

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Energy for Housing

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Inside:

Call for Entries!
See pages 21-23





Marijuana in the Workplace: It's Complicated

Evolving marijuana laws are creating a haze of confusion for both employers and employees addressing permissible use, workplace safety and federal compliance.

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Manuel Timbreza

INTERN
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ABOUT THE COVER

Environmental legislation passed by the 2020 General Assembly has raised the bar on energy efficiency and green building standards for housing in the Commonwealth. This has also created opportunities for new funding for healthier and greener affordable housing. We check in with some agencies and businesses leading the way.

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Call for Entries!

Full details on how to enter on **Pages 21-23**

Looking forward to the long (but not lazy) days of summer 2021!

IN 12 MONTHS filled with anxiety, sadness, hope, and resiliency I think this moment in which we are marking signs of recovery feels more focused and productive than any that has preceded it. Maybe it's because we're all wiser and (for better or worse) increasingly fluent in the language of epidemiology, executive orders and relief packages. Or maybe it's because we increasingly hear people whispering, "Did you get 'the jab' yet?" Those who have not been vaccinated try not to offend people who are still waiting (or who don't want it). Of course, it's not always possible to keep it to oneself and that's OK too. It's hard to hide happiness and with what we've all been going through a little happiness can go a long way to help everyone. For example, the day after our locality held a large vaccination event everyone was outside, and you could tell by the smiles who got the jab and we *all* felt better for it. So, whether you choose to get the jab or not, I hope that this is truly the turning point and we can all see each other soon!

Among the topics we discussed at the VML Board meeting earlier this week, the most exciting and enjoyable were our plans for the Annual Conference in October. I hope that as many of you as possible join us at the Lansdowne Resort just outside of Leesburg October 3-5. In addition to the usual valuable opportunities for education and networking, I know this year will be special as we share stories of living through the pandemic and the resourcefulness and courage all our localities have displayed during this long, hard time. Also, different this year, we will be featuring not only our host locality of Leesburg but all seven towns of Loudoun County. Each of these communities has unique and fun things to share and it will make for a very special event. To get everyone ready, last month *Virginia Town & City* began a series in which we will feature an article about each of the Towns of Loudoun in every issue leading up to the conference. Last month we learned about Hamilton, this month we explore Round Hill and in April we'll find out about Hillsboro. So, when you come to the conference, you will have a great idea of what history, features and shopping are nearby!

Speaking of shopping, and money in general, the new stimulus money is coming, and rumors are it will be soon! VML is working with the state and federal government to provide guidance on

how localities can use this money. At this point, there are more questions than answers with the Treasury Department currently overwhelmed. At last count, localities had compiled hundreds of questions about permissive uses, documentation, etc. Rest assured VML will continue to ask the right questions and work in the best interest of our members. We encourage our members to keep an eye on our *eNews** newsletter and your email for specifics as they come to light.

Complexities aside, direct aid to localities is exciting and there is a great opportunity to work with the state to leverage these dollars!

Although it seems like the 2021 General Assembly just wrapped up (really, it wasn't that long ago), VML's policy team is already getting ready for 2022. Every spring and summer we begin another round of our legislative and policy committees to prepare for the following year's session and the numerous studies that occur during the summer. If the 2021 Session was any indication, there will be plenty of work to do to be ready for the next Session. There will be no shortage of issues or ad campaigns this summer! Also, please keep your eyes open for our VML Legislative Updates webinar series set to begin in April.

Finally, I want share news of an old favorite coming back and the start of something new. VML's Innovation Awards took a break last year but they are back and are better than ever! Check out the spread in this issue of the magazine (pp. 21-23) for more details or visit www.vml.org/innovation-awards. And new for 2021 – "The VML Voice" podcast is focused on the people, places, and issues that matter most to Virginia's localities. It is available in most places you look for podcasts or you can listen and subscribe at www.vml.org/category/podcast. I encourage you to listen to the first episodes as I am so proud of our team and love how cool these podcasts are. If you have an idea for an episode, let us know!

**Please note, although eNews will revert to a bi-weekly schedule during the summer months, it will still be full of information regarding committee meetings and General Assembly studies in progress. Of course, we will publish Special Editions and send communications as events warrant.*



Learn about these and additional opportunities at vml.org/events.

Oct. 2 - 3, 2021 **Virginia Mayors Institute**
Lansdowne Resort, 44050 Woodridge Pkwy, Leesburg, VA 20176

Oct. 3 - 5, 2021 **Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference**
Lansdowne Resort, 44050 Woodridge Pkwy, Leesburg, VA 20176

PEOPLE

In Memoriam: Poquoson Assistant City Manager Graham Wilson



ON MARCH 10, THE CITY of Poquoson suffered a terrible loss with the passing of **Graham P. Wilson** a beloved community member and dedicated public servant. At the time of his passing, Wilson was serving as the assistant city manager. Prior to that he served as the city’s commissioner of the revenue and the chief deputy commissioner in Hampton.

Del. Martha Mugler, whose husband Ross hired Wilson to serve as his chief deputy in Hampton 1993, wrote on Facebook that “the 91st District has suffered a great loss...Graham always greeted you with his infectious smile and was well known for his quick wit. Even from his hospital bed with very little strength he would give (text) hilarious accounts of his experiences there in the care of others.”

“Graham Wilson was a truly special man. He was an

unparalleled public servant. He was an irreplaceable part of my team, and I consider him one of my very best friends,” City Manager J. Randall Wheeler said.

In honor of Wilson, Poquoson closed its city offices on the day of his passing and lowered the city flag to half-staff.

Wilson was an active member of the community throughout his life. He graduated from Radford University where he was a founding father of the Kappa Delta Rho fraternity. As an adult, he was affiliated with the Kiwanis Club, served as the president in 2014 and was awarded the George F. Hixson Fellowship in 2017. Wilson served as the HOA President of his neighborhood and was active at Coastal Community Church.

Wilson was a dedicated husband and father and a valued friend and mentor to many. His compassion, infectious smile, and laughter will be missed by all who knew him.

The family is requesting donations to Coastal Community Church or the American Cancer Society in lieu of flowers.

The full obituary is available at www.claytorrollins.com/obituary/Graham-Wilson.

Stuart Town Manager Tilley retiring after 42 years!



When **Terry Tilley** retires in September after 42 years he will have the distinction of being the longest serving Town Manager in the State of Virginia.

Acknowledging that Tilley leaves behind some “big shoes to fill,” Mayor Ray Weiland advised the town council at its February 17 meeting to create a committee to help with the search for Tilley’s successor. Weiland noted that given Tilley’s breadth of experience, it would be ideal to “pick somebody who might have some time to shadow Terry for a month or two before the transition takes place.”

- Tilley -

For his part, Tilley commented, “I’ve been real fortunate and I’ve had a good career.”

The committee will be conducting a statewide search for applicants and will be seeking resume’s this summer.

City of Staunton appoints Bixler as communications manager



- Bixler -

On March 15, **Michelle Bixler** joined the City of Staunton as its new communications manager.

Bixler brings more than 15 years of experience in communications, marketing, and engagement work, including nine years of direct experience in local

government. She most recently served as the director of community development for the Town of Strasburg, where she implemented and developed tourism and economic development strategies and oversaw town-wide initiatives including a new website, work to advance the community’s brand, and the design and implementation of community engagement strategies.

Prior to her tenure in Strasburg, Bixler served as public information coordinator for the city of Eugene, OR, where she managed the city’s social media presence, coordinated multiple communications channels across departments, provided analysis of communications efforts, and directed public outreach and community engagement for the city manager’s office and central services.

Bixler has several government affiliations and is an active member of state and

PEOPLE

national organizations including Engaging Local Government Leaders, the Virginia Local Government Management Association, and the International City and County Management Association.

Bixler holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in individualized studies from James Madison University and a Master's degree in public administration from the University of Oregon with a concentration in public management.

City of Galax Manager Barker to retire

During the closed portion of the City of Galax's council meeting on January 11, **Keith Barker** announced he would retire as city manager on June 14 after 12 years of service. Barker had previously indicated he would retire in October 2022 but decided that for family reasons, including the anticipated arrival of his first grandchild, he wanted to make the transition sooner.



- Barker -

By retiring in June, Barker will be able to assist in the completion and adoption of the fiscal year 2022

budget and be able to help in getting some projects transferred to other staff members.

In a statement to council, Barker said, "I would like to thank each of you for the opportunity to serve as city manager for Galax during your time on council and thank those prior council members that gave me an opportunity to serve beginning in 2009."

Barker also looked to the future. "While there are many great accomplishments in our past, I also believe many great opportunities lay ahead with development of the T.G. Vaughan Plant, the housing development of the Kipling Lane property and the commercial development of the Galax East Site. The potential with these projects for economic development and housing opportunities for citizens will serve our community well into the future."

Barker began his career in Galax in 1992 as the city's building official and participated in or lead many projects over the years including housing projects, downtown projects, facility and infrastructure improvements, the elementary school upgrade/addition, local and regional economic development opportunities, grant programs, and budget planning.

