

Better Homes.
Better Communities.
Better Lives.

Betternews

Better Housing Coalition builds and advocates for quality affordable housing while creating sustainable communities throughout the greater Richmond area.

GRAND OPENING AT CARTER WOODS II



Katie Swenson, Lissy Bryan, TK Somanath, Josh Galloway

On December 6 Susan Dewey, Executive Director of Virginia Housing & Development Authority, along with officials from the Enterprise Foundation joined Better Housing Coalition in celebrating the official opening of Carter Woods II. Katie Swenson, representing the Enterprise Foundation recognized Better Housing Coalition for being the first EarthCraft certified multifamily development in Virginia.



There are many benefits to building green but the highest compliment is from the residents. "I just love it here" said Jean Williams, a new resident at Carter Woods. "It's quiet and I don't have to bundle up in sweaters like I did in my home in north Richmond."

Advanced building techniques, improved insulation and the use of Energy Star heating and cooling systems make Carter Woods, designed by Winks-Snowa Architects, a comfortable and affordable place to live.

RICHMOND AREA HOUSING: TAKING STOCK

THE RICHMOND REGION HAS ENJOYED CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS OVER THE LAST DECADE ON THE HOUSING FRONT. One cannot

drive through the inner city without being amazed at the revitalization that has occurred along Cary Street or in Carver, Jackson Ward, Church Hill, Blackwell, Manchester, and other inner city neighborhoods.

Progress in suburban Richmond has also been striking. New construction continues at a fast pace along the urban fringe, while a variety of impressive inner-ring suburban housing/revitalization projects have been completed or are underway in both Henrico and Chesterfield counties.

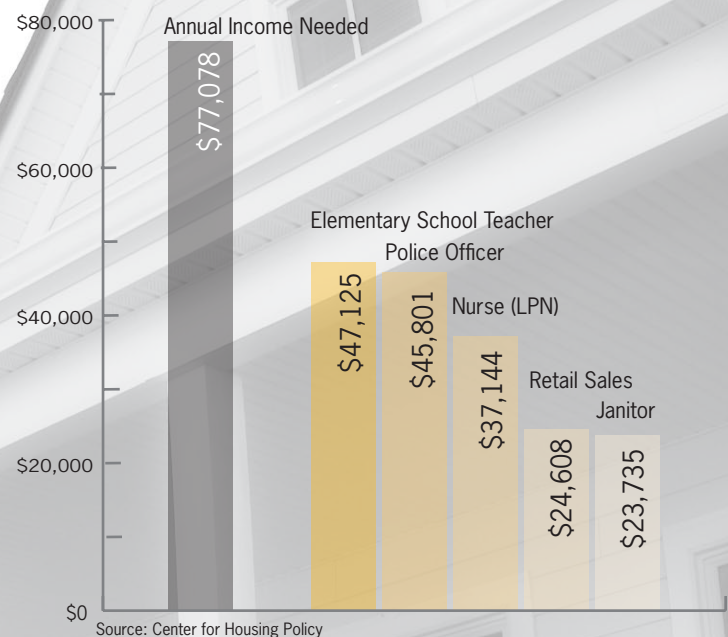
What is perhaps most impressive, however, is the increased attention being paid to housing within the region. The issue of housing now has a prominent place on both the Mayor's and City Council's agendas. Moreover, recognizing the housing problems within the inner suburban ring, both Henrico and Chesterfield counties have appointed directors of revitalization to address growing housing concerns related to their aging housing stocks. At the same time, our citizens have become more enlightened on this important issue as a result of recent in-depth coverage within the Richmond Times-Dispatch and Style Weekly.

Ongoing Regional Housing Challenges

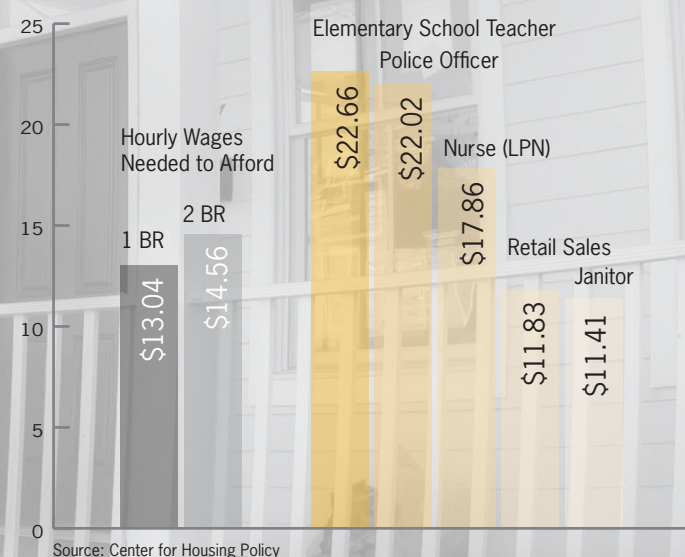
In spite of the progress outlined above, significant challenges remain. Five of these appear particularly problematic:

