

INTRODUCED: December 15, 2025

## AN ORDINANCE No. 2025-264

To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$9,950.00 from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by creating a new special fund for the Office of Sustainability called the “USDN Catalyst Fund for Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond’s Public Housing Communities Special Fund,” and to appropriate the increase to the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Special Fund Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Office of Sustainability’s “USDN Catalyst Fund for Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond’s Public Housing Communities Special Fund” by \$9,950.00 for the purpose of building energy resilience at Whitcomb Court in the city’s East End.

Patron – Mayor Avula

Approved as to form and legality  
by the City Attorney

## PUBLIC HEARING: JAN 12 2026 AT 6 P.M.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. That the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, is hereby authorized to accept funds in the amount of \$9,950.00 from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network for the purpose of building energy resilience at Whitcomb Court in the city's East End

AYES: 8 NOES: 0 ABSTAIN:

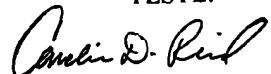
ADOPTED: JAN 12 2026 REJECTED: STRICKEN:

§ 2. That Article I, Section 2 of Ordinance No. 2025-057, adopted May 12, 2025 which adopted a Special Fund Budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, and made appropriations pursuant thereto, be and is hereby amended by creating a new special fund for the Office of Sustainability called the “USDN Catalyst Fund for Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond’s Public Housing Communities Special Fund” for the purpose of building energy resilience at Whitcomb Court in the city’s East End.

§ 3. That the funds received from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network are hereby appropriated to the Special Fund Budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, by increasing estimated revenues by \$9,950.00, increasing the amount appropriated for expenditures by \$9,950.00, and allotting to the Office of Sustainability’s “USDN Catalyst Fund for Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond’s Public Housing Communities Special Fund” the sum of \$9,950.00 for the purpose of building energy resilience at Whitcomb Court in the city’s East End.

§ 4. This ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.

A TRUE COPY:  
TESTE:



Carolin D. Bird  
City Clerk

**DATE:** September 15, 2025

**TO:** The Honorable Members of City Council

**THROUGH:** The Honorable Mayor Danny Avula

**THROUGH:** Odie Donald, Chief Administrative Officer

**THROUGH:** Tanikia Jackson, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**THROUGH:** Letitia Shelton, Director of Finance

**THROUGH:** Meghan K. Brown, Director of Budget and Strategic Planning

**THROUGH:** Sharon L. Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**FROM:** Laura Thomas, Director of the Office of Sustainability

**RE:** Office of Sustainability | Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)  
Catalyst Fund (\$9,950) | Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond's  
Public Housing Communities

**PURPOSE:** To authorize the acceptance of \$9,950 from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) Catalyst Fund to the Office of Sustainability to support efforts to build energy resilience at Whitcomb Court in Richmond's East End.

**REASON:** As the City of Richmond's Office of Sustainability continue to implement the *RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Action Plan*, adopted by City Council, we recognize the urgent need to build energy resilience in the City's public housing communities. This funding will support preliminary work at Whitcomb Court around energy usage data tracking and energy conservation, and directly supports the following plan objectives:

- **BE Objective 2:** Maximize energy efficiency, performance and resilience in all existing buildings.
- **BE-Objective 2.1 Residential Energy Burden:** Implement measures to reduce the energy burden of Richmond's most vulnerable communities and improve residential resilience to climate change.

**RECOMMENDATION:** City Council approves the \$9,950.00 from the USDN Catalyst Fund to create a new special fund to support energy resilience activities at Whitcomb Court in partnership with Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA).

**BACKGROUND:** The Office of Sustainability has been awarded a \$9,950 grant through the Urban Sustainability Directors Network's (USDN) Catalyst Fund for their project: "Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond's Public Housing Communities". During this six-

month pilot project, OOS will work with Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) on targeted energy tracking and analysis at Whitcomb Court to better understand the energy challenges at this aging property. This work is part of a larger energy resilience planning initiative in Richmond's East End, and will also include resident education, energy assessments, and installation of basic energy efficiency measures.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Grant funds will be used to support resident engagement activities around energy resilience at Whitcomb Court. The purpose of these activities is to inform residents about energy tracking and analysis efforts, provide energy education, and offer information about energy assessments and efficiency upgrades.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no local match required. The Office of Sustainability does not anticipate any impact to the city's Budget for this or future fiscal years related to activities associated with this grant,

**DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE:** upon adoption

**REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE:** November 10, 2025

**CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE:**

**REQUESTED AGENDA:** Consent

**RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE:** Finance & Economic Development

**AFFECTED AGENCIES:** N/A

**RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES:** Budget Ordinance

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**STAFF:** Thomas, Laura C., Oleksy, Dawn G.