Among the team projects that meant the most to him, Barker cited "the housing

projects we have accomplished, the storm-water utility system improvements in the Bottom Area, and the Galax Elementary School addition and renovations. When I attended some of my first council meetings in 1992 and 1993 as a new employee, these were needs being discussed by those council members. I feel fortunate to have been able to be a participant in addressing those needs that were identified many years ago."

In conclusion, Barker said, "I consider myself fortunate to have been able to work and serve in a community where I have lived

Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

for the majority of my life, and where a number of my family members still reside. To be vested in a community makes you set higher expectations on what you work to accomplish and how it can impact citizens. I feel I have done my best to serve council, the city and the citizens that rely on us for needs every day."

Barker is a graduate of Virginia Tech.



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de Ferranti named 2021 Arlington County Board chair; Kristol named co-chair

In January, The Arlington County Board unanimously elected **Matt de Ferranti** its 2021 chair. The Board also unanimously elected **Katie Cristol** its vice-chair.

This is de Ferranti's first term as chair of the County Board. Elected to the Board in November 2018, de Ferranti will serve as the official head of the County and set the agenda for Board Meetings.



- de Ferranti -

At the January meeting, de Ferranti led the Board in observing a moment of silence for the 182 Arlingtonians whose lives were claimed by COVID-19 in 2020 before saying that his focus in 2021 will be on "stabilization, recovery, and building a County and community that is systemically committed to racial and economic equity."

In a statement, de Ferranti observed that

the County's ongoing pandemic response, including vaccine distribution, and strengthening Arlington's response to food insecurity will be his priorities. "Our health care response to COVID-19 is clearly the biggest issue we face as a community," de Ferranti explained. "We must get the vaccines out quickly to our health care workers, nursing home residents, essential workers, seniors, and eventually, our community as a whole."

Additionally, the County Board and School Board are supporting the County Manager and Superintendent in forming a Hunger and Food Insecurity Working Group to prioritize the County's hunger response and eviction prevention efforts.

Other priorities include support of APS's efforts to safely reopen schools, accelerating efforts to make broadband affordable and accessible for all Arlington residents, and economic recovery.

According to de Ferranti, racial and economic equity will continue to be at the forefront of all the County's efforts. de Ferranti cited the County's Missing Middle housing study, which is exploring new types of housing to diversify its housing inventory, as an integral part of economic opportunity and achieving racial equity in the County.

de Ferranti currently serves as the legislative director for the National Indian Education Association which advances comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians through promoting educational sovereignty, supporting the continuing use of traditional knowledge and language, and improving educational opportunities and results in communities.

de Ferranti holds a Doctor of Law from the University of Texas, a Master's degree in public policy from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs, and a Bachelor of the Arts in public policy and history from Duke University

South Boston welcomes Barker as new assistant manager, Young as police chief

As of February 1, **Dennis W. Barker** is South Boston's assistant town manager. After a stint in the U.S. Marine Corps where he developed proficiency with several IT systems, Barker returned home to South Boston in 1996 to begin a career with the South Boston Police Department. He became Captain, second in command, in 2018 after rising through the ranks.

After 28 years as a soldier and lawman,

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- Barker -

Baker decided to pursue a second career in the IT field. During this same period, South Boston's town council determined there was a need for a full-time IT person and an assistant town manager. In citing Barker's suitability to fill both those needs, Town Manager Raab said, "After the position was advertised and resumes reviewed, we knew the Town had the best person already on staff that could fill both positions. Captain Dennis Barker knows the Town, the citizens, the employees, IT and has basically served as 'assistant manager' of the Police Department for years."

Barker received his A.S. in Criminal Justice Services in 2000. He graduated from the Southside Information Technol-

ogy Academy in 2019 and is CompTIA A+ and CompTIA Server+ certified. Barker is currently pursuing a Public Administration degree from Liberty University.

Also in news from South Boston, as of January 18, **Bryan Young** is the new police chief. Young replaces Jim Binner who retired after holding the position since 2007.



- Young -

Young, who began his law enforcement career with the Virginia Conservation Police in 1998, comes to South Boston with over twenty-two years of state law enforcement experience. After graduating from the Central Virginia Criminal Justice Academy and spending the first five years of his career in the Lynchburg area, Young began rising through the law enforcement

ranks with stops in the Roanoke Valley, Southside Virginia, and the Smith Mountain Lake community. In 2016, Young was appointed assistant chief of the Virginia Conservation Police and has served as acting chief since that time.

Young holds a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from Bluefield College (1998). He has completed the FBI Command Leadership for Law Enforcement Managers, FBI Supervisor Leadership Institute, FBI National Academy Management Course, PMG Experienced Supervisors Institute, and the Commonwealth Management Institute. In 2019, Young was selected to participate in the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chief's (NACLEC) Leadership Academy where he completed nearly a year of comprehensive leadership training.



The VML Voice is the official podcast of the Virginia Municipal League. Each episode explores a different locality or issue but the focus is always on Virginia and the local governments that make the Commonwealth work for everyone.

Contact Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org to suggest topics, ask questions, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

Subscribe now at www.vml.org and listen to our newest episode.



Congratulations City Emporia ... it's a Starbucks!

THE CITY OF EMPORIA was pleased to recently announce that it would be welcoming its first Starbucks coffee shop at 105 East Cloverleaf Drive this summer. Amazingly, the city was able to keep the news a secret for over a year as the property owners asked that the name of the business not be revealed until a later date. Mayor May Person stated, "what a great way to end calendar year 2020 and start 2021." City Manager, William E. Johnson, III observed "this is outstanding news during this pandemic, it shows that the city is always open for business."



Betting on Emporia

In other Emporia business news, city leaders and officials recently released a statement in support of the potential opening of "Rosie's Gaming Emporium," an off-track horse race betting and restaurant venue in Emporia. Virginia law requires localities that have not already approved pari-mutuel wagering must have a voter referendum before a pari-mutuel facility can locate in their community. If city voters approve the referendum, Emporia could be the newest location for the Colonial Downs Group, joining other locations in New Kent, Richmond, Vinton, Dumfries, and Hampton.



Great news from (and for) the City of Hampton

IN EARLY FEBRUARY, what was described as a "small but ecstatic" group braved heavy rain to attend the groundbreaking for the Mary Jackson Neighborhood Center in Olde Hampton. Mary Jackson, whose inspirational story is told in the book and

movie "Hidden Figures," was a Black mathematician and engineer. Jackson was NASA's first black female engineer and was part of the computing team that helped put a man on the moon. Cited as an "example of the heart and spirit of the community and the city," Jackson's legacy will live on in many ways including the new neighborhood center.

Also, in good news for the city, Hampton has been ranked as one of the top 15 most affordable beach towns for the fifth year in a row according to SmartAsset.com. Cities also in the top 15 were in states such as Texas, Mississippi, and Florida making Hampton the only city located in a mid-Atlantic state.

SmartAsset is a financial technology company that provides financial assistance and advice on homebuying, investing, retirement, taxes, and more. The group compiles its yearly ranking by four key real estate metrics: median home value, average number of rooms per house, median monthly property taxes paid, and monthly housing costs.



Williamsburg set to honor fallen heroes with Memorial Mile

IN HONOR OF FALLEN MILITARY servicemen and women, firefighters, EMS, and law enforcement officers, Williamsburg Parks and Recreation has organized a Memorial Mile. During Memorial Day weekend, fallen hero stories will be shared at Waller Mill Park to honor those killed in the line of duty.

Members of the public are invited to participate by sharing their own fallen hero stories. Remembrance signs will be displayed during the day from May 29 to May 31 at Waller Mill Park located at 901 Airport Road. The public is encouraged to participate.

Information on submitting a fallen hero story is available at www.williamsburgva.gov/429/Memorial-Mile.



City of Fredericksburg takes steps to meet ambitious Renewable Energy Resolution

IN DECEMBER 2019, THE CITY of Fredericksburg council adopted the 100% Renewable Energy Resolution effectively committing to powering municipal operations through solely renewable energy by 2035. At that time, the city council endorsed efforts to pursue solar energy for public buildings and encouraged partnerships with Fossil Free Fredericksburg, the City’s Clean & Green Commission, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and federal resources.

As a step toward that ambitious goal, the City of Fredericksburg’s government and school administration held a meeting in February with state officials and private vendors ahead of issuing a request for proposals on how to best reduce energy consumption in city buildings. This joint effort will help meet the city’s sustainability goals while increasing energy, lowering carbon emissions, and lowering costs for taxpayers.

According to the press release, this is the beginning of the process to contract with a qualified energy services company to assist the City and the Schools with evaluating potential improvements to City and School facilities. The contract would take advantage of future savings from energy efficiency improvements to help finance the up-front costs of the improvements.

In the press release, City Manager Tom Baroody commented, “City schools and government teams have been monitoring energy usage and implementing efficiency upgrades in buildings over the last 10 years and 20 years, respectively. By entering into



a formal energy performance contract for city government and city school buildings we advance our abilities to get more serious near term on energy efficiency – pursuing solar energy, power purchase agreements, and other green energy alternatives.”