■ **HOUSING AFFORDABILITY** – Clearly the biggest challenge facing our region remains that of housing affordability. While salaries in our workforce have remained relatively flat or increased only moderately over the past decade,

HOMEOWNERSHIP MARKET - 2006 MEDIAN PRICED HOME \$225,000



RENTAL MARKET - 2006 FAIR MARKET RENT: 1 BR \$678/MO; 2 BR \$757/MO



housing costs have exploded! In fact, the average price of a home in the Richmond metro area was a whopping \$256,000 in 2006, well beyond the reach of many within our regional workforce (see: Times Dispatch, 9/22/06, p. A10). Rents have also climbed significantly during this time frame.

Dramatic increases in housing costs are particularly problematic for the lower income members of our society. Statistics from the 2000 Census tell us that over 50% of the low-income households within Richmond, Chesterfield, and Henrico are “housing cost-burdened.” That is, they are paying more than 30% of their incomes each month to cover their housing expenses --most considerably more. To the extent that low and moderate income families are forced to pay excessive housing costs, they have less money available to cover the other necessities of modern life: food, healthcare, childcare, transportation, etc.

■ **JOBS HOUSING /BALANCE** — A closely related challenge is that of housing availability. To be more specific, there is a growing disconnect within the Richmond region between job creation and the availability of housing to meet the needs of workers. To the extent that appropriate housing is unavailable near their job sites, low and moderate income workers are forced to endure needlessly long commutes and pay excessive transportation costs. A study by the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC) found, for example, that “Henrico County contains 37.9 percent of the region’s low income jobs and 30.5 percent of the region’s housing units affordable to low-income households. Hanover County contains 11.5 percent of the region’s low income jobs and 4.9 percent of the region’s housing units affordable to low income households (“Affordable Housing in the Richmond Region Fact Sheet,” RRPDC, p. 6).” As the West Creek development in Goochland County builds out, similar discrepancy will appear in that locality.

■ **A RAPIDLY GROWING ELDERLY POPULATION**

— Other housing challenges facing our region are the result of the changing demographic characteristics of our population. Demographics drive the demand for housing and as the composition of our population changes, so too must the composition of our housing stock. Most problematic is the rapid aging of our population.

At the time of the 2000 Census, the Richmond region had a total population of 865,941, of which 95,030 were age 65 and above. By 2030 the region’s population is project to grow to 1,206,801, of which 240,193 will be elderly (Source: Virginia Employment Commission Projections). Thus, in a mere 30 years, the region’s elderly population is expected to grow by approximately 153%, or by more than 145 thousand individuals. This dramatic growth of the region’s older population will intensify the demand for elderly housing communities for active older adults, as well as for housing that provides social and health care services for the more frail members of this age group. We are not prepared for this dramatic shift in housing demand, particularly in regards to the low and moderate income segments of our society.

■ **CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY** — A final regional housing challenge is that of the continued concentrations of poverty within the city’s public housing projects. Richmond remains the only locality within the region with public housing and as a result the poorest of the region’s poor find themselves concentrated within it. Most of Richmond’s public housing is old, in disrepair, and concentrated in large developments of 400 units or more. While public housing serves a vital role in our society, we are not doing the impoverished individuals who inhabit it a favor by concentrating them in such excessively large developments. Such projects often exacerbate their problems and serve as a blighting influence on the residential neighborhood that surrounding them.

■ **HOMELESSNESS** — Estimates of the region’s homeless population vary from around 1,600 to over 5,000, depending upon both how we define homelessness, and whether we are talking about the number of homeless at one specific point in time, or during the course of a year. Regardless of the exact number, it is clear that homelessness remains a major housing challenge for the region, and that it is a challenge that is truly regional in scope. Of the 1,151 homeless individuals who were checked in through Homeward’s central intake system during the first half of this fiscal year, only 39% listed Richmond as their last place of residence. Of the remaining, --162 came from Henrico, 103 from Chesterfield, 15 from Hanover, and 10 from Goochland. Others came from outside the Region altogether. (Source: Scott Bass, “City Homeless Hail from Elsewhere”, Style Weekly, 2/14/07). Homelessness is a regional problem and demands a regional response.



