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## **Habitat for Humanity Awarded \$2.6 Million in ARPA Funding**

Habitat for Humanity in the Roanoke Valley has been awarded \$2.6 million through the City of Roanoke's American Rescue Plan Act funding to build 18 affordable, accessible residential units by December 2024 in a pilot program titled, *Partners in Prosperity*.

As the only local affordable housing provider that serves as realtor, architect, builder, mortgage lender, counselor and educator partnering low-to-moderate income homebuyer families with affordable, low-maintenance homes to purchase, Habitat for Humanity has a proven track record delivering modest, quality single-family residences. In the 34 years that they have been operating in the Roanoke Valley, over 1,000 adults and 280 children have benefited from the permanent homeownership opportunities they've provided. Karen Mason, Habitat's Executive Director, said "On behalf of my organization, we are honored to have been awarded this transformational funding for our program."

Fourteen of the 18 units to be built will be made available for permanent homeownership opportunities to eligible applicants. To address the shortage of accessible rental housing available to vulnerable residents who are disabled and/or at-risk for homelessness, Habitat for Humanity has collaborated with Family Promise of Greater Roanoke and Blue Ridge Independent Living Center to transfer four of the planned 18 units to these agencies for their ongoing use in supporting low-to-moderate income residents in need of housing and case management as they work towards independent living and/or self-sufficiency.

To supplement the volunteers, who Habitat for Humanity relies upon to build its houses, Habitat has collaborated with Build Smart Institute (BSI) - a Roanoke-based workforce development program whose mission is to train individuals to become career-ready and/or advance within construction industry occupations - to create a series of apprenticeships where interested candidates can receive up to \$10,000 in tuition scholarships to earn construction industry certifications while they work with Habitat 30-hours per week to build six of the 18 houses planned for the *Partners in Prosperity* revitalization program.

This unique collaboration combines the resources of both the public and private sectors, through a whole of government approach, to improve the lives of Roanoke

residents. Because implementation of ARPA funding is focused on our recovery and resiliency, Habitat's inclusion of Build Smart Institute in this collaborative not only assists with the labor force needed for this current project but helps strengthen our area's workforce for the future in a high-demand trade industry.

City Manager, Bob Cowell, adds, 'Roanoke, like so many other growing communities, struggles with housing affordability, an issue made all the more challenging by the economic impacts of COVID. It is rewarding that the city is able to collaborate with Habitat for Humanity in the Roanoke Valley in use of a portion of its American Rescue Plan Act funds to build and renovate affordable housing for local residents. Equally as rewarding is that this initiative will also offer a response to the affordable housing needs of residents with physical challenges and an opportunity to grow a workforce with in-demand construction skills and credentials. This is exactly the type of transformational change the Mayor and City Council envisioned when they endorsed the recommendations from the Star City Strong Advisory Panel.'

Marie Muddiman Beebe, Executive Director of Family Promise of Greater Roanoke, expressed her excitement about the collaboration. "We're grateful to Habitat-Roanoke for their leadership in this endeavor. The two units Family Promise of Greater Roanoke will receive will be used for housing families with children who have experienced homelessness. We will also provide case management to those families to ensure their continued success."

Blue Ridge Independent Living Center's (BRILC) Executive Director, Karen Michalski, shared her gratitude that Habitat for Humanity in the Roanoke Valley recognized the need to collaborate in efforts to provide affordable, accessible housing. "Including BRILC as a recipient for two of the houses to be developed helps address the need for ongoing accessible housing in Roanoke. Involving BSI has the added benefit of training up-and-coming contractors on the skills they'll need to construct accessible residential units for the future."

Rob Leonard, Director, Build Smart Institute (BSI) said, 'Build Smart Institute is proud to be a part of the *Partners in Prosperity* Public/Private Collaboration. We look forward to delivering our part of the program, which is to instruct individuals in the relevant knowledge and skills-competencies in the construction trades, so these individuals can assist in the construction of the housing units to be developed and then enter other professional construction employment opportunities with area companies.'

The 18 residential, single-family units planned will be focused in or near the Melrose-Orange, West End, and Belmont-Fallon target areas. For more information about how you can participate in *Partners in Prosperity* contact Betty Jean Wolfe, Senior Director - Community Engagement, at 540-344-0747 or visit Habitat for Humanity's website at [www.habitat-roanoke.org](http://www.habitat-roanoke.org).