



**FOR RELEASE**

For information :

Friday, September 12, 2008

Valena Dixon (804) 780-4167

## **RRHA Names ICON Architecture to Lead Master Planning Effort for the Revitalization of North Jackson Ward and Dove Street Revitalization Area**

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority today announced the first contractor in the agency's major plan to revitalize a significant portion of the city.

RRHA selected ICON Architecture Inc. of Boston as the firm to lead the agency's planning process for the revitalization of North Jackson Ward which includes Gilpin Court and Fay Towers, and the Dove Street Revitalization area which includes the vacant apartment complexes of Dove Court, Carrington Gardens, Northridge Apartments and the Matthew Heights area. ICON will serve as the Master Planner for the revitalization process, meaning the company will create a document which describes, in narrative and with maps, an overall development concept including both present property uses as well as future land development plans. ICON will also develop the planning schedule, prepare financial analyses, and engage all stakeholders including residents, community leaders, city political and business leadership in a participatory process where input and design elements will be guided by realistic and sound market principles .

"By redesigning, revamping and reinvigorating North Jackson Ward and the Dove Street Area we will inject renewed life into each neighborhood ultimately recharging the entire city," said Anthony Scott, RRHA's executive director. "This rejuvenation represents a key segment of our Strategic Plan. RRHA is excited to have the experienced, award-winning ICON team lead the way as we work with our residents, the community, our partners and stakeholders to chart our course."

-More-

The master planning process will begin in September with resident and stakeholder meetings. Focus group sessions with public housing residents are set for Wednesday, September 17 and the first Public Meeting for the community-at-large and residents is scheduled for Tuesday, September 30 at 6:00 pm at the Calhoun Family Investment Center, 436 Calhoun Street.

“This will be the single most transformative initiative of this city in the last 60 years,” Scott said. “Communication and participation will be our major focus. We will hear from residents, neighbors, partners, businesses, city leaders and our team to prepare us and our families for this opportunity.”

“The revitalization of Gilpin Court, North Jackson Ward and Dove Court represents the largest redevelopment initiative RRHA has ever undertaken and most likely the largest such revitalization plan in the state and the region,” Scott said. North Jackson Ward consists of 55 acres and contains nearly 1,000 public housing units along with 14 acres of privately owned property. The Dove Street Revitalization area contains approximately 14 acres, which includes the Dove Court public housing community the vacant Carrington Gardens/ Northridge Apartments and surrounding area and Matthew Heights.

“This plan is significant not only to the residents of the targeted areas, but to the city and region as a whole,” Scott explained. “When visitors, business people, students, home seekers and even native Richmonders enter the city via Interstate 95 they will be able to see these neighborhoods as welcoming gateways into the Capital of the Commonwealth. These are central, vital neighborhoods. We have a unique opportunity to redefine urban living in this city with a design that is carefully planned, convenient, comfortable, responsible and inclusive.”

This master planning process is yet another example of RRHA working to be a catalyst for affordable housing and community revitalization by coordinating with leaders in the community as well as leaders in the field of architecture, engineering, and urban planning. The resulting, redeveloped communities will still contain public housing. Thirty percent of housing will serve public housing eligible households, while the remaining 70 percent will be accessible for families at other income levels, from affordable housing through market rate.

Throughout the process RRHA will call upon local residents, business leaders and other stakeholders along with regional and national representatives to serve on the agency’s advisory committees to assist with the master planning process. The goal of these various committees will be to act as the broad community leadership voice and to reach a consensus with regards to vision and direction. Ideally the committees will anticipate and therefore avoid roadblocks and

obstacles well in advance, while focusing on real estate aspects of the revitalization as well as the human development component.

Through human development, the committees will make certain the Master Plan includes input from social service agencies and educational institutions with the goal of encouraging resident self sufficiency and healthy communities. RRHA's tenants, neighbors and various other stakeholders are vital to successful planning and execution of the Master Plan.

The Master Planner will also provide market analysis, design guidelines, financing data, graphics and various communications and technology expertise throughout the planning process to build support and understanding of the process and plan design as well as test the design elements.

ICON will bring a team to include BAM Architects of Richmond, a minority and woman-owned local firm which will serve as associated architects and planners ; Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. of Richmond, which will provide expertise in transportation consulting, civil engineering, landscape architecture; Urban Partners of Philadelphia, real estate and economic development consultants; and EJP Consulting Group Inc. of Washington D.C. and Boston, public housing finance and strategic planning consultants.

### **About ICON**

For more than a quarter of a century, ICON, located in Boston, has led a host of other revitalization projects including transforming East Boston's 426-unit public housing development Maverick Landing into public and affordable waterfront housing. ICON's work in Boston's Maverick Landing came in \$1.5 million under budget and was completed six months ahead of schedule. The development was named the Nation's Best Affordable Housing Development in 2006 by Affordable Housing Finance magazine.

ICON also developed the master plans for downtown Augusta, Ga. and North Augusta, SC, Portland, Maine's East End waterfront, and is master planning and designing a 900-acre mixed-use area near Casablanca, Morocco.

ICON's clients include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Housing Authorities of Boston, New Haven, Newport, RI, and Durham, NC, MassHousing, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and The National Park Service. *For more information on ICON Architecture visit [www.iconarch.com](http://www.iconarch.com).*

# # #

*RRHA is the largest housing authority in the commonwealth of Virginia. RRHA serves nearly 10,000 residents and manages nearly 4,100 units through its Public Housing Program and through its various Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Programs provides subsidized housing in approximately 3,100 units. RRHA also manages neighborhood redevelopment and conservation programs throughout the city of Richmond. RRHA has approximately 300 employees.*