

# New Leadership, New Success

A small housing agency in Virginia is continuing its legacy under new direction



Bristol Redevelopment  
and Housing Authority

Executive Director & CEO :: Lisa Porter  
Former Executive Director & CEO :: Dave Baldwin  
Location :: Bristol, Virginia

New leadership at the Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority (BRHA) strives to ensure the respected agency is able to continue meeting its goal of providing low-income individuals and families with safe, secure and accessible affordable housing.

At the beginning of the year, Lisa Porter assumed the helm at BRHA, following Executive Director and CEO Dave Baldwin's retirement after nearly 15 years of service.

Porter, who is now BRHA's new Executive Director and CEO, is now focused on implementing the strategic plan developed during Baldwin's leadership.

"We looked at every physical asset that we had and came up with a priorities list of how we wanted to move forward with each of our public housing properties," Baldwin says.

## STRONG NEW LEADERSHIP

Porter brings nearly 30 years of industry experience to her new role at BRHA. This includes working extensively with the organizations involved with the Little Ten Housing Authorities of Southwest Virginia, a nonprofit umbrella group that allows agencies throughout the region to collaborate and learn from one another.

"This is my fourth housing authority, but it's the first time I have been in an executive director's position," she says.

BRHA is working with the Little Ten to ensure it remains a viable source of affordable housing, regardless of potential financial cuts to federal housing programs. Porter says the group is keeping a close eye on efforts to block-grant housing vouchers, which could affect the amount of money available for housing agencies throughout the country.

BRHA's extensive programming helps address the systemic issues facing many of its residents.

"We offer many resident services programs," Porter says. "We participate in family self-sufficiency programs and elderly services programs."

Baldwin adds that BRHA continues to meet a real need for accessible housing solutions in its community.

"We have not had any problem keeping our public housing occupied," he says. "We've had nearly 98 percent occupancy rates in our housing as long as I have been here. There is a real need in our community."

## THE VILLAGE AT OAKVIEW

With its Village at Oakview, BRHA is leveraging the success of an earlier community—called Sapling Grove—that it built in 2007 and now maintains.



"The development of Sapling Grove went very well," Baldwin says. "It really started to change the image of what BRHA is in our community."

The agency began redeveloping Village at Oakview in 2015. After it was unable to make the financing work under HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration program, it opted to pursue the same financing model that made Sapling Grove possible.

"We were successful in getting some tax credits for redevelopment on that site," Baldwin says. "We again decided to pursue a mixed-finance project."

The new Village at Oakview will open its doors to residents in the coming months.

"We are in the final stages of construction now on that site," Baldwin says. "We are creating 48 units of affordable housing. Two-thirds of them are going to be straight tax credit housing. The rest will include a public housing overlay."

BRHA has pursued an innovative and aesthetically appealing design at the Village at Oakview.

"We decided to move away from row-type housing, which has been standard for public housing in communities across the United States," Baldwin says. "We built under a 'big house' concept. From the street, it looks like a number of single-family homes with one entrance, but each of the buildings is actually a quadruplex."

The community will include a mix of two- and three-bedroom units. The Village at Oakview is receiving a warm welcome from its neighbors, Baldwin says.

"As you drive down the street, it looks like a lot of the rest of this old neighborhood, which consists of a lot of older houses from the mid-19th and early 20th centuries," he says. "We are very proud of what we are doing there."

### VIRGINIA HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT

BRHA is also focused on facilitating the revitalization of the Virginia Hills neighborhood, the location for many of the agency's affordable housing properties. The agency is planning on redeveloping portions of the neighborhood, and is actively working to update both the affordable and market-rate housing it maintains there.

"The quality of the private housing in this neighborhood has a real impact on the public housing," Baldwin says. "It is in our best interest as an agency to do something to help the private housing market in this neighborhood."

By investing in Virginia Hills, BRHA will ensure that its own housing stock remains healthy for years to come.

"The quality of the private housing in the neighborhood has an impact on our ability to market our public housing in the future," Baldwin says. "We have not identified the resources that we need to move forward in a major way, but we have begun the process of strategically buying property in the neighborhood."

As BRHA has moved forward on this effort, it has received considerable support from the city of Bristol.

"The Virginia Hills neighborhood has also been designated a historic neighborhood, which adds some significance for us and makes it more significant to the city itself," Porter says. 🏠



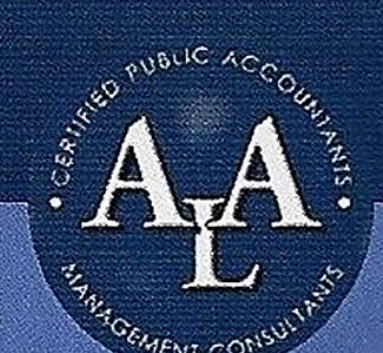
Dave Baldwin

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