Baroody also noted that in the coming fiscal year he would recommend that the city hire a sustainability manager.

In related news, Fredericksburg also recently announced a review of the potential use of hybrid vehicles by the Fredericksburg Police Department’s by Virginia Clean Cities. The city plans to purchase hybrid police vehicles for its Police Department beginning in FY 2022 as part of a pilot project.

City of Newport News Waterworks begins upgrading to smart meters

ON MARCH 1ST, NEWPORT NEWS Waterworks began its Smart Meter Installation Project. When completed, over 130,000 existing meters in Newport News, Hampton, Poquoson, York County, and James City County will be upgraded to smart meters.

According to Yann Le Gouellec, director of Newport News Waterworks, “Smart meters reduce the number of trucks on the roadway and the department’s carbon footprint, while eliminating monthly visits from meter readers. This full deployment of smart meters is an infrastructure improvement that will speed up issue resolution and identify problems in our system sooner for the benefit of our customers.”

To accompany the project, Newport News Waterworks created a customer service portal with features such as access to detailed

data usage, service connection information, identification of high usages, and notification to customers before charging high bills.



During the project, customers receiving the smart meters will be notified 30 days before work is scheduled. Although the work will not affect the ability of residents to be in their homes, the water supply to the home will be shut off for approximately 20 minutes.

The Smart Meter Installation Project is a joint effort between project partners Ferguson Enterprises, Mueller Co., and

Deloitte, with Utility Partners of America (UPA) as a subcontractor.

For more information on the smart meter installation project, visit www.nnva.gov/2212 or call the UPA project hotline at 757-304-3291.

Community invited to help plan Vienna's first Liberty Amendments Month celebration

THE TOWN OF VIENNA is encouraging community organizations, businesses, and individuals to help shape the four weeks of festivities that will mark the town's inaugural Liberty Amendments Month celebration.

Liberty Amendments Month is the brainchild of Town Manager Mercury Payton, who sought a way to bring people together and find common ground during the past summer of discourse and strife. The month is a celebration of the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which extended rights to those who had previously been excluded from full participation

Observes Payton, "We all can celebrate these amendments that ensure rights and liberties for each of us."

Liberty Amendments Day has been recognized as an official 2021 Town holiday on July 19, and Liberty

Amendments Month, to be celebrated June 19 - July 19, has been adopted this year by the General Assembly.

"I'm so proud that the Town of Vienna is leading the way in initiating this holiday and monthlong commemoration of these fundamental rights that we all cherish," said Mayor Linda Colbert in a press release.

In Vienna, Liberty Amendments Month will kick off June 19 with an educational event that will offer thoughtful reflection on the liberties assured by these four amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The celebration will culminate with a multicultural festival featuring food, drinks, crafts, and entertainment from around the world on July 17.

In between those dates is where community organizations have been invited to offer ideas. Each week between June 19 and July 19, one of the four liberty amendments will be celebrated with contests, entertainment, lectures, performances, classes, themed restaurant specials, art exhibits, films, shows, walks, and more.

More information is available at www.viennava.gov/liberty.



Town of Occoquan preserves the Peeps!

ALTHOUGH THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC has caused countless programs and events to be cancelled, the Town of Occoquan is persevering with its annual Easter holiday season Peep Contest. During this exciting time, local businesses display unique dioramas that tell a story using only Peeps. These dioramas are based on current events, the community, movies, art, science fiction, politics, or fantasy. Residents are encouraged to check out all the displays and then vote on their favorite marshmallow creation for a chance to win a \$25 prize to spend at any of the amazing shops.

Members of the community are also encouraged to participate by creating their own dioramas. They can submit their masterpieces virtually with a picture or in person at town hall.

Winners are set to be announced on April 3rd on Facebook.



Virginia Beach begins new small business grant program

THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH Development Authority is currently taking applications for its new District Improvement Program (DIP) which offers up \$10,000 in matching funds to new and existing small businesses located in specific areas of Virginia Beach.

To apply for this new grant program, the property and applicant must be up to date on all city licenses, fees, and taxes, and must be located within the boundaries of the SGA, SEGAs, SEAs, council adopted districts, or be any valid business association in the city.

In the press release, Economic Development Director Taylor Adams noted that DIP targets "work above and beyond routine maintenance and supplies. This is about making substantial improvements to the physical space or processes that will enhance the business environment."

The grant must be used for improvements such as building repairs, equipment expansion, and business modernization. Specifically, improvements can be items including but not limited to electrical repairs, security lighting, new windows, doors, landscaping, signage, and fencing.

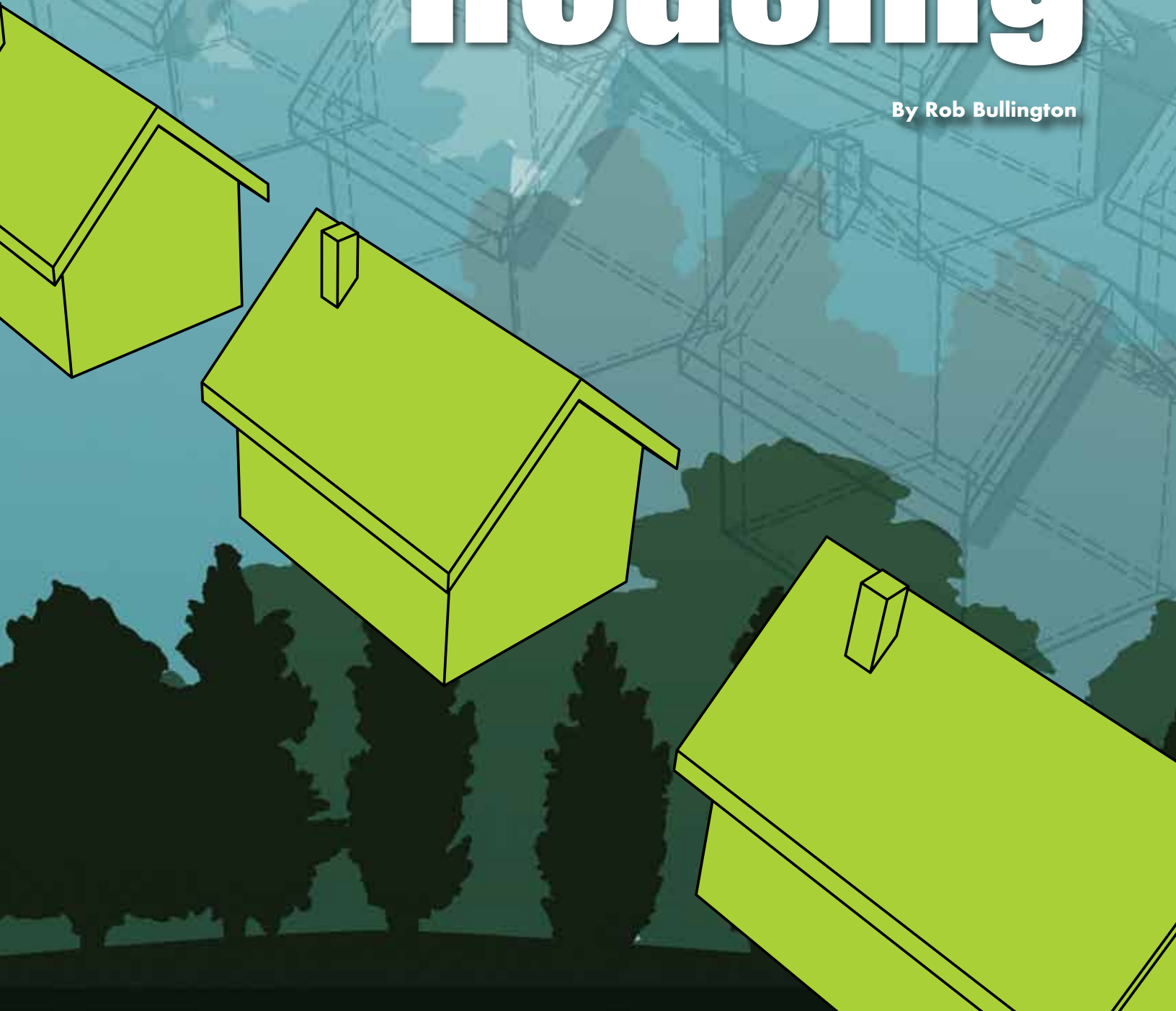
The grants will be awarded on a first come first serve basis until funds are depleted.

More information is available at www.yesvirginiabeach.com/Business-Environment/incentives/Pages/District-Improvement-Program.aspx



Energy for Housing

By Rob Bullington



MY FAMILY AND I LIVE IN A HOUSE built in 1925. It's not particularly big, but it is tall with really high ceilings. Although we have a heat pump, during the winter months we tend to use the gas furnace to stay warm. Most of the rooms have enormous radiators – in some cases multiple enormous radiators – that produce a lovely level of comfort. Although they take up space, the radiators make wonderful napping spots for our cats. In fact, we've learned that there are few things more content than a cat sleeping on top of a warm radiator.

