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Virginia Housing Receives Two Fannie Mae Innovation Challenge Awards

Awards will support regional collaboration to expand housing opportunities through Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners and West Piedmont Planning District Commission

RICHMOND, VA – Fannie Mae announced Virginia Housing, in partnership with the Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners (AHHP) and West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC), as recipients of two 2026 Innovation Challenge awards. The Innovation Challenge is a national competition to identify and support high-impact development proposals that are capable of creating affordable single-family or multifamily housing with the potential for future loan delivery to Fannie Mae.

“Partnering with the West Piedmont Planning District Commission and Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners through Fannie Mae’s Innovation Challenge awards reflects our shared commitment to expanding housing opportunities,” **said Virginia Housing CEO Tammy Neale**. “These awards not only strengthen the transformative work already underway in these rural communities, they also help advance scalable, attainable housing models that can benefit communities across the Commonwealth.”

In total, six awards were announced across the country, and Virginia’s two awards will support efforts to increase housing supply, accelerate innovative development models and encourage replicable approaches to make affordable housing attainable for homebuyers and renters throughout the nation and the Commonwealth. In Virginia, the two awards will increase housing supply in rural areas, directly targeting barriers that make homeownership inaccessible in high-need markets.

Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners
AHHP’s project will deliver 50 new single-family homes in communities across southwestern Virginia, serving households earning between 80% and 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The Innovation Challenge award will help AHHP upgrade essential technology systems that improve production, quality control and cost predictability — ensuring the homes can be delivered efficiently and sustainably.

To help address the region’s housing shortage, the project brings together three coordinated strategies: modern off-site modular construction through RidgeBuilt, workforce training and development with HOMEWorks, and long-term affordability supported by a new Community Land Trust. After the award period, this approach is expected to produce 250 homes per year, creating a consistent and scalable pipeline of attainable housing for the region and beyond.

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“We are honored to be chosen as a recipient of the Fannie Mae Innovation Challenge Award in partnership with Virginia Housing,” **said Sean McMurray, Executive Director of AHHP**. “With this support, we will have the tools to build homes more quickly and efficiently, train local talent and keep these homes attainable for years to come. We are grateful to Fannie Mae and Virginia Housing for their confidence and partnership.”

West Piedmont Planning District Commission
Through the Martinsville Fleetwood Duplex Housing Initiative, WPPDC aims to address the challenge of reducing costs, shortening construction timelines and the production of 10 new single-family homes using HUD-code manufactured housing installed on permanent foundations and converted to real property homes for families earning 80% or less of the AMI in the city of Martinsville. Production will be completed in the town of Rocky Mount at the Fleetwood facility and will replace traditional site-built methods with a standardized and repeatable model using factory-built housing, which significantly reduces per-unit costs and delivery time while ensuring full mortgage eligibility.

The initiative’s model will establish a scalable framework in a rural setting for delivering homeownership with potential for replication in rental housing and expanded loan delivery into the secondary mortgage market.

“We are excited to partner with Virginia Housing through Fannie Mae’s Innovation Challenge and grateful for their continued commitment to addressing housing needs in our region,” **said Sean Campbell, Deputy Director of the WPPDC**. “This opportunity allows us to build on the progress we’ve already made in southern Virginia while exploring innovative, cost-effective approaches to affordable homeownership. We believe this project has the potential to demonstrate a housing model that can be replicated in communities across the Commonwealth.”

About Virginia Housing
By investing in the power of home, Virginia Housing transforms where and how thousands of Virginians live and thrive, strengthening communities and the economy. Virginia Housing has worked for over 50 years in partnership with the public and private sectors to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing. While receiving no state taxpayer dollars, Virginia Housing raises money in capital markets to provide mortgages to first-time homebuyers, financing for rental developments and neighborhood revitalization efforts. Virginia Housing invests in innovations in affordable housing and makes homes for people with disabilities and older Virginians more livable. Learn more at VirginiaHousing.com and review the most recent annual report.

About Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners
Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners (AHHP), established in the fall of 2024, is a wholly owned nonprofit subsidiary formed to address the urgent need for workforce housing in Washington, Grayson, Russell and Smyth counties in collaboration with Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia. Additionally, AHHP is committed to improving the entire housing ecosystem through investment in skilled trade education, workforce development and community infrastructure to sustain long-term growth. For more information, visit AHHPVA.org.

About West Piedmont Planning District Commission
Established in 1970, the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) is one of Virginia's 21 regional planning organizations, serving Franklin, Henry, Patrick and Pittsylvania counties, the cities of Danville and Martinsville, and the town of Rocky Mount. WPPDC promotes regional collaboration in economic development, transportation, housing and other community priorities.

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Through its Regional Housing Initiative, WPPDC partners with local governments, developers, nonprofits and funding organizations to expand affordable homeownership and rental opportunities, rehabilitate existing housing and support innovative housing development. These efforts leverage public and private investment to strengthen communities, address housing needs, and support economic growth throughout southern Virginia. Learn more at WestPiedmontPDC.org.

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