

Riverbend and CRHA finalize contract for public housing redevelopment
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The partnership between the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority and Riverbend Development to redevelop Crescent Halls is official.

The CRHA board voted unanimously Monday to approve a memorandum of understanding among CRHA, Riverbend, the Virginia Community Development Corp., Castle Development and the Public Housing Association of Residents.

"This is a historic moment, in some ways," said Legal Aid Justice Center attorney Elaine Poon, who represented PHAR at the meeting. "For the city to take charge of redevelopment, but do it in this way, is amazing. PHAR is at this table. It's so different than community engagement."

PHAR's role in the partnership is to advise the redevelopment partners on resident needs and priorities. CRHA will continue to own the land under the public housing sites and will manage the properties.

The MOU also outlines an ambitious schedule for redeveloping Crescent Halls and building 63 new apartments on the field at the intersection of South First Street and Hartmans Mill Road. The team

plans to apply for low-income housing tax credits by March 1 and start construction on Dec. 15.

“For both of these projects, we are trying to move forward with a March tax credit application. That is why we have a very aggressive schedule for design work,” said Ashley Davies, who works for Riverbend and will be the development manager for the project.

Riverbend and Castle will provide technical expertise, such as 3D modeling of the site plans, and financing help — without charging any developer fees.

The partners also are helping to build capacity at PHAR to become a community development entity in the future.

“I think a lot of developers would love to know what their end user wants and needs. Even more so, after decades of being excluded from that process, it’s all the more important to have resident-led development,” Poon said. “I don’t think you get more resident-led than the residents becoming the developers.”

The next CRHA meeting is set for 6 p.m. Jan. 28 at City Hall.

This article has been updated to reflect the number of units currently proposed for South First Street.