During the first cold snap last fall, however, several of the upstairs radiators stopped getting warm.

The cats were not pleased.

During the service visit by the furnace folks, the technician told me a bit of history as to why many homes built around the same time as ours have such large radiators. "During the Spanish Flu pandemic after the First World War," he explained, "the government advised people to keep their windows open all winter to let in fresh air."

As he wrote out the invoice for his visit, adding zeroes freely as he talked, he continued. "They believed fresh air would prevent the flu, so people were told to leave their windows wide open all winter."

I waited for him to add a decimal, which he finally did, before the final two zeroes. While I sat down to compose myself, and the check, he finished his explanation.

"Builders thought the best way to keep a house warm that had its windows open all winter was to install really big radiators. Which works, in a way. So, a lot of homes built in the 1920s had big radiators."

While leaving the windows wide open with the heat cranked may have made sense in 1925, this approach no longer holds water. For one thing, it's expensive. For another, it's bad for the environment. For yet another thing, the cats would be bothered by the draft.

Thankfully, homes and buildings being planned and built today have a variety of ways to achieve levels of energy efficiency that our Spanish Flu surviving forebears could have only imagined! Moreover, state and federal programs offer incentives to make existing structures more efficient through simple, often inexpensive, measures.

It's an exciting time for Energy + Housing and we're happy to share these insights from some policy and industry leaders...

Vice President for Grid & Technical Solutions Joe Woomer illuminates us on how Dominion Energy's programs help customers save money and conserve energy.

Associate Director of Energy Efficiency Daniel Farrell with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is energized by his agency's existing and "coming soon" initiatives to make affordable housing healthier and less costly to heat and cool.

Director of Energy Analytics and Informed Design John Nichols from Moseley Architects shines a light on why local governments are best positioned to build efficient buildings and how they can go about doing it.

Writer Amy McCluskey from Virginia Housing shows how the winds have shifted in favor of energy efficiency and green standards for affordable housing and why the future looks bright for everyone involved.

Dominion Energy brings new ways to conserve energy (and save money)



NEW TECHNOLOGIES ARE CHANGING how our customers use energy and Dominion Energy is adapting as well. In fact, helping our customers reduce their energy consumption and save money is a key component to our work to achieve a cleaner and more sustainable energy future. We want to make it easy for our customers to help the environment and save money through energy efficiency and conservation.

Before the spring and summer heat arrive is a great time for our customers to explore ways to reduce both their energy use and electric bills. We encourage all our customers to explore the programs below and see how energy efficiency and rebate programs can help them conserve energy and save money.

A sustainable energy future

Dominion Energy is working to ensure that the energy we deliver to our customers is more sustainable. A year ago, we set a course for net-zero carbon and methane emissions company-wide by 2050. We are already making major changes in how we conduct our business — with a special focus on making the energy we provide cleaner and more environmentally-friendly. Currently, about half of our energy mix across our national footprint comes from carbon-free sources, like nuclear and solar. That will grow as we continue to make major investments in solar, wind, and other forms of renewable energy — including building the largest offshore wind farm in the North America!

But we can't do it alone. Customers will play a key role in driving down emissions. We also know that customers are looking for more ways to control and manage their energy use. Therefore, we have developed a number of programs and products that can help them meet their goals.



Energy-efficiency and savings programs

The best way to save money and lower your carbon footprint is to reduce the amount of energy you use. Residential customers can take advantage of the following programs to make their homes more energy efficient and manage their energy usage:

- **Home Energy Assessment and Rebate Program** – A qualified participating contractor conducts a free or low-cost 30-60-minute walk-through of your home and installs simple measures like LED bulbs and water heater pipe insulation, while identifying other energy-saving opportunities. At the end of the Home Energy Assessment, your contractor will work with you to submit your rebate application for work completed at your home, on your behalf.
- **Discounts and rebates on LED light bulbs and ENERGY STAR® products** – These energy efficient products can help reduce energy use in your home. Discounts are available on lighting and small appliances, and rebates are available on certain ENERGY STAR® appliances.
- **Off-Peak Plan** – For our smart meter customers in Virginia, enrollment in the Off-Peak Plan is an opportunity to save money on your monthly Dominion Energy bills. For example, when day-to-day habits such as running the dishwasher are shifted to off-peak hours, you will pay less for that electricity than you would on our standard residential rate. Smart meters can also help customers manage their energy use by providing daily energy information.

Learn more about these programs by visiting www.dominionenergy.com/virginia/save-energy.



BrightSuite by Dominion Energy

Dominion Energy has launched BrightSuite, an unregulated, wholly owned subsidiary focused on customer energy solutions “behind the meter.” A BrightSuite “smart home” system protects a customer’s home and helps keep it energy efficient throughout the year.

What is BrightSuite?

BrightSuite is an unregulated affiliate of Dominion Energy Virginia, but it is not the same company. BrightSuite’s services are not a part of the regulated services offered by Dominion Energy Virginia. A customer’s decision to participate in any BrightSuite offerings, or not to participate, does not affect the price, availability, or terms of service from Dominion Energy Virginia.

Renewable energy customer programs

We understand that many of our customers care about their environmental impact. That’s why we offer a wide variety of affordable renewable energy programs to help customers be a part of a sustainable future.

- **100% Renewable EnergySM** – This new voluntary program matches 100% of the participant’s monthly electricity use with renewable energy resources in VA and NC.
- **REC Select** – Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) are tradeable certificates that prove renewable energy was generated and paired with electricity on the purchasers’ behalf. Purchasing RECs through the Dominion Energy REC Select program is a cost-effective way for a customer to match their home or business’ electricity use with renewable energy.
- **Green Power** – When you sign up, we buy Green-e Energy certified renewable energy certificates (RECs) from renewable energy facilities on your behalf to guarantee that renewable energy is generated and delivered to the power pool in the amount specified.
- **On Site Renewable Energy** – Net Metering Program – Net Metering offers customers the opportunity to consider a small-scale renewable energy system, like a rooftop solar array, while ensuring they still always have a reliable source of energy from the grid even during times when their own generator isn’t producing energy.
- **WeatherSmartSM Program** – Heating and cooling use more energy than anything else in your house. Smart thermostats are one of the best ways to help save some of that energy. The WeatherSmart uses your smart thermostat and local weather data to learn how your house reacts to weather conditions. Your smart thermostat can respond with automatic adjustments to save you even more. Plus, you get a \$10 annual rebate and a monthly report with personalized energy-saving tips

For more information on these programs, visit www.dominionenergy.com/virginia/renewable-energy-programs.

BrightSuite has expanded its home monitoring services to include elements of energy management including:

- Smart thermostats that can respond automatically to activity in the home or from changing weather patterns.
- Built-in analytics to let you know when your HVAC system needs maintenance before it becomes a problem.
- Smart, long lasting LED light bulbs as a great way to turn every light in your home into a “smart” light.
- Smart plug-in dimmers that adjust the brightness to any standing lamp, table lamp or stand-alone light from anywhere. With a space efficient design that only takes up one outlet, you can easily schedule your lights to turn on at a certain time of day, or off when a door or window is open.
- Smart plug-in outdoor switches that transform any outdoor outlet into a smart light switch. Weather resistant housing and a protective outlet cover ensure this switch is designed to withstand the elements.

As smart home technology continues to evolve, so will BrightSuite, with a goal to connect devices and resources to an intelligent platform allowing customers flexibility, customization, and the ability to live more sustainably.



More than smart homes!

BrightSuite is also helping small businesses and local governments achieve their sustainability goals while providing long-term energy cost savings. For example, in 2020 BrightSuite added a commercial rooftop solar to its residential and commercial security services.

More information about BrightSuite is available at www.brightsuite.com or calling 833-374-8637.

About the author: Joe Woomer is the vice president for Grid & Technical Solutions for Dominion Energy.

Low-income housing energy efficiency programs on the rise

DHCD delivers for Virginians, during the pandemic and beyond!

Important note:

If you or someone you know is having difficulty in making rent payments due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you may be eligible for the Virginia Rent Relief Program (RRP). To find out if you may be eligible, visit www.dhcd.virginia.gov/eligibility.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has made clear that the need for safe and affordable housing in communities throughout Virginia is greater than ever. Challenges for low-income Virginians have been particularly acute during the pandemic as the demand for affordable housing outpaces the supply. Furthermore, the pandemic has underscored the importance of affordable housing that contributes to the health of residents. In this article, we look at some current and new funding programs Virginia’s Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) offers to address these needs.

Housing Innovations in Energy Efficiency (HIEE)

A DHCD program in development at the time of this writing, the Housing Innovations in Energy Efficiency (HIEE) program will focus on increasing energy efficiency in affordable housing and lowering energy bills for low-income Virginians. HIEE is being created because of legislation passed during the 2020 General Assembly session (HB 981), which authorized Virginia to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI is a multi-state compact which requires utilities to purchase carbon “allowances” to cover their projected CO2 emissions on an annual basis. RGGI provides an economic incentive

to utilities to reduce emissions and transition to clean energy, which benefits everyone by reducing greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) developed the regulations and will oversee participation of Virginia-based facilities in the RGGI auctions.

