



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Virginia Supportive Housing celebrates grand opening of Cool Lane Commons**

Richmond, Va. (June 12, 2024) — Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH) hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony and grand opening for Cool Lane Commons, an 86-unit supportive housing community at 1900 Cool Lane in Henrico County on the border of Richmond's East End, on Tuesday, June 11 at 10am. The ceremony included remarks from Henrico County, the City of Richmond, and VSH leadership.

"Today, we're so excited to be here formally celebrating all the work that has made these 86 new supportive apartments possible. 86 apartments that will move our region measurably closer to our mission and goal of solving homelessness," said VSH Board Chair Jason Snook. "We're celebrating every opportunity we have to end someone's experience of homelessness or housing instability."

Cool Lane Commons is a mixed-income apartment community for unhoused and low-income residents from the Richmond region. All residents have incomes at or below 50% of the Area Median Income. Virginia Supportive Housing manages the property and offers supportive services on-site to residents.

"Our inclement weather shelter and emergency shelter, that's our emergency room. This is building the ICU. This is building the recovery center that we need for individuals and families to be able to get back on their feet and to be stable and supported," said City of Richmond Chief Administrative Officer Lincoln Saunders.

Each unit is at least 500 square feet and includes a private full bathroom and kitchen with full-size appliances. 13 units are fully accessible. The building, which is approximately 90,000 square feet, contains a large community room with a kitchen, a resident computer lab, a phone room for resident use, a fitness room, laundry facilities, a front desk, staff offices for supportive services and property management staff, and

off-street parking. It is built to Earthcraft Gold standards. The building contains a photovoltaic solar array of 180 solar panels which offsets approximately 20% of the building energy load.

“This is how you revitalize a neighborhood and build a better future for everyone. This is how you give those in our community the support and resources they need to be successful,” said Henrico Supervisor Roscoe D. Cooper III, Fairfield District. “Cool Lane Commons represents a collective win for our community and a great place for residents to call home.”

Total development costs were approximately \$24 million, with funding provided by local, state, and federal funds as well as private funds. All 86 units have Project Based Vouchers from Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA).

“The reinvestment that we and so many other partners have made together here is lifting the surrounding community and helping to address our tremendous need for high-quality, safe and affordable housing,” said Henrico Board of Supervisors Chairman Tyrone E. Nelson, Varina District.

Cool Lane Commons is also home to VSH’s administrative headquarters, known as the Bren Center. It is named after two of VSH’s original founders and earliest supporters, Karl and Jane Bren. The separate office space was funded independently from the apartments.

A key supporter and on-site partner of the project is the Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC), located across the street from Cool Lane Commons, with leadership from Founding Visionary Dr. Patricia Gould-Champ. Cool Lane Commons contains a Neighborhood Resource Center operated by Community In Development (CID, Inc.), FCBC’s nonprofit community development corporation. Through the Neighborhood Resource Center, CID will continue delivering their critical neighborhood services, which include food and urban farming programs, workforce development, and HIV/AIDS prevention education.

“Homelessness is solvable,” VSH Executive Director Allison Bogdanović said.

“Supportive housing – like Cool Lane Commons, like our future building on Rady Street – is the solution. We know that ending homelessness is possible because we are doing it every day with support from partners like you.”

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Of the 86 units, a portion serves individuals who have experienced long and/or repeated episodes of homelessness and who have a disability (serious mental illness, substance use disorder, chronic medical issue, etc.) that affects their housing stability. The remaining portion is reserved for individuals with incomes 50% or less of area median income. The waitlist is maintained by RRHA.

Virginia Supportive Housing was founded in 1988 and has provided permanent, affordable housing with supportive services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Virginia for over 35 years. VSH currently serves over 1,600 individuals and families in the Richmond, Charlottesville, and Hampton Roads regions. Cool Lane Commons is VSH's third 60+ unit property in the Richmond region and 10th overall in Virginia. It is VSH's largest development to date.

VSH follows the "Housing First" methodology, a best practice solution to homelessness which calls for housing individuals first with low barriers to program entry, then providing customized supportive services to help participants maintain housing stability. Services include the following: connecting clients to primary healthcare; helping them secure income, insurance, and benefits; providing case management, counseling, and skills training; assisting with mental or physical health recovery; and helping individuals overcome substance use disorder. This evidenced-based supportive housing model works: 95% of individuals VSH serves in the Greater Richmond community do not return to homelessness.

The site on Cool Lane was identified as VSH's next Richmond-based development project in March 2018. The former Seven Hills Health Care Center had been vacant since 2008. Rezoning was approved in March 2019. Fundraising included several successful rounds of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit applications, 2019 and 2021. Construction began in May 2022 and was completed in January 2024.

Cool Lane Apartments was awarded Low Income Housing Tax Credits in the 2019 and 2021 Accessible Supportive Housing pools. Additional financing included Solar Equity; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) HOME, Virginia Housing Trust Fund, National Housing Trust Fund, and Housing Innovations in Energy Efficiency (HIEE) funds; City of Richmond CDBG-CV funds and Henrico County CDBG and general funds; Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta AHP and Multifamily Housing Bridge funds; a Virginia Housing REACH loan and grant; Partnership for Housing Affordability Housing Development Program funds; and private foundation and grant funds. Cool Lane Office financing included a loan from Locus and private foundation and grant funds. Atlantic Union Bank, in partnership with Locus, served as the construction lender.

*See more project details on our website: [Cool Lane Commons](#).*