

Virginia Housing Development Authority South Hampton Roads Regional SRO Partnership

“Without the capital provided by VHDA’s low-interest financing and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, these developments would never have been built, and more than 200 homeless Virginians would still be without a place to call home.”

Alice Tousignant
Executive Director, Virginia Supportive Housing

Brief Description

Beginning in 2005, the seven jurisdictions of South Hampton Roads (the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach and Suffolk and the counties of Isle of Wight and Surry), met to discuss increasing homelessness in the region. The data showed that the bulk of chronically homeless people were located in the four core cities of the region: Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Chesapeake. To be considered chronically homeless, an individual must have been either homeless for three consecutive years or have experienced four episodes of homelessness over the past three years. The vast majority of the chronically homeless have a dual diagnosis of mental illness as well as substance abuse. Each of these four cities agreed to facilitate the construction of a 60-unit single room occupancy (SRO) development within their boundaries. Each jurisdiction also provided 15 Housing Choice Vouchers to each development. Therefore, all of the partner cities had a stake in the ultimate success of each development.

The cities partnered with the state’s foremost developer of SRO projects, Virginia Supportive Housing, to handle all four developments. VHDA’s role was to provide substantial financial resources to make these developments a reality. Of the \$28,300,000 cost of these four projects, funding raised from VHDA-administered Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) allocations and VHDA-funded direct loans covered 59% of the total cost. It is clear that without VHDA’s support, 240 people in the South Hampton Roads region would still be without a home.

Why it was Undertaken

According to the state Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia ranks 18th in the nation when it comes to homelessness. Dealing with the chronically homeless drains public services, from the police who arrest and jail them due to a lack of psychiatric beds; to hospitals that treat them in emergency rooms; to shelters that house them sporadically. Providing permanent housing and targeted social aid gives these individuals a chance at a better life, and lessens the heavy toll homelessness takes on public resources.

Because homelessness continues to be a largely urban phenomenon, with 71 percent of those who are chronically homeless living in central cities, infill SROs are part of a growing strategy in Hampton Roads to reduce homelessness by building permanent housing for single adults, which make up the bulk of the region’s homeless population.

In addition, the chronically homeless are the most challenging subpopulation of homeless individuals. Due to their mental health and substance abuse issues, which result in an extraordinary number of visits to emergency rooms, the chronically homeless are the most costly to the safety net system. Their situation demands housing stability in order to address the underlying issues involved. Because of the transient nature of this population, the leaders of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Chesapeake recognized that it would take a regional effort to adequately address this issue.

What It Has Accomplished

With the participation of VHDA through loans and the allocation of LIHTCs, 180 permanent supportive housing units have been constructed with another 60 to be under construction by the end of the year. The first development, Gosnold Apartments, is located in Norfolk. To combat any NIMBY – “not in my back yard” – issues, the property was

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located in an industrial zoned area and involved the adaptive reuse of a former commercial structure. However, the complex was near transportation and jobs, and adjacent to established residential areas.

The second development, Cloverleaf Apartments, is located in Virginia Beach and again involved the adaptive reuse of a commercial structure—a former roller skating rink—into a 60-unit apartment complex. So, in addition to addressing the needs of the homeless, this development was an opportunity to combat blight along a tired and neglected commercial corridor. The third project, South Bay Apartments in Portsmouth, is a very attractive new construction building. The final complex, Heron's Landing in Chesapeake, was just awarded an allocation of tax credits by VHDA and is expected to be under construction by year end. When all four developments are completed, 240 formerly homeless individuals will no longer be living on the streets of the cities of South Hampton Roads.

Why It Is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria

Innovative

The regional SRO concept in South Hampton Roads is the first SRO development of this type in the nation. The leaders of these four cities showed a tremendous amount of courage and innovation to structure a plan where all of the jurisdictions were involved in the success of each development.

