

**2014 Entry Form**  
(Complete one for each entry.)

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name REO and Community Outreach Marketing

HFA Virginia Housing Development Authority

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Qualified Entries must be received by **Tuesday, July 1, 2014.**

For more information about Qualified Entries, [click here to access the 2014 Entry Rules.](#)

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page.

HFA **Virginia Housing Development Authority**

Entry Name **REO and Community Outreach Marketing**

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

# Virginia Housing Development Authority REO and Community Outreach Marketing

***“By applying our corporate marketing expertise to address the needs of specific communities, we have dramatically strengthened public knowledge and perceptions of the properties, thereby significantly increasing occupancy.”***

***– Mike Hawkins, VHDA Managing Director of Community Outreach***

## **Background**

Community preservation is the core of community revitalization. Across Virginia, local governments, developers and non-profits are working together to transform declining neighborhoods into thriving communities for entertainment, working and – most importantly – living. These revitalization efforts require a strong plan, local commitment and multiple funding resources. This is where VHDA can help.

By partnering with VHDA, communities, organizations and developers can identify the resources and assistance they need to successfully begin revitalization efforts and provide affordable housing for all generations – including the growing senior population. Our REACH (Resources Enabling Affordable Community Housing) *Virginia* programs and marketing support can provide assistance – everything from an in-office review and email to a property manager to a full campaign – but only if affordable housing stakeholders know about this support, can see concrete evidence of its success, and contact VHDA to learn how they can be a part of it.

To generate awareness, as well as favorable perceptions of community revitalization, VHDA developed an effective marketing brand positioning campaign for three different properties.

## **Multifamily Real Estate Owned (REO) Properties**

- **1.) The Independence and 2.) Heritage Commons:** In 2011, two senior multifamily properties financed by VHDA, The Independence and Heritage Commons, entered foreclosure. VHDA was tasked with increasing the occupancy rate for each property with the idea that increased occupancy would make the properties more attractive for purchase, as well as generate more revenue. To increase occupancy, VHDA developed a marketing and rebranding campaign for each property. The Independence targeted a younger, more active senior population with the message – *Live Someplace Awesome*. For Heritage Commons, marketing focused on the brand promise – *Love Life Here*.
- **3.) The Village at Gateway:** In partnership with local government and the developer, Harris-Judah LLC, VHDA began work on The Village at Gateway in 2009. VHDA created a model for a mixed-use development with for sale condos requiring 20% of the condos to qualify for financing under VHDA’s First-time Homebuyer Program. The initial phase of the development included 133 residential condos for sale and 56,000 sq. ft. of retail/office space. VHDA rebranded the community and included a new tagline, *“The Neighborhood We’ve All Been Waiting For.”* From inception to the final touches on a comprehensive design center, VHDA worked closely with The Village at Gateway to develop a property that would provide affordable housing in an underserved area while supporting the revitalization needs of the community.

## **Why VHDA’s REO and Community Outreach Marketing is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria**

### **Innovative**

While VHDA enjoyed positive relationships with other properties and developments in the area, some were wary about working with us. There were concerns that VHDA might not fully understand the needs of the community or would bring in “low-income housing” that would generate controversy. To change this perception, a rebranding strategy with consistent, positive messaging was developed for all three properties. For each community, VHDA developed a new website, online display ads, TV and radio spots, flyers, print ads, direct mail and an enhanced social media presence on Facebook, YouTube, Google+, and Twitter.

# Virginia Housing Development Authority REO and Community Outreach Marketing

## Replicable

Although VHDA focused on rebranding and positioning, our marketing model can be used by any HFA to promote real estate owned properties, mixed-use/mixed-income revitalization, rental production, mortgages, homeownership education, and a wide variety of other services or messages using a mix of print, electronic and digital media.

## Reach Targeted Audiences

Target audiences included new residents, Realtors, developers and officials in local government, economic development and planning. One challenge in reaching these audiences – particularly potential residents – was accurately identifying the target audience for each community. To increase resident capacity, extensive market research was conducted. For The Independence, research indicated the need to target a younger, more active senior audience with a focus on people in their mid-50s and 60s, instead of the older senior audience the community had previously been targeting. For The Village at Gateway, we learned that the property needed to include one- and two-bedroom condos in addition to the lofts to make them more appealing to future residents.