Gary Johnson, PhD, emeritus professor of Urban and Regional Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University

Summary and Conclusion

The Richmond region has made considerable progress on the housing front over the last decade. High quality new communities have been and are being built throughout the region, to meet the demands of our rapidly expanding population. Moreover, thanks to the revitalization that has taken place in the central city and in our older suburban neighborhoods, thousands live in quality housing today who otherwise would have been forced to live in squalor.

Unfortunately, however, serious housing challenges remain. In many respects these are the more difficult ones. Many of them are challenges that are truly regional in scope and which can only be effectively addressed on a multijurisdictional basis. And yet, to the extent that we fail to act, the future quality of life within the Richmond region is in jeopardy.

Smiles, songs, friendship and fun are always in season

Winter is such a wonderful time to take part in indoor fun such as going to the Glen Allen Arts Center for theatre as the Rockwood seniors did in December. Columns residents have been taking advantage of all of the music and performances around town this season including the Richmond Symphony and performances at VCU's Singleton Center ...

... New friendships were forged on Valentine's Day when eight boys and nine seniors from Market Square shared their thoughts about friends while making holiday cards for those most important to them ...



... Heart Health month got an extra boost from BHC seniors with discussion groups, healthy snacks and new aerobics music to dance to ...

... And, Signs of Spring ... Girl Scout troop 867 has been working with the residents of Rockwood to install birdhouses at the community as part of their Silver Award. The girls did research, built the houses and discussed birds and their habitats with the Rockwood



residents. As there are already many bird watchers at Rockwood, this was a perfect match!

Pictured, clockwise from top, left: Valentine's Day celebration at Market Square; Music by Doc Branch at Carter Woods II opening; Girl Scouts set the pole for a birdhouse at Rockwood; Rockwood residents visited with members of Girl Scout troop 867

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Renovations begin at Randolph Place Apartments

In September 1927, Dorothy "Dot" Allen began as a kindergartner at the Randolph School. In September 1985, Mrs. Allen moved into the Randolph Place Apartments—newly converted apartments for seniors—in the same building. Today, nearly eighty years after she first entered the building, Mrs. Allen is benefiting from the first major renovation in more than twenty years.



BHC acquired Randolph Place in November 2006 and a two million dollar renovation began in December financed in part by VHDA and Enterprise Community Investment, Inc. The challenge is renovating this wonderful building while it is almost completely occupied", said Stewart Jester, BHC's Senior Project Manager. Kate Noon, Community Social Worker at Randolph Place, said, "The consistent and open communication between our social work,

property management, maintenance and construction staff is key to ensuring that we are meeting the needs of our residents during this time of transition."



