes. Division staff prepared packages for each workgroup and facilitated the workgroup meetings, encouraging open discussions and noting suggestions for further refinement of the code change proposals.

Workgroup One was established to address residential code issues, and contained participants from the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association's (VBCOA) Residential Code Committee, the Virginia Plumbing and Mechanical Inspectors Association (VPMIA), the Virginia Chapter of the American Institute for Architects, the Home Builders Association of Virginia, the American Forest and Paper Association, the fire services industry, and several product manufacturers. This group was instrumental in making consensus recommendations on approximately 20 code change proposals considered by the group.

Workgroup Two was established to evaluate changes to the administrative provisions of the codes, and contained participants from the VBCOA's Administrative Provisions

Committee, the Apartment and Office Building Association, the Virginia Apartment Management Association, the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, the Virginia Fire Prevention Association (VFPA), the Virginia Chapter of the International Association of Electrical Inspectors (IAEI), the Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and the Home Builders Association of Virginia. This group successfully gained consensus on approximately 12 of the approximately 24 code change proposals considered by the group.

Workgroup Three was established to evaluate technical code changes to the I-Codes and contained participants from the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects, the Virginia Fire Services Board's Code Committee, the VBCOA, the VPMIA, the Virginia Chapter of the IAIA, the Virginia State Corporation Commission, the natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas companies, the Virginia Hotel and Tourist Association, the Virginia Department of Corrections, the Virginia Masonry Association, utility contractors, product companies, the Virginia Department of General Services, fire protection equipment installers, the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, the VFPA, the Bed and Breakfast Association of Virginia, the Apartment and Office Building Association, the Virginia Apartment Management Association, the American Forest and Paper Association and the Virginia State Fire Fighters.

This group considered more than 40 code change proposals and developed consensus recommendations on more than half of those proposals considered.

DBFR also established several specialized workgroups to consider issues such as in-building emergency communication equipment for emergency responders, sprinkler standards for attics in apartment buildings marketed to senior citizens, and the implementation of a Wildland-Urban Interface Code newly published by the ICC.



### Approval process

The processes and procedures for implementing code changes includes publishing proposed regulations, holding a public hearing, distributing a "compilation document" containing all proposals and staff evaluations for 30-day review and public comment period, and final consideration of all comments by the Board of Housing and Community Development.

Since the three workgroups were involved from the beginning of the code change process, they also provided input and feedback for the board to make informed and conscientious decisions on the code change proposals submitted during the 2006 code change cycle.

"On behalf of DBFR and DHCD, I want to thank all of the participants of the workgroups for volunteering their time and energy to this important undertaking," said Emory Rodgers, deputy director of the DBFR.

"Developing and updating Virginia's building and fire regulations with input at all levels ensures that we will continue to provide a safe built environment for our citizens."

For additional information on the 2006 Code Change Process and to view all workgroup packages, proposed regulations, Codes and Standards Committee packages and additional information, please visit the division's Web page for the [2006 Code Change Process](#) or contact the Technical Services Unit at (804) 371-7174 or TASO within DBFR at (804) 371-7140.



## Local building official has first-hand involvement in agency revitalization projects

Jimmy Whitten is originally from Illinois, but has found living in the small town of Floyd, Virginia, and serving as its building official a unique and rewarding experience.

Since 2000, Whitten has served as the building official for the small Virginia town, which is undergoing a significant downtown revitalization project partially funded through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)'s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

The immense revitalization project has kept Whitten quite active. As the only local code enforcement official for Floyd County, Whitten is charged with the many daily tasks in performing the enforcement responsibilities of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC), from the review of construction documents/plans to the issuance of occupancy certificates.

"There is certainly a lot going on," said Whitten. "A lot of older buildings are being turned into spaces for offices, small businesses, and shops; a new hotel and amphitheater are being built; every building downtown will be affected and it will be great for Floyd."

Floyd, which is a haven for many artists and musicians, is quickly becoming a destination for heritage tourists and visitors on *The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail*. As the local economy transitions into one of tourism and arts, Floyd has received \$1,000,000 in CDBG funding for various revitalization projects.