Replicable

Regional cooperation can be a difficult endeavor under the best of circumstances. However, the structure of local governments in Virginia makes inter-jurisdictional cooperation especially challenging. Thus, if cooperation can happen in this environment, it can be replicated elsewhere. The level of resource commitment provided by each locality is within the means of metropolitan localities elsewhere in the nation. Once the local decision was made, the search for resources began and VHDA was able to provide permanent funding and/or an allocation of LIHTCs to ensure these developments were built. The commitments made by VHDA are ones that other HFAs are capable making with the federal resources they administer.

Respond to an important state housing need

During the June 2010 *Point in Time Count*, Virginia had 9,080 homeless individuals within South Hampton Roads accounting for 1,113, or 12% of the total. The Virginia Homeless Outcomes Advisory Subcommittee of the State Housing Policy Taskforce has identified increasing supportive housing as a significant goal in ending homelessness in Virginia. The Regional SRO developments of South Hampton Roads are leading the way in that effort. In addition, VHDA's allocation of LIHTCs was made pursuant to a Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) that uses a competitive scoring system based on the housing needs of the state. Each of the Regional SRO developments that were awarded credits placed first or second in the nonprofit allocation pool in which they competed.

Demonstrate measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers

The 240 individuals who will no longer be homeless as a result of the South Hampton Roads SRO developments have benefited immeasurably. The stability of housing has allowed these people the opportunity to address serious mental health and substance abuse issues in a compassionate and caring environment. A national study has determined that only five% of those who leave supportive housing became homeless – i.e., went to an emergency shelter, transitional housing or the streets.

Have a proven track record of success in the marketplace

Permanent supportive housing has proved to be a successful model in reducing homelessness and addressing the underlying issues of the people served. A 2010 study by Virginia Supportive Housing revealed a 61% decline in emergency room visits from the population served under its "*A Place To Start*" (APTS) program.

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Provide benefits that outweigh costs

Permanent supportive housing is a national model aimed at ending homelessness among the chronically homeless. The stability of housing combined with wraparound services allows individuals to become more productive citizens. The cost benefit in human capital is immeasurable – as it always is when people consider the quality of human life.

Demonstrate effective use of resources

According to data from Virginia Supportive Housing's "*A Place to Start*" model, the daily cost of permanent supportive housing is \$49, compared to \$70 for a jail bed and \$598 for an adult psychiatric state hospital. Thus, there are real tangible benefits to the providers of the housing and services, and ultimately the taxpayers benefit as well. Moreover, by employing Virginia Supportive Housing to develop all four projects, efficiencies were created in not having to "reinvent the wheel" with each new structure.

Effectively employ partnerships

The collaborative effort of the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Chesapeake is significant and unprecedented. Through their combined efforts, they have been able to substantially reduce the number of chronically homeless people in the South Hampton Roads region. But perhaps even more importantly, these often competitive localities have come together with the resources of VHDA to build trust and confidence in working cooperatively to address a regional need. They have worked together in an atmosphere of compromise to create regional synergy and accomplish something that could not have been achieved alone.

Achieve strategic objectives

VHDA has structured its LIHTC QAP and special multifamily lending programs to target "challenging to serve populations and needs," including chronic homelessness. However, this strategic objective has been difficult to achieve despite the dedication of lending capital and equity subsidies because potential users are often unable to structure effective partnerships to put these resources to use. The South Hampton Roads regional SRO partnership has enabled VHDA to support four permanent supportive housing facilities located throughout South Hampton Roads serving 240 chronically homeless persons. This impact on homeless needs in South Hampton Roads far exceeds the strategic outcome that would otherwise have been achievable.

Conclusion

Four localities South Hampton Roads came together in an extraordinary way to address the issue of chronic homelessness in their region. VHDA facilitated the means to obtain the resources necessary to build these projects, and Virginia Supportive Housing served as the developer of these unique SRO developments. **Of the \$28,300,000 cost of these four projects, funding raised from VHDA-administered LIHTC allocations and VHDA-funded direct loans covered 59% of the total cost.** It is clear that without VHDA's support, 240 people in the South Hampton Roads region would still be homeless. **In addition, the daily cost of permanent supportive housing is \$49, compared to \$70 for a jail bed and \$598 for an adult psychiatric state hospital. Thus, there are true financial benefits to the providers of the housing and services, as well as Virginia's taxpayers.**

Attachments: Photographs of Gosnold Apartments, Cloverleaf Apartments, South Bay Apartments, and Heron's Landing; clippings of press coverage



Gosnold Apartments

Whatever happened to . . . the Gosnold Apartments?

