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The Virginia Nonprofit Housing Coalition releases a new report:
Understanding the Myths and Realities of Manufactured Housing

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Today the Virginia Nonprofit Housing Coalition released a new report: *Myths and Realities of Manufactured Housing*. This report explores the challenges and benefits of this type of housing and debunks many of the misperceptions that are widespread about this type of housing. The report finds that some types of manufactured housing offer significant affordability benefits to lower income households and points to the improved quality of this type of housing that was manufactured after 1976.

Key Findings:

- Manufactured housing (especially smaller “single wide” designs) offer clear affordability benefits well beyond site built housing and are among the most affordable homeownership options for lower income households. Manufactured housing accounts for 43% of all homes under \$150,000.
- Post 1976, manufactured housing has been required to meet stringent federal quality and safety standards that are set by HUD. This has resulted in a dramatic improvement in quality, durability and safety, as well as energy efficiency.
- When well sited and maintained, research shows that this type of housing does retain its value and does not affect property values in neighboring communities.

Over the last year, several mobile home parks in the Richmond area have come under scrutiny as a result of physical deterioration of homes and park infrastructure. Advocates and affordable housing providers have been working together to help the residents of these parks to improve their housing and find alternative housing, if needed. Christie Marra, President of the Mobile Home Park Coalition (MHPC), applauded the release of the report: “There are many

misperceptions about mobile home communities – this report provides the facts that help us understand the reality of this form of affordable housing.”

The MHPC is comprised of several non-profit groups that have formed to explore and support the opportunities that mobile home parks offer to those seeking affordable housing. They are committed to protecting and advancing the rights of people who reside in mobile home parks. While their initial focus is on parks in the City of Richmond, they plan to expand their scope to the entire region during this year. Lee Householder, the Executive Director of project:HOMES and a member of MHPC, noted: “Mobile homes provide housing for thousands of people, mostly lower income, in the Richmond region. It’s important for affordable housing providers to better understand the benefits and liabilities of this type of housing. This report starts us on that path.”

Manufactured home shipments, especially the “single wide” homes that are common in mobile home parks, have been declining over the past decade. However, Census data reveals that the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area still has nearly 25,000 people currently living in “mobile homes”. The vast majority of these households are lower income. Many of the residents of mobile home parks in Richmond own their homes but rent the lots on which the homes sit. Some mobile home owners in Richmond also face challenges with respect to the upkeep of park infrastructure to a level that ensures safety, habitability and preservation of property values.

Although ownership of mobile homes without ownership of the land they sit on can be risky, mobile homes are nonetheless attractive homeownership options for many people because they are so affordable. For many, mobile homes are their only realistic homeownership option. These residents have worked hard to be able to purchase their homes and many have made significant improvements to their homes.

Pending the identification of additional sponsors, a comprehensive study of manufactured home parks in the Richmond region will be made in the Spring. This study will develop an inventory of parks, their condition, resident profile, cost structure and other characteristics, as well as best practices in the improvement, preservation and revitalization of parks. Upon completion of the report, a regional conference will be convened to report on findings as well as explore best practices for preservation and revitalization of these communities.