\$700,000 of the funding is being spent to remove blighting conditions, including façade improvements to 14 buildings, some demolition, storm drainage improvements, and more. The additional \$300,000 is being utilized to create a low-interest revolving loan fund for businesses wishing to create new jobs within the project area.

Plans for the revitalization include the creation of The Floyd Hotel, which is being constructed using green building standards as well as geothermal energy design. Existing

trees will remain in place, incorporated into the interior of the building. Additionally, each room of the hotel will offer a theme and be painted by a local artist.

The town is also planning a business incubator, a natural

amphitheater, parks and landscaping, sidewalks, public parking, facades, and more through the revitalization.

The community parking lot will connect the hotel with The Village Green, a newly constructed pedestrian retail and business center consisting of 15 to 20 stores and office spaces. Adjacent to the parking lot, a circular walking path having benches and other park-like features will provide additional open and community space, and will be able to host outside functions, festivals, and concerts.

Also in downtown Floyd, the existing Winter Sun building, which housed a phone machine factory, a clothing business, and a Tex-Mex restaurant, will be converted to an additional retail outlet of approximately 10 shops.

Recently, the historic Floyd Country Store, the oldest venue on *The Crooked Road*, sparked the revitalization efforts by completing an extensive renovation as a centerpiece of the project.

At nearly 100 years old, the store has been a central gathering place for the Floyd community, and draws several hundred local residents each week for a Friday night jamboree.

The timberframe store's revitalization included restoring its use to full-capacity as a country store vending local wares and crafts, a restored 1936 ice cream soda fountain, extended stage and upgraded sound system, a new façade, and more.

However it's been within the last six months that the majority of the planned projects for the revitalization have begun, and as the local building official, Whitten is involved in each one. Whitten enjoys seeing the changes being made to his community, and being able to participate in the revitalization and find ways to help move projects along.

"Almost all of the buildings downtown are being brought back to what their original appearances were," said Whitten. "So it's a busy time."



The Village Green



The historic Floyd Country Store



Construction of the Floyd Hotel

“Everyone in Floyd is happy to see the downtown area get redone; at lunch time everyone comes outside and walks around; they will really enjoy having the new parking areas, sidewalks, and parks.”

Across the street from the historic Floyd Country store an early 20<sup>th</sup> century structure previously utilized as a factory, automotive repair shop, and a car dealership is undergoing the planning and design phases by a team of developers and architects for a major renovation project. Although the 15,000 square foot building is currently unoccupied, two restaurants previously operated in the lower level of the building.

The proposed renovation of the building will create additional assembly/restaurant, business, and mercantile occupancies on the lower level, and upscale residential apartments on the upper level. The original structure of the building consists of concrete masonry block and brick veneer, and the renovation would refurbish the brick façade, affixing wrought iron railings to the residential balconies at the upper level.

While the revitalization efforts are much welcomed, they occasionally provide challenges for those involved in their planning and design. For example, the preliminary review of the design for the proposed apartments revealed several building code challenges.

“The location of the building in relation to the adjacent property lines has been a concern, especially in consideration of the large exterior openings” said Whitten. “However, as the building will include an automatic sprinkler system, I am comfortable that the fire hazard risks are not as great since its use will be primarily residential.”

The initial planning and development phases of the town project and public areas required a cooperative agreement with the town officials and property owners to relocate the property line separating the dealership building from the town’s property nearer to the building.

Although a deed restriction or stipulation permits the balconies of the residential occupancies to encroach upon the air space of the town property that will be utilized for public parking, this property line became more of an apparent issue during the design phase of the building relative to fire separation distance and the protection of the large exterior openings, as required by the building code.

Whitten sought the advice of state officials in the Division of Building and Fire Regulation (DBFR) at DHCD to examine solutions and alternatives.

Emory Rodgers, DBFR deputy director, and Vernon Hodge, DBFR technical services manager, visited Floyd County and met with Whitten and the developer at the project site to evaluate the existing building conditions and to offer

recommendations for compliance with the VUSBC.

“This project is a prime candidate for the ‘Compliance Alternatives’ provisions of our state building code, which permits an evaluation of the major safety components of the existing building and uses a scoring system to determine whether compliance may be achieved,” said Hodge. “With the installation of a sprinkler system, the scores should be favorable.”