Posted to: [News](#)

© March 27, 2006

NORFOLK - Work has begun to turn an abandoned warehouse near Park Place into subsidized apartments for homeless adults. Although design issues and the discovery of an underground oil tank delayed the project's start, officials said Gosnold Apartments should be ready for tenants in December.

The 60 efficiency apartments - also known as single room occupancy, or SRO - would be South Hampton Roads' first permanent housing for homeless adults with on-site support services, such as job counseling and referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment. A property manager will live on site.

"The project is really taking form," said Alice Tousignant, executive director of Virginia Supportive Housing, which is developing the project. The agency is a nonprofit homeless services provider that operates two similar projects in Richmond.

"We're not in jeopardy of losing any money or any more time," Tousignant said.

A controversy last fall over the building's design threatened to jeopardize federal funding for the project. The State Department of Historic Resources at first demanded that the new building continue to resemble a warehouse. The department later agreed to a compromise that requires the city to create a Web site that highlights the significance of the former Nehi bottling warehouse and other industrial buildings to Park Place.

That delay means the project won't be ready by September, a deadline for receiving federal aid. But Virginia Supportive Housing officials are confident they'll win an extension from federal housing officials, who helped resolve the design issue.

Virginia Supportive Housing is about to launch an adopt-a-room campaign to raise \$180,000 to furnish the units. Tousignant said a \$3,000 donation will furnish a room and help equip some of the common spaces. Such a donation will earn the contributor a plaque on the door of a room.

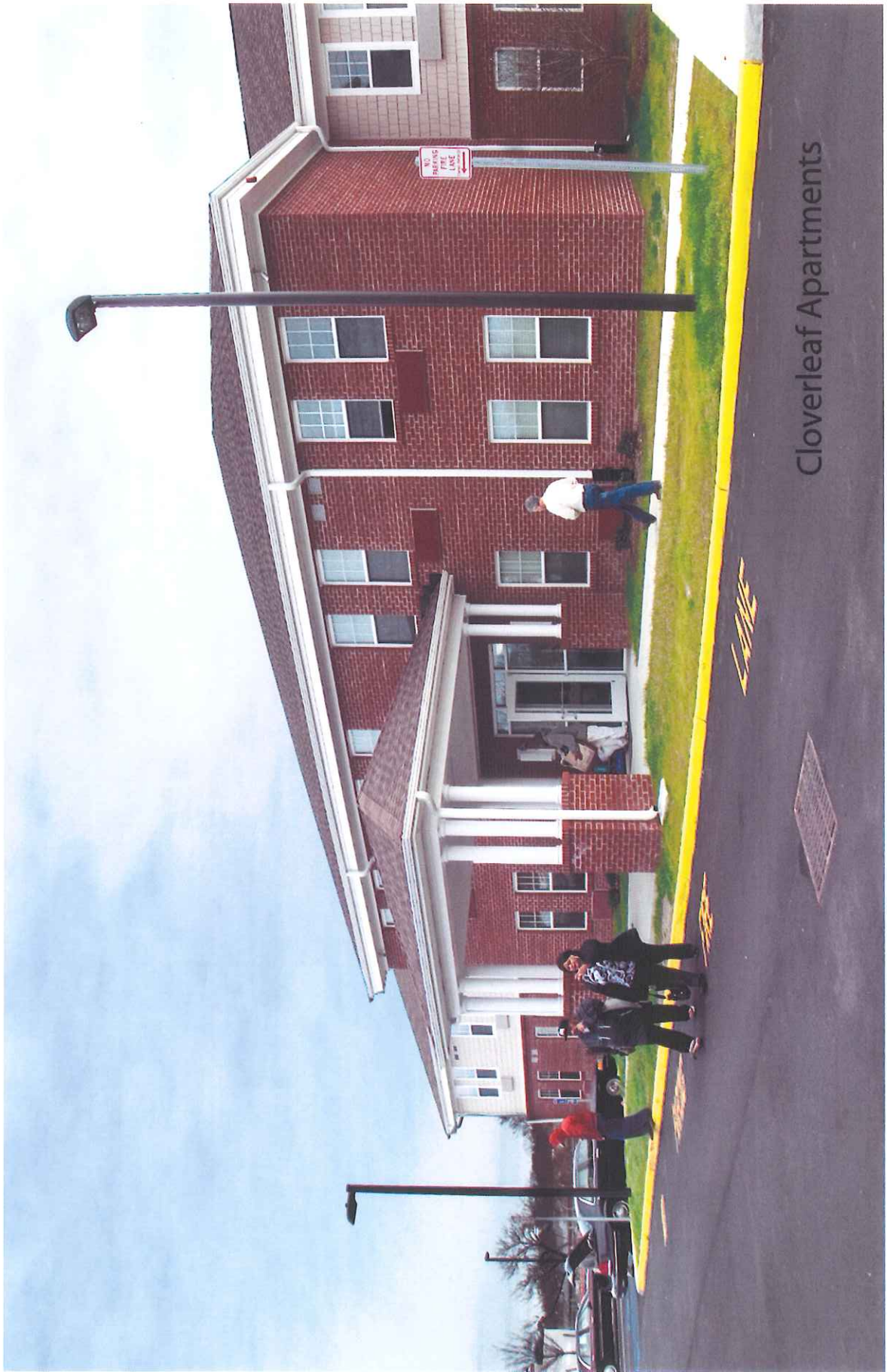
"We want to make sure that when we open, we have everything we need so everyone gets a good start," she said, and the campaign will also promote ownership of the program in the community.