## Achieve Measurable Results:

### Multifamily Real Estate Owned (REO) Properties

- **The Independence and Heritage Commons**

At the time of foreclosure, and before VHDA's rebranding and marketing campaigns began, The Independence had a 12% occupancy rate – only 11 out of 92 units were rented. Heritage Commons had an occupancy rate of 54% with only 54 of 99 units inhabited. Since the rebranding and marketing campaigns, occupancy has increased dramatically at both properties: The Independence now has an occupancy rate of 88%; Heritage Commons is at 75% – and under contract for purchase.

- **Village at Gateway**

VHDA provided marketing support, consulting and project management for the Village at Gateway. We rebranded the development and developed a multimedia ad campaign including TV, radio, a new website, signage, print and social media. We also built a state-of-the-art design center where homebuyers can customize their selections, and acquired a professional real estate sales team. As a result, one unit has already been reserved for purchase in the new building that will go up during the next construction phase.

## Provide Benefits that Outweigh Costs

The benefits of our rebranding marketing campaign outweighed the costs by:

- Educating local government officials and developers about how VHDA financing can be leveraged. The campaign made it easy to understand how revitalization can become a reality through a combination of tax credit programs combined with permanent and construction loans.
- Generating inquiries that enabled VHDA to build new relationships with local government officials.
- Changing lingering negative perceptions about affordable housing and VHDA.
- Generating income – the average rent of \$1,500 per month for apartments at The Independence alone, multiplied by the additional 70 apartments rented, equals an extra \$105,000 of monthly revenue for VHDA.

## Demonstrate Effective Use of Resources

**In-house Creative Development:** Creative direction for the ad campaigns – including TV, radio, print and digital materials – was developed in-house by VHDA's creative team.

**Professional Location Photography:** To convey a high-quality message about the properties we financed, we used professional images for the all the marketing materials, from artist renderings to professional photography.

## Virginia Housing Development Authority REO and Community Outreach Marketing

**Printing Costs:** Costs were reduced by printing two direct mail pieces at the same time whenever possible. We also reduced the number needed by posting them online as digital brochures.

**Media:** We reached a targeted audience with print ads, TV, radio, direct mail, pay-per-click and publications such as Senior Living Magazine, Charlottesville Business Journal, The Daily Progress and The Virginia Gazette.

### **Achieve Strategic Objectives**

Instead of immediately selling multifamily REO's or other troubled properties, the strategic objective was to allocate marketing resources – using either internal marketing staff or external vendors – to turn them around so VHDA did not have to sell them for “pennies on the dollar.” Examples that demonstrate we achieved this: Today, The Independence is 88% occupied. Heritage Commons is at 75% – and is now under contract for purchase.

Equally important was our strategic objective to help offset NIMBY attitudes often associated with affordable, workforce housing with developments such as The Village at Gateway. Because mixed-use housing typically involves bringing a community's historic neighborhoods back to life, citizens enthusiastically embrace these projects.

### **Conclusion**

By aggressively campaigning to increase residential occupancy and mixed-use/mixed income development, we've developed financially stable REO properties that, in addition to improved purchase potential, are now generating revenue for VHDA. We needed to make a credible case that would encourage Virginia's affordable housing advocates to be enthusiastically involved in community revitalization. Developing a comprehensive rebranding and marketing campaign helped VHDA generate interest from developers and local governments. Increased revitalization resulted in new quality properties that neighborhoods – and neighbors – can embrace. It also turned lingering wariness about working with VHDA into a positive experience that local government officials are ready to share.

Revitalizing Virginia's towns and cities is a long-term initiative, involving steady improvements that create momentum over time. Our REO rebranding marketing campaigns – easily replicable for other HFAs – made it easy for communities to see that by partnering with VHDA, they could get the assistance they needed to successfully begin revitalization efforts and provide affordable housing for all generations.

The success of VHDA's partnership with these three communities has led a number of other opportunities. Since our work with The Independence, Heritage Commons and The Village at Gateway, a number of new stakeholders have also taken advantage of VHDA's wide scope of assistance, including James City County, Jefferson South of the James (Petersburg), Montgomery Square (Portsmouth), West Creek (Roanoke), 549 Valley View Road (Winchester) and The Virginia Association of Housing Counselors.

VHDA believes these kinds of successful partnerships will lead to community revitalization that everyone can embrace – and help change NIMBY into YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard!).

### **Please click on examples from the Marketing Campaigns:**

- [TV Commercial – Heritage Commons](#)
- [TV Commercial – The Village at Gateway](#)
- [TV Commercial – The Independence #1](#)
- [TV Commercial – The Independence #2](#)
- [New Website - The Independence](#)
- [New Website - Heritage Commons](#)
- [New Website - The Village at Gateway](#)