Working through these issues and seeing the final results of creative and innovative thinking is a positive for Whitten.

“It’s a wonderful feeling to see a building go up or be redone; I love what I do.”

Whitten obtained his first inspection certification through the Southern Building Code Congress International in 1989, while working for the Florida Power Corporation, where he performed energy audits for the power company, rating speculative homes for builders.

After relocating to Virginia, Whitten became re-certified through the International Code Council as a building code official, building official, plans examiner, commercial building inspector, residential building inspector, and also as a residential mechanical, plumbing, and electrical inspector.

“When I worked in Florida, you would go out and inspect a home and come back to the office; here I get to see contractors from the start to the end of a project, and I have time to get to know them,” he says.

In fact, residents of Floyd have gotten to know Whitten pretty well also.

“If my garage door is open, everyone knows that I am at home and working on my cars,” said Whitten. “They will stop by to ask me a question or two about a project they are working on – that’s small town life.”



Jimmy Whitten

# DHCD Developments



## DHCD Deputy Director receives Outstanding Leadership Award



### DHCD Deputy Director receives Outstanding Leadership Award

On Thursday, Nov. 29 DHCD's Deputy Director of Building and Fire Regulation received the Outstanding Leadership Award presented by the Apartment and Office Building Association (AOBA) of Metropolitan Washington.

The award was presented for Rodgers' dedicated service to the AOBA, and for his professionalism and fairness in conducting stakeholder workgroups regarding building and fire code change proposals.

Congratulations Emory!

*Rodgers accepts the award presented by Brian Gordon, AOBA vice president of government affairs.*



# Calendar & Observances

## HOME Program Input Sessions

Virginia developers of affordable and special needs housing and regional administrators of the Homeowner Down Payment Assistance Program will meet to survey and share their opinions on the effectiveness and impact of the Affordable Housing and Special Needs Program, and the Homeowner Down Payment Assistance Program. For more information, please contact Willie Fobbs at (804) 371-7133 or [willie.fobbs@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:willie.fobbs@dhcd.virginia.gov).

### Affordable Housing and Special Needs Program

**Tuesday, Feb. 5**

**10 a.m.**

*Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) - Boardroom  
501 N. 2nd Street  
Richmond, VA 23219*

### Affordable Housing and Special Needs Program

**Tuesday, Feb. 12**

**10 a.m.**

*Wytheville Meeting Center  
333 Community Boulevard  
Wytheville, VA 24382*

### Homeowner Down Payment Assistance Program

**Wednesday, Feb. 13**

**10 a.m.**

*DHCD Boardroom  
501 N. 2nd Street  
Richmond, VA 23219*

### Affordable Housing and Special Needs Program

**Thursday, Feb. 14**

**10 a.m.**

*Thurman Brisben Center  
471 Central Road  
Fredericksburg, VA*

## Regular Meeting Commission on Local Government

**March 10, 2008, 10:00 a.m.**

*Jackson Center Board Room  
501 North Second Street  
Richmond, VA 23219*

For information, please contact Susan Williams at (804)786-6508 or e-mail: [susan.williams@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:susan.williams@dhcd.virginia.gov)

## Regular Meeting Virginia Manufactured Housing Board

**March 20, 2008 10:00 a.m.**

*Jackson Center Board Room  
501 North Second Street  
Richmond, VA 23219*

Regular meeting of the Virginia Manufactured Housing Board to handle licensing issues, complaints and claims against licensees, and to carry out administrative responsibilities under the Manufactured Housing Licensing and Transaction Recovery Fund Regulations.

For more information, contact Lorenzo E. Dyer at (804) 371-7160 or by e-mail to [Lorenzo.Dyer@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:Lorenzo.Dyer@dhcd.virginia.gov)

## First-time homeowner Constance Battle helped by DHCD's VIDA program



Constance looks on as she is presented with a Crape Myrtle tree meant to grow with her as she begins life in her new home.

On Aug. 21, 2007 Constance Battle closed on her first home.

Just three days later, holding back tears, Battle thanked staff of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), New Visions, New Ventures, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and many more for supporting her during a press event held at her new home to promote the Virginia Individual Development Accounts (VIDA) program.