The apartments are one-room efficiencies, each with a full bathroom and a kitchenette. Residents would pay 30 percent of their monthly income in rent, with a minimum payment of \$50.

The agency has raised \$5.5 million through grants, foundations and tax credits to buy and renovate the warehouse. It's also secured \$3.9 million in federal grants to cover rental subsidies for 10 years.

Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Portsmouth committed nearly \$1 million of their federal money earmarked to fight homelessness. In exchange, Norfolk will have 42 apartments to fill; Virginia Beach, 12 units; and Portsmouth, six. Committees are being established in each city to screen and select residents, a process that will start around October.

Tousignant said her agency is looking for land in Virginia Beach to build another SRO. Advocates hope to eventually have one in each South Hampton Roads city.



Cloverleaf Apartments

Homeless find lucky Cloverleaf

Posted to: [Community News](#) | [Virginia Beach](#)



The new 60-unit Cloverleaf Apartments are built on the site of the former College Park Skating Rink on South Military Highway. (David B. Hollingsworth | The Virginian-Pilot)

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WANT TO HELP?

Cloverleaf Apartments is seeking contributions to its Adopt-a-Room Campaign. Contributions will help pay for furnishings for the apartments and common areas, and help fund a van to transport residents.

To contribute to the campaign, visit www.makeroomhr.org, or mail financial contributions to Barbara Barnes, VSH development consultant, 4891 Parthenon Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23462.

For information, call Barnes at 495-2022 or Mary Aab at 961-4401.

By [Rita Frankenberg](#)
The Virginian-Pilot
© November 6, 2008

The new 347-square-foot studio apartment Richard Harris has called home for the past two months may not seem like much.

A blond wood single bed shares space with a kitchenette, matching dresser, nightstand, table and chair. A closet and full bath round out the quarters.

It's not for everyone, maybe. But it's everything Harris hoped for. It's clean, safe and, most of all, his.

Harris lives in Virginia Beach's new Cloverleaf Apartments, which opens today, Nov. 6, and offers housing for 60 homeless single adults from throughout the area.

