

Governor Announces Effort to Reduce Homelessness, Expand Affordable Housing

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Gov. Bob McDonnell today announced an administrative initiative to reduce homelessness and expand affordable housing.

The executive housing policy framework, the first of its kind in Virginia, will help guide the development of a housing policy that will be announced in the fall. The policy will also address "economic development, healthy neighborhoods, effective coordination of transportation, environmental issues and other opportunities," according to a news release.

A brand-new Housing Policy Advisory Committee, chaired by Bob Sledd, senior economic advisor to the governor, will guide the effort. Sledd has experience with non-profit housing organizations, including the Better Housing Coalition and Homeward, Richmond's regional homeless services coordinator.

"Affordable and safe housing is a fundamental component of healthy and prosperous communities. Every Virginian deserves a safe, warm and secure residence to call their own," McDonnell said. "In this tough economy it is harder than ever for many to attain this basic necessity. Not only does this impact the quality of life of Virginians, housing also has direct implications for economic development, transportation, and the environment."

The policy framework will recognize the role housing policies play in economic development, creating healthy communities and encouraging energy efficiency. It will also focus on the changing demographics of Virginia's population and on increasing the capacity to address the needs of homeless Virginians.

The goal is to guide decision-making and bring coordination in matters affecting housing throughout executive branch agencies.

The Housing Policy Advisory Committee will be made up of representatives from state government, private industry groups, local governments, and nonprofit housing providers and consumer representatives.