VIDA, administered through localized nonprofits termed intermediaries, is an individual development account program that provides financial counseling and a two to one savings match for eligible low- income families saving for homeownership, education, or to start their own business.

For the past year, Battle has participated in VIDA through Richmond intermediary New Visions, New Ventures, taking financial management classes and saving \$2,000 into a designated account. With the \$4,000 maximum VIDA match, Battle was able to put down \$6,000 on her new home on Richmond's Southside.

"I appreciate all of the help that has been given to me to reach this goal," said Battle. "I feel everyone has worked together with my interest in mind, and I couldn't have been in better hands."

In addition to the VIDA program, battle saved more than \$2,000 in escrow through Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA)'s Section 8 Housing Self-Sufficiency Program. This funding will act as a safety cushion for repairs and other needs as she begins her new

life as a homeowner. RRHA is also providing financing for her home during mortgage years 16 – 30 from a federal grant.

The first 15 years are being financed through Neighborworks Resource Group, which required Battle to complete homebuyer's classes. She took additional homebuyers courses through Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), and received \$7,500 toward closing costs and home inspections from the organization.

Through these collaborations and partnerships, training and time to save, Battle was able to move into her new home prepared for the ups and downs of homeownership.

"Constance is a true VIDA success story," said DHCD Director Bill Shelton. "She has taken the financial literacy and homebuyer's courses, she has worked hard to save for her goals, and we are extremely to have been a part of making her dream of homeownership a reality."

At the press event, Battle was presented with several housewarming gifts by the various agencies and organizations that assisted her, including a Crape Myrtle tree from DHCD.



Front row L to R: Louellen Brumgard (DHCD), Dr. Ann Maust, Donna Stallings (New Visions, New Ventures), Constance Battle (homeowner), Erika Payne (Neighborworks), Sandra Coles (HOME) and Sabrina Blackett (DHCD). Back row L to R: Barbara Cotter (VDSS), Bill Shelton (DHCD), Demetrius Murray (RRHA), Lynn Crytzer (Century 21), Robert Jackson (RRHA)

Battle was the first VIDA saver to graduate with the goal of homeownership in the Richmond area. Statewide, 23 first-time homebuyers have been assisted through VIDA since 2005 and currently 152 individuals are enrolled as VIDA savers.

Eligible individuals must: be a U.S. citizen or legal alien; be employed; have a dependent child under the age of 18 living in their home, if saving for business or education; and meet household income requirements.

VIDA is a partnership between DHCD, the Virginia Department of Social services, the Virginia Housing Development Authority, Virginia

Community Action Partnership, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Community Services' Assets for Independence Grant.

Battle is now settling into her new home, in which she will continue raising three grandchildren as she has since her daughter was killed in an act of domestic violence in 1996.

Of sharing her story, Battle said that she "hopes my story will encourage someone else to try these programs, they really work."

## Self-Help Virginia program utilizes volunteers to provide water and sewer for low-income residents

It may be hard to believe that in Virginia, in 2008, there are still thousands of homes lacking adequate water and sewer services. One house at a time, a program launched by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in 1998 is helping to make a difference.

The Self-Help Virginia program, funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), provides funding primarily for materials, project supervision, engineering and administrative costs, for water and wastewater projects in Virginia's



rural localities benefitting low- to moderate- income families.

What makes the program unique – and award winning – is that it requires community volunteers to do the majority of the labor, saving a minimum of 40 percent over conventional contracted water and/or wastewater projects.

“Self-Help Virginia stretches the available dollars for water and wastewater projects by using volunteer labor from the community,” said Jimmy Wallace, program manager in DHCD’s Abingdon office.

Since its inception in 1998, more than 40 Self-Help projects have taken place throughout Virginia, providing water and wastewater service to more than 1,300 homes benefitting more than 3,000 citizens. The majority of these projects take place in rural areas where the topography

and distance from existing lines makes providing water and sewer service nearly impossible because of the expense.

“The same areas where it is so cost prohibitive to install water and sewer lines, are most often the same areas that suffer the most from failing ground water supplies and drought,” said Wallace. “It’s where the need is greatest.”



Through the past ten years of the program, Self-Help Virginia has overcome many of these obstacles. More than \$21,000,000 of construction work has been completed for an actual cost of less than \$10,000,000.