Already, 14 people live in the two-story building. Their names were supplied by the cities of Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Norfolk and Portsmouth.

Harris, in jail on a drug conviction for nearly eight years, went homeless after his release. He moved into Cloverleaf on Sept. 30, after spending almost two years in temporary housing with the Salvation Army in Richmond, and then Virginia Beach.

"I'm a recovering addict," Harris said. "This is a great opportunity, not only for recovering addicts, but also for the homeless."

Cloverleaf is the second Hampton Roads housing development dedicated to helping homeless adults. Gosnold Apartments in Norfolk, another 60-unit building, opened in December 2006. It is fully occupied.

Both buildings were developed and are operated by Virginia Supportive Housing, a nonprofit homeless services provider. In addition to federal funding and grants from private foundations, the \$7.2 million building was financed with money from the cities of Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake and Portsmouth. Because Virginia Beach allocated the most city money for the project - \$1.3 million - 42 of Cloverleaf's rooms are reserved for Virginia Beach residents.

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Cloverleaf Apartments give a home after life on the street

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1 OF 4 PHOTOS: James Elsley, center, makes his way through the crowded halls of the new Cloverleaf Apartments in Virginia Beach after the grand opening ceremony. (David B. Hollingsworth | The Virginian-Pilot)

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By
The Virginian-Pilot
© November 7, 2008

VIRGINIA BEACH

Mendez Alexander Sr. stayed up until 3 a.m. his first night at the Cloverleaf Apartments.

Doing nothing. Taking in the quiet.

For years, finding a bed in a shelter with 40-some other men was the best he could hope for. It beat sleeping outside.

"I haven't had anything like this, not since I was 17 years old," said Alexander, 56, who came to the area four years ago from Massachusetts.

Cloverleaf, which provides apartments for homeless single people, had its grand opening Thursday. The 60-unit complex is the second such regional effort. Though it's in Virginia Beach, on the site of an old skating rink on South Military Highway, Cloverleaf is a collaboration by the Beach, Chesapeake, Norfolk and Portsmouth.

Like the Gosnold Apartments in Norfolk, the \$7.2 million complex was built by Virginia Supportive Housing, a nonprofit agency, using federal money, private grants and funding from the four cities. Virginia Beach contributed the most, \$1.3 million, so 42 of the 60 rooms are reserved for its homeless.

The residents pay 30 percent of their income, a minimum of \$50. The cities provide rental help for the remainder. Among other things, residents receive help finding jobs and dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues.

"I prayed to God each and every day to get me where I am today," said Michelle Lemon, 38, who moved into Cloverleaf about a week ago.

She's reveling in being able to cook again; her cupboards and fridge are full, and the smells of barbecued chicken and broccoli fill her apartment. For Thanksgiving, she wants to host her three children, and plans ham, stuffing and homemade macaroni and cheese.

