



**2013 Annual Awards Entry Form**  
(Complete one for each entry.)

Entry Name REACH Virginia Revitalization Marketing Campaign

HFA Virginia Housing Development Authority

Submission Contact Brian Matt

Phone (804) 343-5520 Email Brian.Matt@vhda.com

Program Contact Yvonne Farmer

Phone (804) 343-5529 Email Yvonne.Farmer@vhda.com

Entry form with description, check(s), and visual aids (optional) must be received by NCSHA by **Monday, July 1, 2013**.

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

HFA Virginia Housing Development Authority

Entry Name REACH Virginia Revitalization Marketing Campaign

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

*“This campaign has been a great way to start a dialogue with local governments across the state, from small communities to large municipalities. In fact, several communities have been revitalized because VHDA got the word out and helped these localities make it happen.”*

*David Parsons, Director of Communications, Virginia Municipal League*

## **Background**

Local governments and developers have to work together to transform Virginia's historic downtowns into hubs for urban living. Such revitalization requires a solid plan, local commitment and multiple funding sources. VHDA can help communities identify the resources it needs to successfully begin revitalization efforts and provide affordable housing for the next generation. Our REACH (Resources Enabling Affordable Community Housing) *Virginia* programs can help. But only if planning officials, developers and legislators know about this assistance and can see evidence of its success.

To create awareness, as well as favorable perceptions of community revitalization, VHDA developed an effective and consistent brand positioning campaign strategy. It included:

- Print ads that featured revitalized communities as they became realities. The ads included a user friendly URL with a link to case studies posted on VHDA's website.
- [Case studies](#) that detailed a community's current situation and the revitalization process – highlighted with before and after photos.
- [The REACH Report](#), an annual newsletter that focused on revitalization success stories, and VHDA's latest community outreach efforts.
- [Free magazine editorial](#) that leveraged our partnership with The Virginia Municipal League that featured revitalization articles in their *Virginia Town & City* magazine.
- Digital display ads that enabled us to target—using behavioral and contextual patterns—the user rather than the website.

## **Why VHDA's REACH Virginia Revitalization Campaign is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria**

### **Innovative**

While VHDA enjoyed positive relationships with some jurisdictions, others were wary about working with us. They had concerns that VHDA might bring in “low-income housing” that would generate controversy among the electorate. To change this perception, an inclusive brand strategy, with consistent, positive messaging, was developed. The message was reinforced in a series of ads, printed case studies ([vhda.com/casestudies](http://vhda.com/casestudies)), editorial articles and digital display ads.

Each ad featured a success story from a different geographic area of the state. The ads included a “before” picture of a run-down neighborhood or building, juxtaposed against a dramatically improved and inviting “after” picture. Each ad also featured a butterfly icon and encouraged the reader to “*Start a Metamorphosis of Your Own*.” The metamorphosis concept was used to give government leaders and developers a vision for the positive transformative changes they could bring about in their own communities.

Case studies were developed to compliment the ad series and provided in-depth information about each project, including financing details and a brief history of the community. They also included pie charts that made it easy for readers to understand how financing could be leveraged using tax-exempt and taxable bonds, along

with historic tax credits, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits. In addition, quotes from government officials and developers were included in the campaign materials.

The revitalization campaign inspired developers to inquire about VHDA's financing. It also demonstrated to local officials that working with VHDA could help to improve their neighborhoods. The call to action was for local government officials and developers to inquire about VHDA's revitalization programs.

### **Replicable**

Although VHDA focused on revitalization, our marketing campaign model can be used by any HFA to promote mortgages, homeownership education, rental production and a wide variety of other services or messages because of the standardized media mix (print ads, case studies, free magazine editorial, digital ads, landing page and unique URL).

### **Reach Targeted Audiences**

Our target audience included developers, local government and economic development and planning officials. To reach our audience as cost-effectively as possible, we decided to place the ads in *Town & City* magazine as our main publication. Published by the Virginia Municipal League, this magazine's subscriber base includes local, state and federal government officials (59%) and affiliate organizations (41%). We also ran ads in several other highly targeted publications, including *Urban Land* magazine, whose readers include developers (37%), architects (33%) local government officials (16%) and investment firms (14%). In addition, when VHDA staff met with local government officials or developers, they distributed the case studies and *REACH Reports* as part of their presentations. These materials were also distributed at numerous industry events.

### **Achieve Measurable Results**

Based on circulation, readership, and one-on-one distribution, over 6.3 million readers saw our print and digital ads; over 20,000 industry professionals read our *REACH Reports*; and over 22,500 read our case studies.

We have worked with 25 jurisdictions, financing \$299 million for 53 developments comprised of 2,485 rental units. We are in the process of financing \$136 million for 13 developments comprised of 891 rental units.

### **Provide Benefits that Outweigh Costs**

The benefits of our REACH Virginia Revitalization 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.

### **Demonstrate Effective Use of Resources**

All print ads, case study brochures, *REACH Reports* and digital ads were designed, written and produced by VHDA's in-house creative team. This kept external costs — shown below — to a minimum:

**Professional Location Photography:** Developers, architects or others involved in projects provided “before” pictures at no cost. To convey a high-quality image and change perceptions about the properties we financed, we used professional images for the “after” photos. Photographer fees were around \$1,175, including a buyout

that allowed VHDA to use the photos on an unlimited basis.

**Printing Costs:** Costs were reduced by printing two case studies at the same time whenever possible. When printing two full-color, four-page case studies together, the cost to produce 2,500 of each (5,000 total) is \$1,741. The cost to print one by itself is \$1,371. We also reduced the number needed by posting them online as digital brochures at [vhda.com/casestudies](http://vhda.com/casestudies).

**Media:** To reach a very targeted audience, we used *Town & City* magazine as our primary print publication. Published by the Virginia Municipal League, it is read by local government officials all over the state. At only \$940 for a full-color, full-page ad, we could afford to have a maximum impact. We also placed ads, very affordably, in *Virginia Business* and *Urban Land* magazines and *Virginia Association of Housing & Community Development Officials* newsletters.

### **Achieve Strategic Objectives**

The goal of the *REACH Virginia* Revitalization Marketing Campaign was to generate serious leads that could develop into quality rental communities. Proof we achieved this strategic objective:

- Strong partnerships forged with local governments, as evidenced by providing resources to 53 jurisdictions — 66 developments — and 3,376 rental units — at \$435 million.
- Increased positive perception of VHDA that translated into increased developer and local government interest in taking on the challenges of community revitalization.

### **Conclusion**

VHDA needed to make a strong and credible case that would encourage Virginia's affordable housing advocates to be enthusiastically involved in community revitalization. Developing a comprehensive marketing campaign for revitalization enabled VHDA to generate interest from developers and local governments. Increased revitalization resulted in new quality rental properties that neighborhoods — and neighbors — can embrace. It also turned lingering wariness about working with VHDA into a positive experience local government officials are ready to share:

*"One of the best things about working with VHDA was the tremendous amount of support we received. They held our hand every step of the way. Without them, our limited staff would never have been able to successfully tackle a project with the scope of The Station on South Locust," said Karen Hodges, town clerk and treasurer of Floyd, Va.*

Revitalizing Virginia's towns and cities is a long-term approach involving steady improvements that create momentum over time. Our revitalization marketing campaign — easily replicable for other HFA messages — makes it easy for communities to see that by partnering with VHDA, they could identify the assistance they needed to successfully begin revitalization efforts and provide affordable housing for the next generation.

**To see examples, please click on the links in this document.**