***Memorandum of Understanding for Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in  
Richmond's Public Housing Communities***

This is a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”), dated September 15, 2025 (“Effective Date”), between the City of Richmond, VA (“Lead Community”), and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (“USDN”), an Illinois nonprofit corporation, to implement the ***Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond's Public Housing Communities*** project (“Project”). It describes partnership roles.

**1. Purpose and Scope**

This work will build capacity for energy resilience measures in Richmond's public housing developments through targeted energy tracking and analysis in one multi-family property, resident education, and partnership building. The work is described in greater detail in the Final Project Proposal, Appendix I.

**2. Project Term**

USDN and the Lead Community agree to a Project Term of 6-months from award notification (September 15, 2025 – February 28, 2025). If more time is required, the Lead Community indicates this to fund management as soon as that is known, so an extension can be documented. Please reference the [USDN Award Guidelines and Policies](#) for more information about this process.

**3. Responsibilities**

**a. USDN.** USDN, as a project investor, is responsible for:

- i. **Funding.** USDN provides funding for the project in an amount not to exceed \$9,950 USD. Payment(s) are made according to the Payment Schedule described in Table 1.
- ii. **Technical Assistance.** USDN contracts with [Sutherland & Associates](#) to manage its competitive member funds. Fund management assists with any decision-making that impacts this MOU or any associated agreements/ payments. They receive, confirm, and process all deliverables, quarterly reports, and invoices. They monitor progress and capture the impacts of the investment.
- iii. **Payment Processing.** USDN processes Lead Community approved invoices upon receipt via the Lead Community, within 30 days.
  - Invoices are submitted by any party receiving payment, including local governments. Invoices paid by USDN to any party follow the payment schedule outlined in Table 1 of this agreement, which are also reflected in any associated independent contractor agreement(s). All invoices are addressed to:

Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)

Reference: CF08 – Richmond, VA

Attn: Jamal Brown

USDN Chief Finance and Operations Officer

500 Westover Drive #14973  
 Sanford, NC 27330

- Project funds are expended per the proposed budget, in accordance with the terms in this MOU and to fulfill the scope of the final and awarded proposal.
- To keep the Lead Community as the visible lead of the work, invoices are approved by the Lead Community and then submitted to USDN fund management for review against the project budget. USDN fund management initiate processing of approved invoices with USDN.<sup>1</sup>

**b. Lead Community.** The City of Richmond, VA, as the Lead Community, is responsible for:

- i. **Project Management and Coordination.** Providing the project management and coordination necessary to complete the project.
- ii. **Quarterly Updates.** Submitting a 1-2 paragraph update describing progress on outputs, timeline, budget, and metrics is due at the end of each quarter, until project completion.
- iii. **Final Products and Reporting.** By February 28, 2026, submitting:
  - **Project Products / Outputs.** All substantial products and outputs produced as high-quality deliverables, for posting to the USDN website.
  - **Final Project Report.** A final project report, form [here](#)
  - **High Resolution Photos.** High resolution .jpg photographs of project work, to potentially be used in USDN communications.
  - **Project Budget and Expenditures.** A detailed record of project expenditures, including a comparison of original budget to award expenditures. Please use the Budget Template [here](#) or simply modify and return your proposal budget to show proposed to actuals.
- iv. **USDN Presentation.** At project completion, awardees may be asked to present project outcomes during a USDN virtual or in person meeting. This request is subject to USDN's communications schedule and is not guaranteed to be made
- v. **1-Year Impact Report.** Submitting a 1-page report 1 year after the project term, noting any additional impacts that have developed since the project ended.

