

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

News, announcements, and more from the
Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority



Lineweaver 35KW Solar
Array - February 2020

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Environmental Responsibility



The "environment" is often discussed as if some far off piece of wilderness that needs protecting, separate from where we work, play, and live. But the truth is that we all live in an environment. We are shaped by our environments, and how we live in our environments shapes others. As Canadian science broadcaster Dr. David Suzuki is often quoted, "We all live downstream" from others, and others live downstream from us.

This year marks the 50th anniversary since the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, which highlighted the need for increased environmental attention and protection. Housing has and will continue to be part of these conversations. These include resiliency with our coastal housing communities, household energy generation & distribution, transportation, food production, waste, and more. Simply put, we recognize that the health of our families, environments, and economies are all interconnected.

In this issue we look at some of the ways HRHA has approached our own environmental responsibility, as well as how we are looking towards the future.

Early environmental initiatives



When HRHA was considering putting solar on Lineweaver Apartments in 2013 and renovating Franklin Heights apartments to Earth Craft certification in 2008, there were few examples to look to in the state. But motivations for both efforts were similar: lower utility costs for residents who struggle financially and strengthen HRHA's commitment to our local and global environment. In partnership with Secure Futures Solar, HRHA became the first housing authority in the state to solarize an affordable housing complex.

Since the 35KW array went 'online' in 2013, over 325 megawatts of electricity have been generated for Lineweaver. This equates to over 900,000 lbs of avoided CO2 emissions and thousands of dollars in cost savings. HRHA's investment in EarthCraft measures continue to serve residents through lower utility costs and higher indoor environmental quality. Over the decade since these efforts, other affordable housing projects across the state have made similar investments.

Improving energy sourcing and efficiency is a win-win in affordable housing. If the resident pays utilities, these measures help add stability to monthly electricity bills. If a local non-profit or Housing Authority covers utilities, energy savings equate to savings on the taxpayer end, allowing housing funding to stretch farther. Factor in environmental benefits and you have a clear case for a sensible investment.

To see more data on our solar array, visit our website: harrisonburgrha.com



HRHA's 35KW Solar Array, J.R. "Polly" Lineweaver Apartments
Downtown Harrisonburg - February 2020

Executive Director's Corner



Increased utility costs have a significant impact on the affordability of housing. These costs have a higher impact on lower income families due to the ratio of housing burden on their overall income. The Authority has prioritized healthy, sustainable housing and has implemented earth craft certification in all of its new construction and renovation projects. These goals include healthy air quality, high standards of energy and waste efficiency, reduced resource consumption and cost saving on maintenance and repairs. Activities include installation of low flow facets, rain barrels, and toilets, use of energy efficient water heaters, heat pumps, and electronic appliances, low voc paints and carpets, and LED lights.

Through these efforts, **HRHA's Franklin Heights renovation was recognized for being the first multi-family affordable housing project in Virginia to meet EarthCraft certification standards. Additionally, JR Polly Lineweaver became the first affordable housing complex to install solar panels in the state.**

These panels were installed through a lease purchase agreement, with the Authority taking ownership January 1, 2020. The solar panels have exceeded performance expectations, benefiting the residents through reduced rental costs. In December 2019 the Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the support for the 50x25 Clean Energy For All initiative, recognizing the proposal to be consistent with the Authority's mission to provide safe, healthy, and sustainable housing.

- Michael Wong

Community gardens for residents receiving housing assistance

After positive results from an initial garden survey to residents in 2019, HRHA began moving forward with two community garden projects for individuals and families living in Franklin Heights. Located along Reservoir and Kelley streets, the two proposed community gardens are aimed for launch summer 2020 and summer 2021. We are grateful for the support of local ecological landscape company Natural Garden, who has partnered with HRHA to develop garden plans that are accessible, inclusive, and restorative. Over the next few months, we will be hosting resident planning meetings, inviting financial support from our community, and planning summer events around growing, harvesting, and cooking.

We cannot do this without your support! Please consider supporting this project financially, through volunteering, or helping spread the word. For more information or to donate visit: www.harrisonburgrha.com/community-garden



The proposed location for the Reservoir Street Garden. HRHA currently mows the land through the growing months and the location is not suitable for the development of housing.

An initial sketch by the Natural Garden of the Reservoir Street garden. Initial design includes raised beds for increased accessibility and a variety of native plantings. March 2020



HRHA endorses 50 by 25 petition



Clean Energy for All
Harrisonburg

Driven by local non-profit Renew Rocktown and other community groups, the 50 x 25 petition lays out a clear energy vision for Harrisonburg City: Adopt a solar and wind energy requirement of 50% by 2025 and improve energy efficiency by 25% in municipal and school operations by 2025. Renew Rocktown is a coalition of organizations advocating for and building more sustainable systems in Harrisonburg. Their call is grounded in current climate science, as well as a vision for the city that is just, sustainable, and offers a quality of life for all residents.

For more on the 50x25 initiative see: www.50by25harrisonburg.org



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Website



www.harrisonburgrha.com

Facebook



[@harrisonburgrha](https://www.facebook.com/harrisonburgrha)

HRHA Board of Commissioners

The Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Harrisonburg City Council. The Board establishes the Authority's policies and procedures and appoints the Executive Director.

Board of Commissioner meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00PM, at the Authority's administrative office located at 286 Kelley St., Harrisonburg, VA.

+ John Hall – Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

+ Scott Gallagher – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2020

+ Benjamin Fuller – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Costella Forney – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Dany Fleming - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

THE NATURAL GARDEN



Help us build a garden!

HRHA is partnering with local ecological design and landscape company Natural Garden to develop two garden programs for residents living in Franklin Heights. Over the next few months we will be holding community meetings, talking with residents, building initial structures, and seeking community support.

We need community support to make these gardens a reality. Please consider donating in support of this effort through our website at www.harrisonburgrha.com/community-garden. Interested in volunteering? We will be looking for individuals and groups to assist in garden education, cooking classes, garden construction, and more! Contact our Resident Services Coordinator Everett Brubaker at ebrubaker@harrisonburgrha.com