While the savings is impressive, it’s not the most important thing, according to Wallace.

“Of all the projects we have done, the overwhelming majority provided water to families that would not otherwise have adequate drinking water. To have witnessed that time and time again – the

joy and appreciation of those families is what makes this program so special and so worthwhile,” said Wallace.

One of the most recent Self-Help projects is taking place in Wakefield, Virginia, and is set to provide services to 36 households and 65 persons.

The Birch Island Road Community Water and Sewer Project broke ground on Sept. 18, 2007. The Town of Wakefield applied for grant funds for the program, which should be completed by the spring of 2008.



“One of the unique factors in the success of the Self-Help projects is that DHCD requires at least one volunteer take the lead on coordinating the rest of the volunteers and getting them motivated to come out,” said Wallace. “We call that special volunteer the project’s ‘sparkplug.’”

The Birch Island Road project's sparkplug is Norris Eley.

Eley is a retired Birch Island Road resident, who will benefit from the project. You would never know by witnessing his dedication and determination that Eley was the recipient of a heart transplant several years ago.

"He's out here every day that they can working on this project, laying down the pipe, organizing and motivating the volunteers, and bringing unbelievable energy to this project," said Wallace.

With more than 20 volunteers taking part in the project in Wakefield, more than 16,800 feet of water and sewer pipe are already in the ground.



"Sparkplug" Norris Eley

Last fall Joanne Peerman, program manager, organized staff from DHCD's Division of Community Development to volunteer for two days at the Birch Island Road project. During the two trips DHCD staff installed more than 640 linear feet of water lines for the project.

"I was impressed by the commitment of the area residents and the follow-through to complete the first phase of construction," said DHCD Program Administrator Matt Fitzgerald. "I got to see the local folks taking advantage of the little bit of help we gave them and turn it into something bigger."

DHCD Community Representative and Financial Analyst Roberta Gargiulo, who also volunteered, said "I was very impressed with how hard the residents worked to put in the sewer and water pipes. It was great to be able to help install the pipes and be apart of such a worth while project."



As of Jan. 15, 2008, all of the main line for the project has been installed.

Now, the volunteers are starting to install the pipes that will connect the houses to the main lines for each of the 36 homes in the neighborhood. Then the pipes will be flushed and sanitized, meters put in, and other preparations made for water and sewer service to begin.

The residents in the Birch Island Road project will now be customers of the Sussex Water Authority for sewer service, and the Town of Wakefield for water service.

"When we first launched this program in 1998 there were a lot of people, including me, who thought it might never work," said Wallace. "But we've had communities that have

a 'can-do' attitude that have found us, and if we give them the materials and supervision they need they will get out there and get the pipe installed."

The program has involved tremendous collaboration between state agencies, including DHCD, and the Virginia Departments of Health and Environmental Quality.

In 2004, DHCD was awarded a Community Development Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Self-Help Virginia program. The award was one of only 15 awarded nation-wide at HUD's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the CDBG program.

"The Self-Help Virginia program has been an invaluable tool for Virginia's rural areas to use in the challenge of creating viable and affordable water and wastewater systems," said DHCD Director Bill Shelton. "By using volunteer's to provide labor, we are able to stretch limited funding and provide resources to more localities throughout the state."

Self-Help Virginia has been a proven success in utilizing local talent, manpower and creativity to provide water and sewer services in areas where they are difficult to provide through conventional means.

"The goal of the program is to harness community skills and manpower to construct water and sewer lines in areas where those services are a challenge to provide through regular financing," said Joanne Peerman. "In the process, the program stretches limited financial resources to assist more communities than would be otherwise possible."

The most common examples of Self-Help Virginia activities include neighborhood residents acting as their own project managers, installing water and sewer lines, providing traffic control, and preparing meals for workers.

The residents of the Birch Island Road Self-Help Virginia project can expect to receive clean and sanitary water and wastewater services this spring. Currently, there are two Self-Help projects underway in Virginia, which are expected to benefit more than 150 Virginians.

For more information about Self-Help Virginia, visit: [www.dhcd.virginia.gov](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov).

## Karl Bren – Green Hero of the Planet



According to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, nearly half of all energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in the United States come from buildings.