#### **4. Project Participants and Primary Contacts**

**a. Lead Community and Primary Contact:**

- i. **Lead Community:** Richmond, VA
- ii. **Project Lead:** Dawn Oleksy | Energy Program Manager | Office of Sustainability | 730 E. Broad St., 8th Floor | Richmond, VA 23219 | [dawn.oleksy@rva.gov](mailto:dawn.oleksy@rva.gov) | 804-584-0430

**b. Project Participants.**

<sup>1</sup> To prevent any payment delays, the Lead Community lets Fund Management staff know of any schedule or staffing changes with as much advance notice as possible so that schedules can be adjusted.

i. **Primary Participating Local Governments:**

- **Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority** (Primary: Joe Sarver, Senior Technical Advisor; Secondary: Jena Swank, Management Analyst) **Role:** RRHA contacts and facilitators at Whitcomb Court property **Responsibilities:** provide utility data, information, and access to property for site visits; attend meetings; communicate with residents/staff; coordinate with RRHA staff to assist OOS with project activities (i.e. site visits, resident education, and energy assessments/upgrades); active participation in creating program next steps

**5. Project Scope: Deliverables, Timeline, Reporting and Payment Schedule**

Project requests from the Selection Committee:

- **Please provide more detail on the involvement of the housing authority in this project:** A letter of support from RRHA is attached to demonstrate commitment (Appendix II). Joe Sarver, RRHA Senior Technical Advisor, has been in regular communication with OOS Energy Manager, Dawn Oleksy, about partnership opportunities and need for greater collaboration around energy resilience, given the number of highly vulnerable residents and challenges around energy burden and routine power disruptions. This project in particular was agreed upon as a way to begin targeted energy education and to make a case for more formal energy tracking and energy conservation in RRHA properties. RRHA's role is stated on page 3 of this MOU. They have agreed to this active role and will collaborate with OOS during the project period.
- **Please provide more detail on the 15/hr. rate noted in the Budget and if it is fair and tracks with the market.** This rate has been adjusted to \$20/hr based on guidance from the City's HR department. Budget allocation for this position has not changed; however, working hours and position duration have been shortened to accommodate pay increase. In a [memo](#) dated July 25, 2024, the CAO noted the minimum wage increase of \$20/hr for all employees.

Project activities, deliverables, and due dates are scheduled below in Table 1.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Schedule of Project Deliverables and Payments**

#	Activity	Deliverables	Due Date	Payment / Recipient
		Agreements: Signed MOU and other project agreements	Not later than 30 days after MOU is delivered	Payment upon fully executed MOU and associated invoice: \$9,950 to City of Richmond

<sup>2</sup> Please add these dates to calendars(s) and proactively notify Fund Management staff if it is anticipated that any deliverable due dates will shift after this award agreement is executed. Schedules will be adjusted accordingly. Table 1 becomes the project's Deliverables Report. Each time a deliverable is received, it is returned to the Lead Community from Fund Management with notes/links as a receipt. This method keeps each party clear and aligned on the status of the work.

1	Activity 1: Hire for Part-time staff position	Deliverable 1: Job description	Date: September 25, 2025	
2	Activity 2: Convene stakeholders (RRHA and OOS) to discuss project and establish resident community meeting schedule	Deliverable 2: Meeting agendas and presentation materials	Date: October 15, 2025	
	Progress Update 1	250-word update	PR1: October 15, 2025	
3	Activity 3: Collect and compile energy usage data	Deliverable 3: Template of database; list of challenges encountered	Date: November 5, 2025	
	Progress Update 2	250-word update	PR2: November 5, 2025	
4	Activity 4: Meet with RRHA to report progress and hold initial resident meeting to introduce initiative	Deliverable 4: Meeting agendas and presentation materials	Date: November 14, 2025	
	Progress Update 3	250-word update	PR3: December 15, 2025	
5	Activity 5: Research other municipal low-income energy efficiency programs and energy conservation measures	Deliverable 5: Summary of findings	Date: December 15, 2025	
6	Activity 6: Perform energy assessments and efficiency improvements	Deliverable 6: Assessment Questionnaire; catalog of improvements by unit type	Date: January 30, 2026	
7	Activity 7: Meet with RRHA and resident community to present findings	Deliverable 7: Meeting agenda; final database of utility usage data and conclusions	Date: February 15, 2026	
	Final Project Report, Photos, and Budget Reconciliation	Final project report describing lessons / impacts, high resolution photos (.jpg format) and the final reconciled budget	Date: February 28, 2026	

