PEOPLE FIRST

Santa's Elves!

The People First office transformed into one of Santa's workshops in December as Urban Strategies staff worked diligently to make sure that former Tidewater Gardens residents had a wonderful Christmas. With the help of community and charitable donations, People First provided 119 households and 253 children with holiday presents, and an additional 100 households with food.

In the new year, People First turns its attention to ensuring that families are warm this winter with winter coats. We are grateful for community partners like the YMCA, which provided more than 100 coats, and Sweet Jams restaurant, which provided a dozen coats at the request of Delegate Angelia Williams Graves, the former Chair of the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee.

If you have new or gently used coats of any size (infants to adults), please consider a donation to our Tidewater Gardens families.

Also, this month, our workforce soft skills class, "Thriving Tuesdays", returns. Classes began on January 10 and occur every Tuesday in January.

For information on Thriving Tuesdays, or to donate cold weather gear, please contact People First @ 757-390-4625.

From the Director's Desk

Happy New Year! In 2023 our commitment continues to put people (Tidewater Garden's residents) first and brings us one year closer to our goal of transforming the Tidewater Gardens community into a resilient, mixed income, and mixed-use St. Paul's neighborhood for all residents who desire to return.

This edition of This Month in St. Paul's contains a snapshot of the resident engagement activity conducted by Urban Strategies and an exciting update on plans for the new Aspire development at the corner of Brambleton Avenue and Church Street.

Thank you for your continued interest and support in this transformational effort to ensure that Tidewater Garden's residents are safe, supported, and thriving.

Susan Perry

Susan Perry, Ph.D., Director

Department of Housing and Community Development

City of Norfolk

NORFOLK ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

The national Choice Neighborhoods Conference was held November 30-December 2, 2022, in Fort Myers, Florida, where representatives from communities that received a Choice Neighborhood Grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathered to discuss best practices.

Nicole Brown, Senior Project Manager with People First, USI, presented the Norfolk's Landlord Incentive Program, an innovative way to engage landlords to accept rental payments using Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV).

Participants were wowed by this cutting-edge program and gave kudos to Nicole and the team for thinking "outside the box" in creating a way to increase the number of rentals available to those who use HCV to pay for housing.

Congratulations to all involved and thanks for putting Norfolk on the national stage!

REDEVELOPMENT

MORE THAN A HOME, A PLACE TO ASPIRE!

Do you remember the Willis Building at the corner of Brambleton Avenue and Church Street? Built in the mid-1980's, it was once the most prominent Black-owned business and office complex in downtown Norfolk.

It became necessary to tear down the building due to disrepair, but the legacy of a minority owned entity remains with Aspire, a new development underway in the location of the former Willis Building. Aspire will contain 85 apartment units; 21 units are for returning former Tidewater Gardens residents. The building will also house a full art studio.

Aspire is being developed by The Richman Group Development Corporation, a company committed to diversity; 54% of its staff are minorities, 46% are women. The developer will use local minority partners in the building process, keeping with the City of Norfolk's commitment to economic inclusion as part of the St. Paul's area transformation project.

Working in conjunction with The Richman Group is ISSA of Virginia, Inc., a 501 (C)(3) Community Development Corporation created by the Historic First Baptist Church, Norfolk. ISSA is engaged in economic development, education, community organizing and real estate development for lower income residents to enhance quality of life. ISSA means "Salvation, God Saves".

"The Richman Group is excited to partner with City of Norfolk, and many other stakeholders on a meaningful development that will hopefully be an exciting addition to the St. Paul's area of Norfolk" says Andre Blakley, President, TRG Community Development, an affiliate of The Richman group of Companies. "This deal would not be possible without our local partner, ISSA of Virginia, Inc., who also decided on the Aspire name for the project. As expressed by our partner, the Aspire represents a place where not only someone can lay their head but also lift up their head with various programming for residents, and a full Art Studio. We want our future residents to feel inspired by the development, but more importantly we hope this will be a community where individuals aspire to achieve a full and high quality of life. That is our collective mission."

Groundbreaking for Aspire will be in February.

ST. PAUL'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

The January meeting of the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee (SPAC) was held on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, 6-7:30PM, at the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, 800 Tidewater Drive in Norfolk. The January meeting minutes will be available next month. You can find minutes from our December meeting here.

Questions?   Please email us at stpaulstransformation@norfolk.gov.