PilotOnline.com

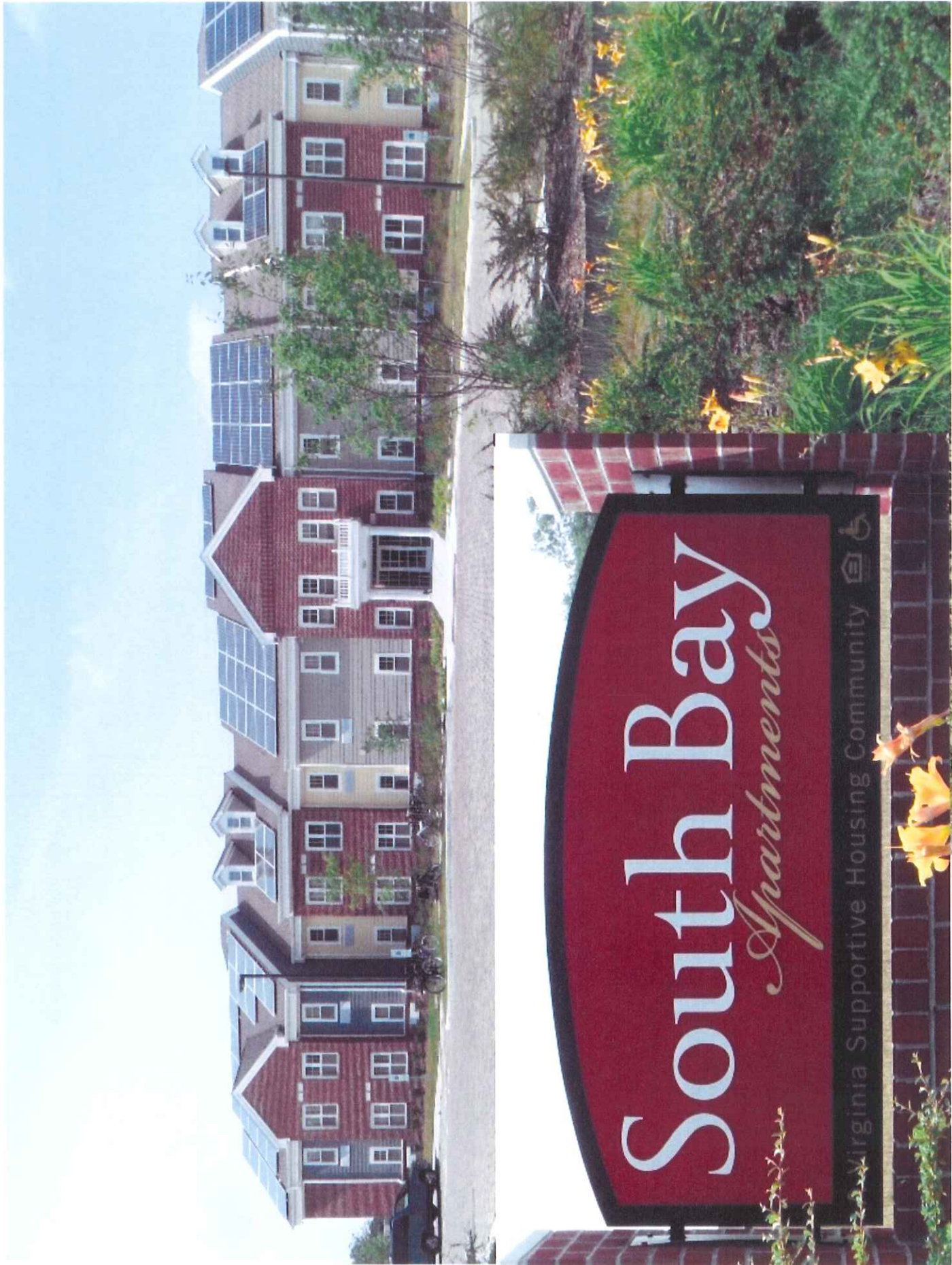
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South Bay

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Virginia Supportive Housing Community





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Solution to end homelessness in Portsmouth

South Bay Apartments opens

Updated: Thursday, 03 Feb 2011, 6:16 AM EST
Published : Wednesday, 02 Feb 2011, 9:14 PM EST

PORTSMOUTH, Va. (WAVY) - Forty homeless individuals are now off the streets with the opening of South Bay Apartments in Portsmouth.

Virginia Supportive Housing celebrated the opening of South Bay Wednesday morning.

South Bay is the third regionally funded housing project for homeless people in Hampton Roads.

There's already similar housing in Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

New residents said they feel blessed.

"It's a big blessing and the people that help I thank them, yes, just to turn your own key, have a lease again...I'm very thankful," said resident Angela Mennefee.

The next Virginia Supportive Housing project is scheduled to open in Chesapeake sometime in 2012.

Portsmouth News



Library may reopen in four months

Portsmouth is hoping to reopen the Main Library in four months,...



Free lunch offered to children

Portsmouth is offering free meals to children this summer as ...



Portsmouth business catches fire

Fire crews in Portsmouth are investigating the cause of a fire ...



Chesapeake Regional Apartments

STUDIO
COMMUNITY
DESIGN

VIRGINIA
supportive
housing