**6. Lobbying.** USDN project funds cannot be used for lobbying.

**Urban Sustainability Directors Network**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** Jamal Brown

**Title:** USDN Chief Finance and Operations Officer

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acceptance of Memorandum of Understanding**

**The City Richmond, VA accepts the terms of this MOU.**

**Name:** Odie Donald II

**Title:** Chief Administrative Officer, City of Richmond

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions for Check Issuance:** Invoices will be submitted for each payment by the organization receiving funds with a completed [ACH Authorization Form](#) and [W-9 Form](#)

**City/County Tax ID Number:** 546001556

**Project Lead Contact Information:**

Name: Dawn Oleksy, Energy Program Manager, Office of Sustainability, City of Richmond

Address: 730 E. Broad St., 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Richmond, VA 23219

Phone: 804-584-0430

Email: [dawn.oleksy@rva.gov](mailto:dawn.oleksy@rva.gov)

## Appendix 1

### Full Project Proposal

- 1. Project title.** *Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond’s Public Housing Communities*
- 2. Project description.** The goal of this project is to build capacity for energy resilience measures in Richmond’s public housing developments through targeted energy tracking and analysis in one multi-family property, resident education, and partnership building. Funding will support a part-time staff person in the Office of Sustainability (OOS) to collect energy usage data at 447 units at Whitcomb Court on the City’s East End to better understand individualized energy consumption and make tailored recommendations for energy conservation improvements. Whitcomb Court is one of fourteen properties managed by the Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority (RRHA); deteriorating infrastructure, inefficient and outdated heating/cooling systems, and location in an Urban Heat Island, all contribute to increased energy burden for residents. At 9%, energy burdens in this census tract are some of the highest in the city and more than three times the median for metro Richmond. This preliminary work will strengthen the City’s partnership with RRHA and serve as a “test case” that will help inform the development of a longer-term energy efficiency program for the City’s public housing communities.
- 3. Amount requested.** \$9,950
- 4. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Acknowledgment.** The Office of Sustainability has reviewed the MOU template and is prepared to execute if awarded.
- 5. Project timeline.** September 2025 to February 2026.
- 6. Primary project focus.** This project is developmental work; however, we see this as an extension of our existing efforts to address energy resilience in the city’s frontline communities, including initiatives related to low-income residential energy burden, community energy education, and early-stage community Resilience Hub Planning. Specifically, this project will respond to a recently completed Energy Burden Study with Community Climate Collaborative (C3) that identifies increased challenges for public housing communities and will also support a larger energy resilience planning effort on the East End that will begin later this summer as part of a grant-funded project through Virginia Energy. Dedicated funding to work directly with RRHA and provide targeted energy usage data in public housing is necessary to build program scaffolding and unlock further resources and investment.
- 7. Priority category.** This project best fits under (1) “work that advances communication and engagement around climate”.

**8. Direct outputs from this work.** This project will be a first step toward building a pathway to energy efficiency in our city's multi-family public housing communities. Funding will enable the "boots on the ground" support needed to track energy usage and better understand the challenges to these aging properties. Since the adoption of RVAgreen 2050, the City's Climate Equity Action Plan, in 2023, the OOS has been looking for ways to partner with RRHA and support energy-burdened residents. Though the need is high, there has simply not been enough capacity or funding available to begin a dedicated program. Public housing residents are a highly vulnerable population; routine power outages, high energy costs, and elevated risks of extreme heat and flooding have an outsized effect on this community, and there is a pressing need for solutions that address these compounding burdens. Additionally, RVAgreen 2050 prioritizes community education in order to meet long-term sustainability goals. Strategy BE 2.1 specifically calls for the facilitation of energy efficiency upgrades and the education of all residents about the benefits of these measures. One of the most direct ways we can fulfill the City's climate equity objectives is by weatherizing and electrifying the existing housing stock and reducing residents' energy bills. Successful implementation of this strategy will improve the quality of life for frontline communities and reduce inequitable energy costs. Specifically, support from the Catalyst Fund will achieve the following outputs:

- ***Energy tracking and analysis in 447 units at Whitcomb Court:*** Currently, RRHA does not track energy usage across its properties. The grant-funded staff person will catalog utility usage data by meter type (i.e. water, gas, electric) for the previous 12 months. Onsite investigations will allow correlation of meter numbers with the associated energy drivers and square footage (e.g. buildings, units, unit types, spaces, equipment, etc.).
- ***Strengthening partnership with RRHA:*** Funding will provide a direct opportunity to work with RRHA and build trust within this community. This partnership will ensure that our next steps are intentional and that we fully understand the needs of residents.
- ***Community Education:*** Education will be prioritized so that all residents understand the benefits associated with energy cost savings, carbon reductions, and climate resilience.
- ***Research of other municipal low-income energy efficiency programs:*** As a follow-up to data collection, the grant-funded staff person will research successful programs from other localities that can be adapted to our specific needs and challenges.
- ***Energy assessments and low-cost upgrades:*** Assessments will be provided for residents upon request and basic energy efficiency upgrades installed where needed (e.g. weatherstripping, duct wrap, and faucet aerators).
- ***A list of tailored energy efficiency strategies based on analysis of data:*** This list can then be utilized in resident education and/or plan development. Recommendations can also be used to build future funding requests (e.g. basic weatherization kits, solar shades, LED lighting, etc.).

**9. Measuring success.** We see this project as fundamental to building clear next steps around addressing low-income energy burden in multi-family public housing properties and improving overall building performance. Our primary objective is to collect and report on existing energy use data in one multi-

family property and to use that data to inform future work. Data collected will be used to better communicate energy conservation needs to RRHA staff and act as a catalyst for longer-term plan development. Because it is typically difficult to capture energy usage per square foot, results from this project can provide a more accurate view of disparities in energy use intensity, supporting benchmarking and tailored efficiency strategies – an approach recommended by the C3 energy burden study. This will help make the case for energy tracking and benchmarking at *all* RRHA buildings, and spur efficiency interventions that will have the most impact to residents. Additionally, the outcomes of this project can be used as an engagement tool and will offer an opportunity to continue targeted energy education to RRHA residents and staff. The success of this project will be based on:

- ***Energy Usage Database Creation:*** Database of utility usage data for Whitcomb Court and associated analysis.
- ***Effective coordination and communication with RRHA:*** Tracked by number of site visits to property and monthly meetings between RRHA and OOS staff.
- ***Community Education:*** Tracked by number of participants. Education will be delivered through two in-person meetings, informational tabling, and materials provided during site assessments (upon request).
- ***Energy assessments and low-cost upgrades:*** Tracked by assessment questionnaire, number of resident requests/type of improvements, and projected energy cost savings

Ultimately, the overall success of this project will depend on how the outputs are utilized to advance partnership and program development post-grant period. We will continue to work with RRHA staff and residents past the grant period through our Community Energy Education program and larger East End Energy Resilience Planning effort that includes a focus on our public housing communities. Additionally, we will be able to compare our results with the next year’s energy usage data to see the results of any improvements made during the project period. This groundwork will enable strategic funding requests for energy efficiency upgrades across properties and improve residential resilience in our most vulnerable communities.

**10. Lead USDN member.** Dawn Oleksy | Energy Program Manager | Office of Sustainability | 730 E. Broad St., 8th Floor | Richmond, VA 23219 | [dawn.oleksy@rva.gov](mailto:dawn.oleksy@rva.gov) | 804-584-0430

## **11. Other participants.**

### **City of Richmond Office of Sustainability**

- **Role:** Project lead and administrator
- **Responsibilities:** hire part-time staff to complete data collection/cataloguing and other project deliverables; schedule and attend meetings; track and report on outcomes; resident education coordination and program delivery; resident energy assessment and upgrades coordination, scheduling, and installation.

**Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority** (Joe Sarver, Senior Technical Advisor)

- **Role:** Primary RRHA contact and facilitator at Whitcomb Court property
- **Responsibilities:** provide utility data, information, and access to property for site visits; attend meetings; communicate with residents/staff; coordinate with RRHA staff to assist OOS with project activities (i.e. site visits, resident education, and energy assessments/upgrades); active participation in creating program next steps

**12. Root cause design.** Richmond's public housing communities face endemic challenges that are a result of City-led disinvestment and discrimination. Black and Brown neighborhoods have yet to recover from the effects of redlining and other race-based zoning and housing policies that excluded them from accessing quality housing and homeownership opportunities. The effect of these discriminatory practices is that communities of color are most impacted by Richmond's aging infrastructure and housing stock. They are more burdened by high energy costs, and their homes are less energy efficient and more vulnerable to extreme heat and flooding. The median energy burden for Richmond's LMI households is 8.4%, which is over three times the median for households overall. In Whitcomb Court and other highly vulnerable parts of the city, local energy burden is as high as 9%. This contributes to a cycle of housing instability that increases the risk of eviction, and illness related to urban heat. In fact, a recent C3 Energy Burden Study noted that RRHA has routinely filed the most evictions since 2018. At Whitcomb and other aging multi-family public housing properties, there is no centralized heating/cooling system. The buildings are heated through a gas-powered boiler system, and units lack thermostats for individualized control. A/C window units, if present at all, are the financial responsibility of residents. Extremely inefficient, they are no match for Richmond's increasingly hot days, and during extended heat waves they often fail, putting vulnerable residents at risk. These problems are compounded by another root cause: Decades of declining federal investment in public housing infrastructure severely limits the capacity of staff to make basic repairs and upgrades to deteriorating properties, let alone facilitate and fund energy conservation improvements. RRHA is the largest public housing authority in Virginia, serving over 10,000 residents and managing nearly 4,000 units. They cannot tackle the problem of energy burden without outside help and resources. Additionally, multiple levels of mistrust, between the public and housing authority and residents and the housing authority, can stall partnership and other opportunities for funding and collaboration.

This project responds to these challenges by taking a measured approach to a multi-layered problem. More frequent power outages at RRHA properties, increased likelihood of extreme weather events, and a highly vulnerable population highlight the need for more resilient buildings and solutions. Yet, we cannot get there immediately. By focusing our approach on strengthening partnerships, community education, and understanding building challenges through utility usage data collection, we will gain a clearer picture of this community's needs, paving the way for greater energy resilience and improving living conditions for our most vulnerable residents.

**13. Partners.** Yes, the Office of Sustainability and RRHA are fully committed to this project.

**14. Multi-pronged approach.** The Office of Sustainability works across departments, agencies, and with community organizations in its role to implement RVAgreen 2050 and to ensure that frontline communities receive the benefits of climate investments. Strategic partnership is central to our mission and messaging; climate work is shared, and we need functional, collaborative, and thoughtful partnerships across all sectors to make progress on RVAgreen's ambitious goals. This project will provide an opportunity to begin building a more formal relationship with RRHA. Trust-building is an important first step, and one that is often overlooked in our rush to provide solutions to the many challenges facing vulnerable residents. This problem is not unique to Richmond, and it is likely that many municipalities share the same barriers when it comes to creating meaningful partnerships with public housing authorities. Our approach is inclusive and will focus on building capacity in this community, by providing opportunities for collaboration and education. Rather than providing immediate relief, our project will begin with data collection to fully understand the energy challenges plaguing these multi-family properties, then use this data to define next steps. The strategy to begin with one property in the City's East End, will allow us to layer this project in with a larger energy resilience planning effort in this area, and work in concert with other community partners. Findings from this project can help advance conversations around Resilience Hubs and can be used to better inform actions at other RRHA multi-family properties.

OOS is currently involved in several multi-partner initiatives related to low-income residential energy burden; but has yet to tackle multi-family properties. Historically, it has been difficult to track energy usage across these properties, given building and unit variabilities and the lack of non-aggregated utility data. During a time of declining federal investment in public housing, increased energy costs and climate threats, and aging infrastructure, cities across the country are facing similar challenges. Our project will serve as a resource to our USDN partners and demonstrate effective collaboration with multifamily low-income housing developments in implementing climate mitigation and resilience strategies. We will share energy usage data, building challenges, data collection best practices, targeted energy efficiency measures, and overall lessons learned, so that other communities can learn from this pilot initiative.