Fifty percent of RGGI proceeds will be directed to a fund managed by DHCD for energy efficiency in affordable housing programs. The HIEE program will assist affordable housing projects in completing energy efficiency upgrades that would not have been feasible otherwise. These upgrades will lower utility costs and will make affordable housing more sustainable, durable, and healthier for residents.

DHCD has formed an HIEE Advisory Group with members representing affordable housing developers, housing development authorities, energy efficiency, environmental and consumer advocacy groups, and weatherization providers. This group will provide input and guidance throughout the program’s development process. The advisory group will focus on investments in deep energy retrofits of existing buildings and new construction. To ensure that low-income populations benefit from long-term energy cost savings, these investments will aid in significantly exceeding the energy codes that accompany existing funds for state affordable housing construction and rehabilitation. These investments will also prioritize long-term sustainability, durability, and occupant health (e.g. ventilation) as well as energy efficiency and innovative approaches.

DHCD and the Advisory Group, and other stakeholders have generally agreed on using HIEE funds to increase the impact of DHCD’s existing programs, such as the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and Affordable and Special Needs Housing (ASNH) Program.



ASNH and WAP

Two of DHCD's largest and longest operating programs, Affordable Special Needs Housing (ASNH) and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) serve between 6,000 – 8,000 low-income families every year. ASNH combines several state and federal funding sources to support development or preservation of multi-family housing for the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens, such as those who have special needs or who have experienced homelessness. ASNH projects may be new construction or substantial renovations of existing buildings. At a minimum, new construction projects under ASNH are designed and built to ENERGY STAR standards, which means they are more efficient than buildings built to current energy code requirements. In fact, many of these projects are sourced, constructed, and designed to reduce environmental impacts that exceed the ENERGY STAR standard.

WAP serves existing homes or multi-family buildings where occupants meet income criteria, typically at or below 60 percent of State Median Income (SMI). For a family of four in Virginia, this is about \$62,000 a year. WAP provides energy audits and retrofit services at no cost to eligible customers through a network of 17 regional weatherization agencies. The program prioritizes serving the elderly and those with disabilities.

The power of weatherization

Weatherization not only saves energy and money it also improves comfort, health and safety for homeowners and tenants of multi-family buildings. Although investments in weatherization are a crucial component for better health outcomes for residents, the weatherization network has faced challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Willie Fobbs, DHCD's Associate Director of Housing, notes that "the weatherization agencies and provider network has had to overcome significant disruption to their operations with COVID-19. Many had to suspend operations for a few months and revamped their audit and customer interaction processes to ensure everyone's safety."



In addition to improving health outcomes of residents, weatherization can mean a significant savings on utility bills. According to a national survey conducted by the US Department of Energy, weatherization program customers save an average of \$280 each year on their utility bills. While the specific upgrades covered by a weatherization retrofit can vary, typical measures include:

- Adding insulation and sealing air leaks in the building envelope (caulking and weather-stripping)
- Installing energy efficient lighting
- Repairing heating and cooling systems, or replacing unsafe or inefficient equipment
- Sealing leaky duct systems to better deliver conditioned air to rooms and avoid energy waste
- Installing exhaust and/or ventilation fans to ensure proper ventilation in the home
- Measuring carbon monoxide (CO) levels and installing CO detector and smoke alarms
- Installing water-conserving faucet aerators and showerheads (reducing hot water use)



Over the past two years, both major electric utilities in Virginia, Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power Company, have significantly increased funding for their respective low-income energy efficiency programs, as directed by the General Assembly through the Grid Transformation and Security Act (2018) and Virginia Clean Economy Act (2020). Dominion and APCo have largely partnered with DHCD's existing weatherization provider network to deliver these expanded programs, which has created both additional opportunities and challenges.

"It's been busier than ever, and we are always looking to hire new project managers and weatherization crew members," notes Janaka Casper, CEO of Community Housing Partners (CHP), one of Virginia's largest weatherization providers. According to Casper, "weatherization providers recognize that the savings these families realize helps them cover other needs, and this is especially important during the pandemic."

Getting ready for HIEE

The funding for the HIEE program will begin coming to DHCD shortly after the March 3rd RGGI auction. Rather than thinking of HIEE as a new program, DHCD encourages program partners to think of HIEE as a new funding stream that can be applied with flexibility to any of DHCD's affordable housing programs to increase energy efficiency. Deploying these funds quickly and efficiently through existing programs is the best way to help low-income families as soon as possible. Once the majority of Virginians have received COVID vaccinations, DHCD will move forward with other ways to provide deeper energy cost savings to low-income families and carbon reductions in affordable housing.

DHCD plans to have initial draft guidelines for the HIEE program developed by mid-April. The program will be launched subject to final review and approval by Governor Northam's office.

For more information:

- Learn more about HIEE at www.dhcd.virginia.gov/hiee.
- To access services through DHCD's Weatherization Assistance Program, visit www.dhcd.virginia.gov/wx

About the author: *Daniel Farrell is the associate director of DHCD's Energy Efficiency Office.*

High Performing Buildings: Step by Step

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITIES considering building construction and maintenance projects are almost universally challenged by limited budgets. However, given that most of these buildings will operate for 50 years or more, local governments also have unique opportunities to improve energy efficiency and reduce life-cycle costs. So, how can localities maximize these strategies while working within the parameters of budget constraints? This article draws upon Moseley Architects' decades of experience with hundreds of energy models and green building projects to provide step-by-step recommendations and lessons learned.

Step 1: Start with the end in mind

The first step to improving your buildings' energy performance is thinking about where you are now and where you want to end up. This is just as important for existing buildings as it is for new construction.

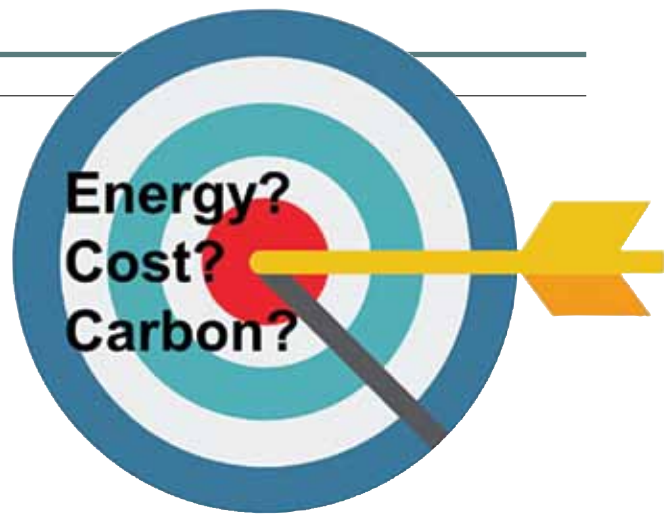
- **Benchmark against your peers.** Start by asking your energy manager or an outside consultant to run a report showing how your buildings' energy use stacks up against other facilities of the same type. Benchmarking programs like ENERGY STAR® are especially helpful because they provide you with a 0-100 score that measures how your buildings compare to others on an apples-to-apples basis.
- **Set a specific goal or target.** Setting a goal, even if it is aspirational, motivates the entire team and gives you the right context for evaluating design decisions. Be as specific as possible; targets like Energy Use Intensity (EUI) or a carbon reduction goal give more direction to the project team than generalities like "green" or "sustainable."
- **Harvest the low-hanging fruit first.** Geothermal wellfields and solar panels tend to be the first things people think of when it comes to saving energy. While those systems are important, there are hundreds of other strategies that can be even more cost-effective. Identify the payback period and upfront cost you are comfortable with and ask your project team to recommend strategies that meet those parameters.

Once you have an idea of how energy efficient your current buildings are and how much you can improve, charting your path becomes considerably easier.

Step 2: Don't just coordinate – collaborate

Now that you have an idea of your starting point and your goal, it's time to involve the right team members to help you connect the dots. The best way to do this is through an integrated design process. Gather your architects, engineers, maintenance staff, and other stakeholders in a collaborative workshop to talk about your energy goals and possible strategies. By asking each other questions and exploring alternate approaches, team members often uncover strategies that reduce both upfront capital costs *and* long-term costs. Here are some examples:

- **Better glass = smaller HVAC.** Most window upgrades have a considerable upfront cost, but if your engineers know



what is being considered, they can usually decrease the size of the HVAC components. Doing so can greatly improve the payback, or even pay for the window upgrades outright.

- **Brighter finishes = less lighting.** When interior designers and electrical engineers collaborate, brilliant strategies to reduce upfront and long-term costs come to light. Bright, reflective interior finishes not only improve the aesthetics of your space, they can also decrease the number of light fixtures needed to illuminate that space.

The interior finish colors used for the Pohick Regional Library in Fairfax County maximize daylight and minimize electric light.



Step 3: The envelope please...