While most climate change information focuses on transportation and cars, the built environment together - including homes, offices, schools, stores and more, lead transportation and industry (at 25 and 27 percent) in energy consumption.

The cost of heating and cooling modern buildings contributes to the vast majority of the energy consumption and emissions produced.

However, use of green construction materials and techniques is on the rise in both the public and private sector – and is targeted toward decreasing emissions produced by the built environment.

Karl Bren, president of Green Visions Consulting and executive director of EarthCraft Virginia, was one of five green heroes recently presented the “Green Hero of the Planet” award, cape not included, by STYLE Weekly at the Emerald Awards held Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2007.

Bren is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accredited professional with the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) who has been involved with green building and sustainable development for more than ten years. Bren is also the founder of the Virginia Sustainable Building Network and a founding board member of the James River Green Building Council and Better Housing Coalition.

According to Bren, the green building movement in Virginia is ahead of many other states.

“Within the last two years in Virginia green building has taken off,” said Bren. “You see green building now in commercial development, and in both market rate and affordable housing.”

In fact, the green building movement is increasing nationwide, with California in the lead. The USGBC now boasts more than 70 chapters nationwide, and many organizations and building professionals from code personnel to architects are coming

together to build green.

New developments, such as the proposed Roseland in Chesterfield County, are being built using green standards. Roseland will incorporate New Urbanism, focused on walkable interconnected communities, and green building into more than 1.5 million square feet of office and retail space, and more than 5,000 residential units.

“We are also seeing a lot of smaller developments and buildings utilizing green building techniques, especially around Charlottesville, Roanoke and Tidewater,” said Bren.

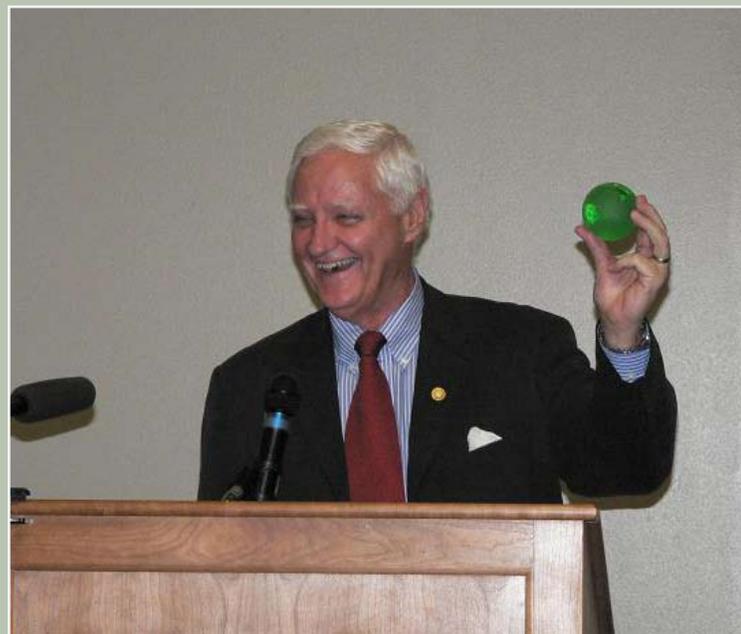
Green building standards, such as LEED for non-residential and EarthCraft for residential, are catching on as more builders realize that the minimal increase in costs are quickly made up as energy prices continue to climb.

“It’s becoming more mainstream. The big myth that it’s a lot more expensive to build green is giving way,” said Bren. “In reality the cost is one to three percent more to build green – but your home is 30 to 50 percent more efficient – every time fuel prices go up, you’ve made a better investment.”

In fact, green buildings now come in all shapes and sizes – from Habitat for Humanity homes to skyscrapers.

“Building green is the most immediate, efficient, and effective thing we can do to reduce emissions - and it makes sense from every standpoint to do so – it’s more economical, it’s healthier, and it reduces the strain on the environment,” said Bren. “Why wouldn’t you?”

For more information about building green, visit: [www.earthcraftvirginia.org](http://www.earthcraftvirginia.org) or [www.green-visions.com](http://www.green-visions.com).



# GHC2007

Hotel Roanoke





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