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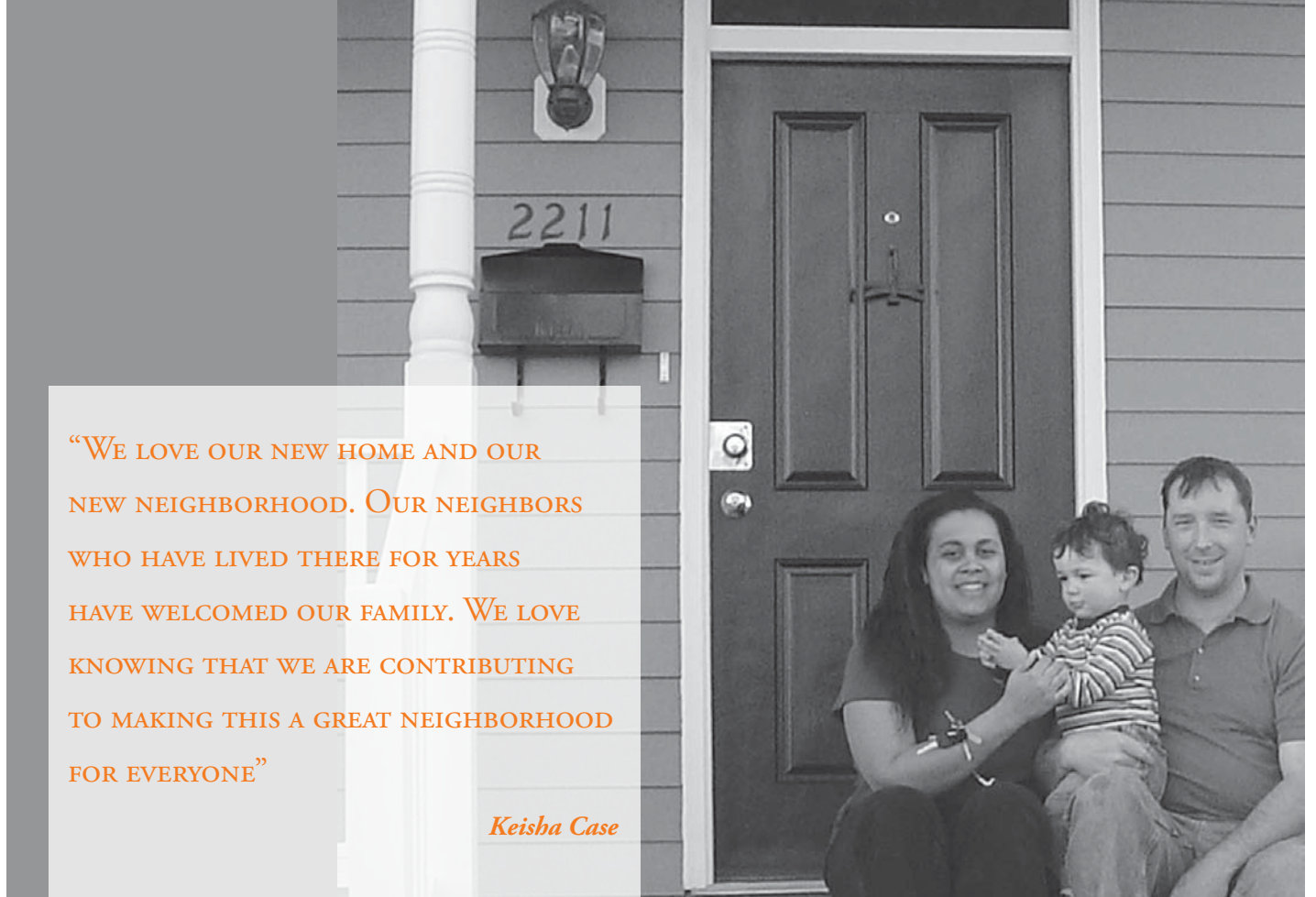
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WHO HAVE LIVED THERE FOR YEARS
HAVE WELCOMED OUR FAMILY. WE LOVE
KNOWING THAT WE ARE CONTRIBUTING
TO MAKING THIS A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD
FOR EVERYONE"

Keisha Case

Photo: Taylor Dabney

HOMEOWNERSHIP: CASE SOLVED!

Finding just the right home can sometimes take a long time but in this case it was worth the wait. BHC worked with the Case family for nearly three years to find the right house at the right price.

In partnership with the city of Richmond's model Neighborhoods in Bloom initiative, BHC purchased land in the 2200 block of Q Street and have built three new homes for first time homebuyers. By combining grants, below market rate financing and tax abatement obtained through BHC, the Cases were able to purchase a new 5- star energy efficient designed, 3-bedroom, 2.5 bath home on a terrific block.

Better Housing Coalition completed and sold 14 homes in 2006, all of them in Church Hill with more than 20 planned for 2007.

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 St. Paul's Episcopal Church
 Tabernacle Baptist Church
 Ukrops
 Virginia Dept. of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Virginia Dept. of Health
 Virginia Family Physicians
 Virginia Poverty Law Center
 Walgreen's Pharmacy
 Wal-Mart
 DeTanya Wilder DPM
 William Byrd Community House
 Your Neighbors Uptown Civic Association

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Bensley Elementary School, Chesterfield
 Bon Secours Care-A-Van
 Bon Secours Hospice
 Boy Scouts of America
 Central Virginia Food Bank
 Girl Scout Troop 3004
 Girl Scout Troop 652
 IVNA
 Jewish Family Services
 Hospice of Virginia
 Meals-on-Wheels
 New Visions, New Ventures
 Senior Connections Chesterfield
 Senior Connections Richmond
 Shepherd's Center - Chesterfield
 Shepherd's Center - Richmond

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 Yvonne Claiborne
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