Once you've engaged your project team in a collaborative design effort, the next step is to focus your collective attention on the building envelope. This is especially true for local government teams, where most building envelopes need to last 50 years or more. Careful consideration of the building envelope is especially important on new construction but should also be part of major renovations. Some prominent items to remember:

- **Use the correct amount of insulation.** Existing structures with poor insulation can benefit greatly from adding even just a small amount of insulation. On the other hand, new buildings don't always benefit from having more insulation than the minimum required by code. This is especially true on larger buildings, where too much insulation can trap excess heat inside, causing the air conditioner to run even during the winter months!



Virginia Beach City Hall

- Choose the right windows.** Good windows are building envelope “All-Stars.” But many variables contribute to whether windows are “good.” Ask your mechanical engineer to run a building energy model to determine the right type of windows for your buildings’ use, size, and solar orientation. “Spectrally selective” glass is especially useful since it maximizes daylight while minimizing solar heat gain.
- Combat WAV-T.** A properly designed air barrier system will address WAV-T issues – Water, Air, Vapor, and Thermal – which are among the most important concerns for building envelopes. One of the best paths to success is to simplify the overall complexity of the building envelope by reducing the number of joints and intersections between materials.

The windows used in the new Virginia Beach City Hall harvest more than 40% of the sun’s visible light while blocking 80% of its heat.

What is a building envelope?

A building envelope is the physical separator between the conditioned and unconditioned environment of a building; it includes the exterior walls, foundations, roof, windows, and doors.

Step 4: Heat it, cool it, light it

After thinking through the best ways to design the building shell, it’s time to discuss everything that will go *inside* the building. To save energy and ensure the comfort and wellbeing of your building occupants, it is crucial to choose the right technologies for heating, cooling, lighting, ventilating, and performing all the other processes that support your building.

The variable speed fans specified for the Sterling Fire & Rescue Station in Loudoun County have an estimated payback period of less than 5 years.

- Go for high(er) efficiency.** Energy-saving HVAC components are available for every possible system type, not just geothermal and chillers/boilers. Ask manufacturers for high efficiency options and variable frequency drives (VFD) for everything from pumps and fans to compressors and furnaces.
- Keep it simple.** HVAC and lighting controls are one of the most cost-effective components for saving energy, if the number of sensors and signals don’t become overwhelming. Work with your operations and maintenance staff to identify the right balance between automated and manual controls and make sure they feel confident maintaining the proposed equipment.

- What (or who) are you forgetting?** While HVAC and lighting systems typically consume the most energy in a building, other systems such as domestic hot water, foodservice, and IT equipment are sometimes overlooked. Ask your engineers and vendors to specify ENERGY STAR models for these systems and propose other energy-saving options like add-on devices that recapture waste heat.

Step 5: Check your work

You’ve successfully gone through design and construction; now you’re moving into operations. Congratulations! But as with many things in life, your work is never truly finished. Here are the next steps for ensuring that your buildings operate the way you intended and for applying what you have learned to future projects.

- Commissioning is a must.** Building commissioning became popular as LEED® gained traction in the marketplace, but its value isn’t limited to green buildings. Engaging a quality commissioning agent can easily pay for itself by making sure everything is working as it should. On existing buildings this is often the first step to diagnosing issues and setting goals.
- Track your progress.** Remember those energy goals we set back in Step 1? As the saying goes, “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.” Annual reports showing the Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of each building are a good start; evaluating your energy use monthly and by fuel type will help you identify anomalies and address them as they occur.
- What worked? What didn’t?** Projects end as new ones begin, but no building is truly “complete” when usage and technology change over time. Developing an internal knowledge base and sharing your experience with project teams are invaluable ways to repeat the strategies that worked and avoid those that did not.



Sterling Fire & Rescue Station

About the author: John Nichols is Director of Energy Analytics and Informed Design for Moseley Architects, a full-service architecture and engineering firm headquartered in Richmond. John’s work focuses on leveraging data to inform key design decisions related to energy savings and occupant wellbeing. Moseley Architects is a recent ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year award recipient and a long-time member of the U.S. Green Building Council.

Please note that this story was written prior to the Governor finalizing legislation from the 2021 General Assembly regular and special session that may add additional energy efficiency standards to the building and remodeling of local government facilities.

Affordable housing energized

Virginia Housing works to make affordable housing more energy efficient

SOLAR ENERGY. HIGH-EFFICIENCY appliances. Smart thermostats. LED lights. These are not terms one generally associates with affordable housing, but the industry is evolving.

Research over the years has shown the energy burden for low-income multifamily households is nearly twice as high as the median household. This disparity is due to low-income families living in older, less energy-efficient buildings, which results in higher-than-average utility bills.

Efforts have been underway for some time to reduce the energy burden for these households by incorporating energy-efficient standards and green building practices in affordable housing. This trend was given a boost in 2020 when Governor Ralph Northam signed the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) which provides even

more assurance that affordable housing will continue to become increasingly more energy efficient.

In addition to calling for the state's largest power utilities to transition to clean energy over the next 25 to 30 years, the VCEA includes several provisions aimed at affordable housing, including:

- A new program to reduce the energy burden for low-income customers.
- Help with energy efficiency for marginalized communities, including weatherization of low-income housing and assistance for veterans and the disabled.
- Caps on how much customers can be charged to prevent spikes in electric bills.

Energy efficiency becomes the norm

Virginia Housing has offered energy performance incentives to builders for more than a decade. In recent years, however, baseline energy performance has become mandatory. As an example, for a development to receive federal Housing Credits it must meet the following requirements:

- New construction must be Energy Star certified, meaning the homes are at least 10% more energy-efficient than homes built to code, and they must achieve a 20% improvement on average in energy performance.

Energy-efficient affordable housing...

- reduces utility bills for low-income residents.
- is good for the environment because less power used means less greenhouse gas emissions.
- boosts property values through improved building conditions and reduced utility costs that increase a building's net operating income.

JEFFREY SAUERS, CPI PRODUCTIONS



- A rehabilitated development must show a 30% increase in the building's Home Energy Rating System (HERS) – an industry standard by which a building's energy efficiency is measured – or have a HERS index of 80% or higher.
- Adaptive reuse developments must show a HERS index of at least 95%.

“These requirements are put in place to ensure that low- and moderate-income tenants do not spend large amounts of income on utilities and also seeks to encourage environmentally responsible housing development throughout the Commonwealth,” notes J.D. Bondurant, director of Virginia Housing's Housing Credit program.

Virginia Housing also incentivizes builders to obtain additional green certifications through rating systems such as LEED or Earth-Craft Gold.

“Sustainability, as well as the shared responsibility to care for the earth, is why we strongly support green building,” says Bondurant. “This building process results in homes that perform better, have improved indoor air quality with lower utility costs and comparable construction costs relative to other standard construction practices.”

Virginia Housing's innovative Green Building Initiative has had tangible results. In less than five years the number of developers who went green increased from roughly a third to 100%.

Let's take a look at a couple of examples of how developers are using green building incentives to make affordable housing better for residents and the community as a whole.

Example #1 – The Apex (Arlington County)

“The perception of affordable housing is often far from what it is,” observes Celia Slater, director of communications for AHC Inc., an affordable housing developer out of the Washington D.C./Baltimore region.

In October 2020, AHC Inc., in partnership with Arlington County, completed The Apex, a 256-unit affordable apartment community with 342 solar panels. It's the largest solar panel array on a multifamily apartment building in Northern Virginia. The property received \$2.5 million in 9% Housing Credits and \$1 million in 4% Housing Credits.

“I don't think people driving by would think they are affordable; they are built with very high standards, and it makes sense to reduce operating costs as much as we can — and by doing that in a sustainable fashion, it's a win-win for everybody,” says Slater.

For affordable housing developers, utility bills are usually one of the largest and most volatile portions of the development's budget. Stabilizing utility bills through solar and other measures makes it easier to maintain operating budgets, retain resident services and avoid raising rents.

The electricity generated from The Apex's solar arrays is used to offset common area energy usage, cutting down on greenhouse emissions. The lights, elevators, fitness equipment and electricity to the apartment community's leasing office will all be powered by solar energy.

“This is a reflection of how far the industry has come,” concludes Slater.

The Apex earned an EarthCraft Gold designation by including a variety of other energy-efficient features, including:

- High-efficiency WaterSense toilets, showerheads, and faucets
- Energy-efficient LED lighting
- Energy Star appliances, HVAC and water heating systems
- Enhanced insulation and air sealing to eliminate transfer of air between units and the outside environment
- Reduced impervious (paved) area, which reduces runoff by 80%
- Reflective roofing that creates a cooler environment around the building
- Native and drought-tolerant plantings in the landscaping



JEFFREY SAUERS, CPI PRODUCTIONS

Example #2 –Somanath Senior Apartments (City of Richmond)

Another example of green affordable housing is Somanath Senior Apartments at Beckstoffer's Mill in the Church Hill neighborhood in East Richmond. The two-building, 39-unit development for seniors 55 and older by Better Housing Coalition, includes several green initiatives. The most noteworthy is the one-story senior apartment building. This building is one of the few, and possibly the first, affordable net-zero-capable senior communities in the nation, meaning it produces as much energy as its residents consume.

