

Richmond Nonprofit Leading Efforts To Create A Regional Affordable Housing Plan

Roberto Roldan, Community Idea Stations

Local governments, nonprofits and developers are coming to the table to create the first-ever affordable housing plan for the Richmond region.

The Partnership for Housing Affordability, a nonprofit managed by the Richmond Realtors Association, is coordinating the effort. They've put together a working group that includes representatives from the nonprofit and private sectors, as well as representatives from the City of Richmond, and Henrico, Chesterfield and Hanover Counties. The framework will assess the critical affordable housing needs in each locality and recommend policies to meet those needs.

Laura Lafayette, CEO of the Richmond Realtors Association, said she believes officials are ready to start thinking regionally about affordable housing. She points to the recent creation of a housing advisory committee in Henrico and the appointment of a new Revitalization Manager in Chesterfield as proof.

"Right now there's a convergence of momentum from the jurisdictions and interest from the philanthropic community, and a willingness to fund the effort," she said.

Developing the Regional Housing Framework will begin with a series of community meetings in May and June. Consultants will present data and solicit public feedback at two meetings in each locality.

Lafayette said it's important that residents buy into the planning process, not just community groups interested in affordable housing.

"In May we will ask the question: 'What are the challenges you are experiencing around housing,'" Lafayette said. "In June we will come back and say 'Here are the challenges you addressed for us. Here are some strategies.'"

The group hopes to have the framework finalized and made available to the public by the end of the year. After that, local governments, developers and non-profits will be expected to execute the outlined recommendations over the next three years.

The Partnership for Housing Affordability has hired Jovan Burton to be the Implementation Director. Burton recently served as the Low-Income Tax Credit Allocation Coordinator for the Virginia Housing Development Authority.

Lafayette said the Regional Housing Framework will include “measurements of success” like increasing the number of affordable housing units. Burton will use those metrics to hold the participating organizations accountable.

“I’m not interested in creating just another study that will sit on the shelves,” Lafayette said. “We will be monitoring the progress made by the private sector, the public sector, the philanthropic sector and even the faith sector.”

You can find a full list of all the scheduled meetings on the Regional Housing Framework [here](#).