## **15. Project plan.**

#	Activity	Deliverable	Due Date
1	Activity 1: Hire for Part-time staff position	Deliverable 1: Job description	Date: September 25, 2025
2	Activity 2: Convene stakeholders (RRHA and OOS) and hold resident community meeting to introduce initiative	Deliverable 2: Meeting agendas and presentation materials	Date: October 7, 2025
3	Activity 3: Collect and compile energy usage data	Deliverable 3: Template of database; list of challenges encountered	Date: November 5, 2025
4	Activity 4: Meet with RRHA to report progress and hold a second resident meeting to introduce energy	Deliverable 4: Meeting agendas and presentation materials	Date: November 14, 2025

	assessments and efficiency upgrades opportunity		
5	Activity 5: Perform energy assessments and efficiency improvements	Deliverable 5: Assessment Questionnaire; catalog of improvements by unit type	Date: December 15, 2025
6	Activity 6: Research other municipal low-income energy efficiency programs and energy conservation measures	Deliverable 6: Summary of findings	Date: January 15, 2026
7	Activity 7: Meet with RRHA to present findings	Deliverable 7: Meeting agenda; final database of utility usage data and conclusions	Date: January 30, 2026

## 16. Budget

Itemized Cost <i>List Each Cost Against the Requested Amount Below</i>	Requested Amount	Other Funding Sources*	TOTAL in USD	Notes
<i>Part-time staff person (energy tracking, project coordination, and research)</i>	\$7,800.00		<b>\$7,800.00</b>	to fund a part-time position for 5 months, at \$20/hr. for 15-20 hrs./week.
<i>Energy Education (printed materials)</i>	\$500.00	\$10,000 (combined community engagement, education, planning activities)	<b>\$500.00</b>	printed materials for community meetings and energy audits targeted for RRHA residents; note-broader materials regarding energy resilience to be distributed as part of Energy Resilience Planning Grant
<i>Energy Audits and minor energy efficiency upgrades (i.e. weatherstripping, duct wrap, and faucet aerators)</i>	\$1,650.00	in-kind time provided by RRHA and City staff	<b>\$1,650.00</b>	to provide energy efficiency measures to up to 447 households
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,950.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$9,950.00</b>	

**Appendix II**  
**Letter of Support**



P.O. Box 26887  
Richmond VA 23261-6887  
(O) (804) 780-4200  
TTY Dial 7-1-1  
600 East Broad Street, 4th Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219  
[info@rrha.com](mailto:info@rrha.com)  
[www.rrha.com](http://www.rrha.com)

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Steven B. Nesmith

**Board of Commissioners**

W.R. "Bill" Johnson, Jr., Chair  
Charlene Pitchford, Vice Chair  
Dyanne Broidy  
Kyle R. Elliott  
Barrett Hardiman  
Eddie L. Jackson, Jr.  
Gregory Lewis  
Marika McCray  
Harold Parker, Jr.

September 17, 2025

Dawn Oleksy  
Energy Program Manager  
Office Of Sustainability  
City of Richmond, Virginia  
Email: [dawn.oleksy@rva.gov](mailto:dawn.oleksy@rva.gov)

Dear Ms. Oleksy,

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) is pleased and eager to partner with the City of Richmond's Office of Sustainability (OOS) for the Urban Sustainability Director's Network (USDN) Catalyst Fund Grant applied for by the OOS on RRHA's behalf in the amount of \$9,950.00.

We understand that the grant application is for the study of utility consumption and identifying possible energy conservation measures for our Whitcomb Court site.

RRHA's role will be to provide utility data, information and property access for site visits, attend some project meetings, and provide communications to residents and staff. Additionally, RRHA staff will assist the OOS with project activities to include resident education and the possible implementation of some energy assessments and upgrades.

Lastly, we understand that RRHA shall not incur any costs related to the acceptance of this grant opportunity.

We look forward to taking part in this grant field work process and taking a small step forward to support some basic energy conservation for our Whitcomb Court community.

Very truly yours,

Steven Nesmith  
Chief Executive Officer

*"Building Communities. Changing Lives."* is the vision of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority. RRHA is Virginia's largest public housing authority, serving over 10,000 residents and managing nearly 4,000 units through the public housing program. RRHA provides subsidized housing assistance to more than 3,000 families and is a catalyst for quality affordable housing and community revitalization. For more information about RRHA programs and objectives, visit [rrha.com](http://rrha.com), or keep up with us on social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or [LinkedIn](#).





## OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

**DATE:** Monday, September 15, 2025

**TO:** Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer

**THROUGH:** Sharon Ebert, Deputy Chief Administrator

**FROM:** Laura Thomas, Director Office of Sustainability

**CC:** Dawn Oleksy, Energy Program Manager Office of Sustainability

**CC:** Meghan Brown, Director Budget and Strategic Planning

**CC:** Jeff Gray, Organizational Strategist CAO's Office

**RE:** Request for CAO signature to USDN Catalyst Fund MOU

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### Background

The Office of Sustainability (OOS) was awarded a \$9,950 grant through the Urban Sustainability Directors Network's (USDN) Catalyst Fund for their project: "Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond's Public Housing Communities". During this six-month pilot project, OOS will work with Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) on targeted energy tracking and analysis at Whitcomb Court to better understand the energy challenges at this aging property. This work is part of a larger energy resilience planning initiative in Richmond's East End, and will also include resident education, energy assessments, and installation of minor energy efficiency measures (e.g. weatherstripping, duct wrap, faucet aerators). This funding directly supports the following objectives from the RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Action Plan:

- **BE Objective 2:** Maximize energy efficiency, performance and resilience in all existing buildings.
- **BE-2.1 Residential Energy Burden:** Implement measures to reduce the energy burden of Richmond's most vulnerable communities and improve residential resilience to climate change.

### Request

Pursuant to **City Code Section 2-89 Acceptance of gifts:** (a) The Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City, is hereby authorized to accept gifts, donations, bequests or grants of money, securities, personality or in-kind services of a value up to and including \$25,000.00, the Office of Sustainability is requesting CAO signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between Richmond and USDN to implement their awarded project, "Building Capacity for Energy Resilience in Richmond's Public Housing Communities" ahead of Ordinance adoption.



- ***USDN requests that a signed MOU be delivered within 30 days of the effective date September 15, 2025 via DocuSign.***
- An Ordinance to appropriate funds to a Special Fund in the Office of Sustainability has been approved as to form by City Attorney's office
- Ordinance introduction is not expected until November 10, 2025 due to legal and legislative review times
- We need only to sign MOU within 30 days of effective date September 15, 2025; appropriation of the funds can be after this date

### Timeline

- August 29, 2025: Notification of Award and receipt of draft MOU from USDN
- September 15, 2025 receipt of final MOU from USDN
- October 3, 2025 MOU approved as to form by City Attorney's Office
- October 14, 2025: O&R documents will be routed to CAO's office
- October 15, 2025: MOU due to USDN
- November 10, 2025: Council introduction date
- TBD: Council public hearing date



Outlook

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## USDN Catalyst Fund | CF08 - Richmond, VA

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**From** Mariana Garcia <mariana@saenv.com>

**Date** Fri 8/29/2025 11:42 AM

**To** Grace, Rashmi L.B. - Budget <Rashmi.Grace@rva.gov>

**Cc** susanna@saenv.com <susanna@saenv.com>; Oleksy, Dawn G. - OOS <Dawn.Oleksy@rva.gov>

5 attachments (544 KB)

CF Q3 RFP Feedback\_Richmond, VA.docx; CF08 Richmond, VA\_USDN Memorandum of Understanding\_08.29.25.docx; USDN Independent Contractor Agreement.docx; W-9 Form.pdf; ACH Payment Authorization.docx;

**CAUTION:** This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

Hi Rashmi,

Congratulations! Yesterday the USDN Catalyst Fund committee decided to award your proposal. Please see their comments in the attached feedback document to consider as you launch this work.

Also attached are draft award agreement documents for your review:

**1. Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).**

- This is the primary agreement between the City and USDN.

**2. Independent Contractor Agreement.**

- If a project partner will receive funds rather than the City, this agreement needs to be executed between the contractor and USDN. If the City will receive the project funds, please disregard this second agreement.

**3. USDN W9 Form.**

- This is to be completed by the entity receiving funds.

**4. USDN ACH Payment Authorization Form.**

- This is to be completed by the entity receiving funds.

Please complete appropriate agreement drafts, removing the highlights and blue instruction text as you go. Once done, please return to me and Susanna, cc'd above, by September 15 for review. When all aligns, we will return clean versions to you, and upload to DocuSign for signature.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to working with your team.

Thank you,  
Mariana