Somanath Senior Apartments are EarthCraft certified to Tier III standards for energy efficiency and sustainability. Some of the community's green features include: Energy Star appliances, WaterSense plumbing fixtures, ductless mini-split HVAC systems, Energy Recovery Ventilation and 206 photo-voltaic panels with a net-metering system that gives the builder credit for electricity when the building

produces more energy than its residents consume.

The net-zero-capable building received an allocation of federal Housing Credits from Virginia Housing worth \$3.7 million, plus financing for \$1.3 million made possible through taxable bonds and the REACH Virginia program, which supports vital housing initiatives across the state and is funded by significant contributions from Virginia Housing's net revenues.

...and we're just getting started!

Reducing the energy burden on low-income households will continue to be at the forefront of affordable housing development in Virginia. With new legislation and the continued support of housing coalitions and agencies across the state, energy savings and affordable housing will one day be synonymous.

About the author: *Amy McCluskey is a writer at Virginia Housing*

What does green affordable housing look like?

New Clay House (City of Richmond)

This Virginia Supportive Housing community includes 80 apartments for homeless and low-income adults earning 50% or less of the area median income. It was designed and constructed to achieve an EarthCraft Gold certification for resource and energy efficiency and includes a photovoltaic solar array to reduce the building's energy load and a solar thermal hot water system to preheat water.

Gateway Seniors, (Town of Fishersville)

Pinnacle Construction and Development Corp. is using an innovative modular building method that will provide affordable apartments to seniors in less time and with less toll on the environment than regular construction. Modular buildings are partly assembled in factories to strict specifications, then brought to their permanent sites. The factory-controlled process generates less waste, creates fewer site disturbances, and allows for tighter construction. The shorter construction timeframe also reduces carbon emissions.



2021

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

INNOVATION AWARDS

SAPPHIRE ANNIVERSARY YEAR



Recognizing Excellence in Virginia Local Government

CALL FOR ENTRIES

2021 VML Innovation Awards

FORTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, the Virginia Municipal League launched its "Achievement Awards" to recognize outstanding work being done by local governments across Virginia. The program went on to become Virginia's highest honor in local government creativity. In 2017 the name was changed to "Innovation Awards", but the purpose remains the same: To celebrate all that you do to make your city, town, or county a great place to live!

Appropriately this is the "sapphire anniversary" year for the awards as sapphire is often associated with healing and peace – two things we have good reason to welcome in 2021.

So, don't miss this opportunity to spotlight programs and individuals that have made a big difference to your residents by creating innovative solutions to address emerging needs.

The awards will be presented at VML's Annual Conference in Leesburg in October.

Criteria

Projects and programs are judged on how well they demonstrate the following:

- **Innovative problem solving**
- **Improved quality of life**
- **Excellence in management**
- **Making the most of local resources**
- **Increased citizen participation**
- **Long-term value to the community**
- **Adaptability to other communities**

Award-winning projects typically demonstrate innovative ways of delivering services, addressing community needs, or significantly improving an existing services.

CATEGORIES

AWARD CATEGORIES are based on broad topics with local governments of all sizes competing within these categories. The entries will be judged based on the scope and effect of the project in relationship to the community's size, thereby putting all localities on a level playing field.

Many projects relate to more than one category. When deciding what category best fits your project, consider the primary goal of the project and which components of the project demonstrate the greatest innovation.

Localities may submit only one entry in each of the eight following categories (i.e., a maximum of eight submissions total per locality):

Community Health

Includes building healthy community environments through active lifestyle programs, nutrition education and improving access to healthier food choices..

Economic Development

Includes business development and retention; international competitiveness; infrastructure development and investment; planning, land use and zoning; blight; enterprise zones; housing; transportation; workforce development; and historic preservation.

Environmental Quality

Includes natural resources and the authority of local governments to manage the environment, including water resources and quality, solid and hazardous waste management, air quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

Public Safety

Includes police, fire, rescue services, emergency planning and coordinated response, building code enforcement, jails, health, and mental health related to public safety.

Working with Youth

Includes civics education, pre-k-12 education, summer programs, parks and recreation, and literacy programs.

Communications

Includes promotional campaigns, branding campaigns, crisis plans, events, customer service programs; media can include online, video, print, social and other formats.

Risk Management

Includes the process of identifying, assessing and controlling threats to a locality's capital, earnings, information technology, and data. This can include, but is not limited to, investments in risk management and diversification of risk management strategies used to mitigate threats.

Local Champion [NEW CATEGORY FOR 2021]

Includes efforts made by local first responders (i.e., firefighters, EMTs, police) or local government staff who performed valuable work beyond the requirements of their job. The intention of this award category is to recognize public servants and local government individuals who made significant contributions to the communal good without expectation of financial compensation. The nominee can be either an individual or group; the award will be presented to both the winning individual/group and the locality in which they serve.

President's Award for Innovation

One winning project from the category winners will be selected for the top prize – the President's Award – and will receive this top honor in addition to the award in their category. The President's award can come from any of the categories.

Deadline

All entries must be received via e-mail by 5 p.m., Monday, Aug. 16, 2021.

Rules for entering

The competition is open to all VML local government members.

All entries must be submitted electronically via email. Localities must download the entry form at www.vml.org/innovation-awards and fill in all of the requested information directly on the form. The completed form must then be e-mailed to mtimbreza@vml.org.

Entries must cover new projects or programs completed between Jan. 1, 2020 and June 1, 2021, or – for existing projects – entries must cover major enhancements that occurred between Jan. 1, 2020 and June 1, 2021.

Each entry form must be fully completed and must be signed by the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

A local government can only submit one entry in each of the eight categories. The President's Award for Innovation is not a separate category.

Supporting materials totaling no more than 10 pages, including photos, brochures, charts, or other information, can be included in a separate document. This document must also be e-mailed.

A video is also required as part of your supporting materials, include the URL (or web address) of that video. Maximum length of video is five minutes.

Questions?

For more information about completing your entry or other details, contact VML's Manuel Timbreza at mtimbreza@vml.org or call 804-649-8471..

The judging

Entries are screened by VML staff and judged by a panel of judges chosen for their expertise in local and state government. The judges generally represent a variety of backgrounds, including small and large localities and state agencies.

The winners

Awards will be presented at the VML annual conference in Leesburg, Oct. 3-5. All winning entries will also be featured in *Virginia Town & City*.

Don't miss this premiere opportunity to spotlight innovative programs that make your town, city or county a great place for people to call home!



**Enter on-line at
[www.vml.org/
innovation-awards](http://www.vml.org/innovation-awards)**

Roanoke Fire-EMS welcomes new Station 7

IN 2019 ROANOKE'S FIRE-EMS Department bid farewell to its Station 7, which was built in 1922 and was among Roanoke's oldest fire stations. The station was closed in July and demolished in November.

Now, less than two years later, the city is pleased to have a new Station 7 on Memorial Avenue SW in the Grandin Court community. The new station became operational on February 16 and the Fire-EMS Department held a grand opening ceremony on February 24.

The new Station 7 brings a modern Fire-EMS facility to the Grandin Court community that will meet its fire service needs for the next 75 years. Moreover, the new Fire-EMS station is larger than the old station, with 12,000 square feet to accommodate all genders, meet the needs of the health and safety of the personnel who occupy it, and accommodate modern day apparatus.

Keeping the spirit of old Station 7 alive

Because the old Station 7 was an integral part of the Grandin Court community, there was strong interest in preserving as much of its history as possible. To that end, a portion of the old station was preserved and built into the new facility. In addition, Roanoke Fire-EMS worked with Black Dog Salvage, an antique store in Roanoke, to repurpose historical elements of the old station. This effort received special attention in January 2020 when the DIY Cable Network aired an episode of *Salvage Dawgs* showing some of this work being done.

Repurposed items from the old fire station include:

- An old fire truck, a sister truck to one previously housed at the station, used as an interior accent feature.
- The old closet doors, refurbished and used for the new pantry.
- The original brass pole and wood, made into a dining table for the station.
- Brick from the original 1922 station, used for an accent wall leading into the main entrance to the station.
- The run board that shows who was on shift each day and which apparatus they would be riding, incorporated into the design of the building.
- Woodwork from the old staircase, used as accents in the day room.

Furthermore, the station's new façade evokes the architectural history of the community that surrounds it. Finally, the Trojan Dog,



a beloved fixture from the front lawn of the old station made its way back to the new station on February 13, with fanfare, lights, and sirens on its route down Grandin Road and Memorial Avenue. The artwork, which was moved to the Raleigh Court Branch Library during renovation, was created by Ann Glover and originally showcased in the City's second "Art in Roanoke" temporary exhibition in 2010.

Welcome to the new Station 7

The City is thrilled to have a larger, state-of-the-art fire-EMS station for the community.

"The increased square footage of the new station offers easier access for modern fire apparatus, improved living spaces, the accommodation of both male and female firefighters, as well as other new features," notes Fire-EMS Chief David Hoback. "Personnel also have a place to work out, as well as to do office work. They have places to actually do what they need to do, and they didn't have that in the last station."

The grand opening ceremony for Fire-EMS Station 7 was shared live on the Fire-EMS Facebook page and on Instagram. Search for "Roanoke Fire Station 7" on YouTube for a virtual tour.

About the author: *Kristen Perdue is the community risk reduction specialist with Roanoke's Fire-EMS Department.*



Bigger than it seems

At first glance, Round Hill appears to be a small town of only 600 residents. However, the Town of Round Hill provides water and sewer service to a vibrant community of over 5,000 residents in the surrounding area. In fact, only 15 percent of the homes in the Round Hill Water and Sewer Service Area are in the incorporated town limits



By Melissa Hynes

Welcome to Round Hill!

The second of VTC's "Towns of Loudoun" series

IN 1875, THE WASHINGTON & Ohio Railroad arrived in Round Hill, a village 15 miles from Leesburg. The railroad helped Round Hill become a vacation destination for people from the Washington, D.C. area who wanted to trade the city's summer heat for the coolness of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Over the next quarter century, Round Hill grew from a village to a bustling town with boarding houses, merchants, and stables to serve its summer visitors. Many of the town's large historic homes began life as boarding houses, inns, and taverns in the late 1800s.

On February 5, 1900, the Virginia General Assembly incorporated the Town of Round Hill. In May of that year, the residents elected their first mayor, George Ford, who later became a state senator. The first Round Hill Town Council met in the general store owned by Mayor Ford. Almost a century later, in 1986, Ford's Store was renovated to become the official Town Office and Town Council Chambers.

offers groceries, sandwiches, and ice cream. Families on walks often stop by the store to get an ice cream cone or other locally produced sweet treat. For those "on the go" to nearby destinations like Sleeter Lake Park or one of the Appalachian Trail Centers, the quick convenience of the **Round Hill Mini Mart** ideal.

Another noteworthy downtown business, **Savoir Faire**, has been catering weddings and special events across Loudoun County for more than two decades. Situated in the historic Patterson Building, Savoir Faire has won "Best of Loudoun Reader's Choice in Catering" multiple times. Recently the owner of Savoir Faire renovated a historic furniture factory across the street and opened **C'est Bon**, a gourmet store with prepared meals to go for special occasions and busy families.



The Town Office formerly Ford's Store.



C'est Bon

Downtown: The heart of Round Hill

The heart of Round Hill is its downtown where both "in town" and "out of town" residents frequent the businesses that have become part of the fabric of the community. These businesses make long-time residents and newcomers alike feel welcome. One such business is **Tammy's Diner** where people meet daily for breakfast or lunch and often share stories of the "good old days." The historic **Round Hill Local Grocery Store** is another community touchstone that



Round Hill Local Grocery Store



Franklin Park Trail and the Main Street Sidewalk groundbreaking



Parks, and parks, and parks...

Round Hill is home to four parks. The **Downtown Park** is the site of annual events such as the Hometown Festival and the Christmas Tree Lighting and other events throughout the year. Larger parks include **Woodgrove Park** (which has an aquatic center), **Niels Poulsen Park**, and **Sleeter Lake Park**.

Four parks not enough? Well, down the street from Sleeter Lake Park is **Franklin Park** which is a county regional park.

In July 2020, the Town of Round Hill and Loudoun County began construction of the Franklin Park Trail and the Main Street Sidewalk Project. This \$6 million dollar project is part of the town council's goal to connect Round Hill neighborhoods to the local park system. When completed, residents and visitors will be able to easily walk or bike from Downtown to Franklin Park and Sleeter Lake Park making the area a significant regional amenity for Western Loudoun County.



Stoneleigh Golf and Country Club

"Discover" Sleeter Lake and the Hill High Marketplace

Most people driving down Route 7 from Winchester to Leesburg don't notice the beautiful 100-acre lake hiding behind the tree line. Although privately owned by the Round Hill Homeowner's Association, **Sleeter Lake** is the only lake in Loudoun County with public access thanks to an agreement between the town and the association. Residents and visitors can launch small boats from Sleeter Lake Park, the 12-acre town-owned park on the lake's shore. Summer weekends find the park filled with families fishing, picnicking, and launching canoes or kayaks.

Sleeter Lake was created in 1965 by retired U.S. Army Colonel Frank Sleeter who wanted an irrigation system for his orchards. Col. Sleeter owned over 850 acres of orchards in Round Hill, where he grew apples and peaches for commercial distribution. At the time, Sleeter Orchards was among the largest producers of apples and peaches on the eastern seaboard.



In 1948, Col. Sleeter built a fruit refrigeration plant to store his produce before sending it to market. Today, the renovated refrigeration plant is the **Hill High Marketplace**, a multi-tenant shopping center with wares by local artists, artisan producers, and boutique restaurants. It is also home to the **Gateway Gallery**, a local artist co-op, and the **Round Hill Arts Center**, a local artist non-profit organization which hosts the annual **Round Hill Appalachian Trail Art Show**. Other tenants include **Bogati Winery**, which features a wine tasting room and **More Better Brewery**, which features a beer garden. The Marketplace pays tribute to its history through one of its tenants, **Mom's Apple Pie**, a locally owned and operated bakery specializing in fresh fruit pies, retail goods and dining.

The great outdoors

The Town of Round Hill has dedicated the last 8 years to earning its reputation as an "outdoor recreation" destination in Loudoun County. Visitors have many options to relax, recreate and exercise. Aside from its parks, Round Hill offers several amazing outdoor options.

Stoneleigh Golf and Country Club, located on land formerly occupied by Colonel Sleeter's orchards, was once named the "Prettiest Golf Course in Northern Virginia" by *Golf Magazine*. Designed in the Scottish tradition of complementing the natural terrain,

Stoneleigh incorporates historic estate buildings, stone structures and outbuildings in its beautifully designed 18-hole, Par 72 championship golf course.

Round Hill is also strategically located between **two Appalachian Trail Centers**, Bears Den to the south and Blackburn to the north. The Appalachian Trail runs along the western border of the Greater Round Hill Area. In June 2019, Round Hill was designated an Appalachian Trail Community (ATC) by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. This nationally recognized designation has been given to only 40 communities between Maine and Georgia. The ATC awarded the designation in appreciation for the hard work that Round Hill volunteers continuously give to promoting and supporting the Appalachian Trail.

Bears Den Trail Center is owned by the ATC and operated by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. The center includes a back-packer hostel and campground. The nearby **Bears Den Overlook** is a rocky open ledge with a beautiful, open westward view of the Shenandoah Valley. The moderate hike to Bears Den Overlook is great for families and multi-generational groups because it has plenty of parking, easy access, and fun stops nearby.



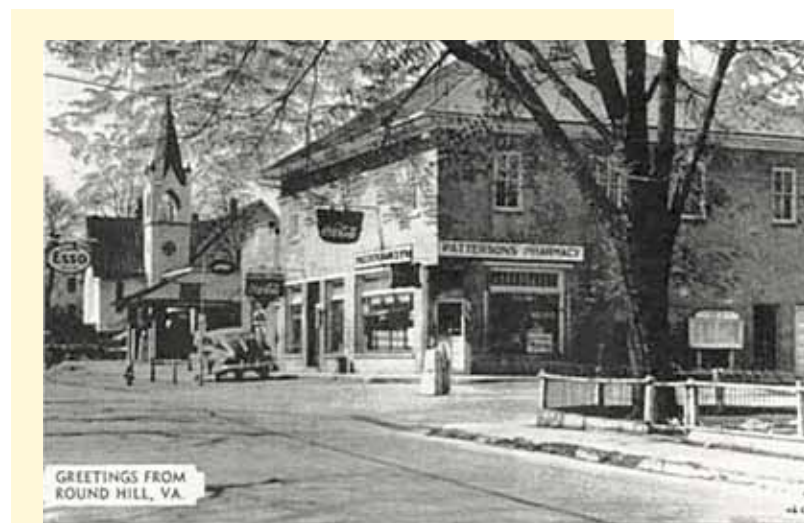
Bears Den Overlook

Blackburn Trail Center is designed to support long distance hikers, trail crews and volunteer meetings. Located along the Appalachian Trail, the Blackburn Center can accommodate day events and has indoor lodging space as well as tent spaces on the adjoining campground.

Another destination located off the Appalachian Trail is **B Chord Brewing Company**, a 66-acre farm brewery that features dozens of craft beers and hosts talented local and regional musicians on a professional soundstage in the main tasting room. It is also home to the **Round Hill Appalachian Trail Festival**, a two-day celebration of the Appalachian Trail, organized by local volunteers and partially funded by a grant from the Town of Round Hill. This year, the festival will be held the weekend of September 11-12.



B Chord Brewing Company



We'd love to see you around Round Hill!

Mayor Scott Ramsey and the Round Hill Town Council invite you to visit their town and to take some time to enjoy the great outdoors of Western Loudoun County.



About the author: *Melissa Hynes is the town administrator for the Town of Round Hill.*



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