



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 4, 2012

Contact: Mike Burnette

Phone: (804) 354-0641 x118

E-mail: [mburnette@phonehome.org](mailto:mburnette@phonehome.org)

**Many Richmond Region Residents are Isolated in Areas with  
Very Little Opportunity for Them to Succeed.**

*Where you live directly influences your ability to access the opportunity cycle*

RICHMOND - By 2040 the population of the United States will be predominantly people of color. The evidence put forth in Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia's new report *Where You Live Makes All the Difference: An Opportunity Map of the Richmond Region* suggests that if our economic development and housing policies continue to isolate and exploit this population, the future vitality of the region is in trouble.

The Richmond region has long suffered from the repercussions of its past. Beginning in the 1930s, federal housing policy promoted segregation through incentivizing the growth of white, middle class suburban areas while starving the inner city of credit. The result has been intergenerational, concentrated poverty in some of the oldest neighborhoods of the region, while increasingly remote neighborhoods, available only to those with the necessary means, continue to blossom and flourish. Only by understanding the mechanisms that have woven the fabric of opportunity throughout the Richmond region will we be able to move forward.

*"Richmond's regional development has largely been shaped by discrimination. We have to be more deliberate in ensuring that all residents of the region have equal access to affordable housing, jobs, public transportation, and good schools,"* said Heather Mullins Crislip, HOME's president and chief executive officer.

*Where You Live Makes All the Difference: An Opportunity Map of the Richmond Region* maps over twenty-two socioeconomic metrics to illustrate the role that where one lives has on accessing those characteristics that everybody looks for when deciding where to live: good schools, safe homes, close to work, nice neighborhood, etc. Where we live directly impacts the schools our children attend. It also impacts our ability to get a sustainable home mortgage, our

potential job opportunities if we don't have a car, our ability to create wealth, and provide for our families. In short, where you live directly influences your ability to access the opportunity cycle – that is the opportunity to get a good education, a good job, purchase a home, build wealth, and pass that wealth along to your children. Brian Koziol, author of the report and HOME's housing research analyst stated, *“Because of past policies, we have isolated residents into areas of low opportunity. We must figure out a way to pave the way for them to create generational wealth and opportunities for their children.”*

As the report shows, the majority of the city of Richmond and a good portion of central Henrico County have very little opportunity. These are the same neighborhoods that house the majority of the African American population of the region. They're also the same neighborhoods that have the lowest educational attainment outcomes, the highest rates of foreclosure, greatest rates of poverty, and lowest rates of homeownership in the entire region. To complicate matters, the region's transportation network further isolates these neighborhoods from entry level jobs in high job growth areas on the periphery of the city.

Other highlights of the report include:

- Only 53 percent of the regions jobs are served by public transit. The majority of these jobs are located in the city of Richmond as GRTC bus service, by and large, ends at the city line.
- Education disparities between school districts are staggering. 61 percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at Mary Mumford elementary school tested at the advanced level in math assessments while only 13 percent did at Chimborazo elementary.
- Differences in mortgage lending between high opportunity and low opportunity neighborhoods are enormous. Half of all mortgage originations in a low opportunity census tract in Richmond were high-cost compared to just 15 percent in a high opportunity census tract in Hanover County.

Due to policy failure and discrimination, housing the region's poorest residents has become, by and large, the sole responsibility of the city of Richmond. This is neither just nor sustainable. As the report illustrates, these residents are isolated in an area with very little opportunity for them to succeed.

Preventing a significant portion of the region's population from gaining access to meaningful employment and wealth building opportunities through public policy is not only morally and socially repugnant; it is bad economic development policy. The vitality of our region is solely dependent upon ensuring that as many people as possible, regardless of skin color or income level, have access to those opportunity factors which allow them to build their families up, not continue to keep them down.

The Richmond region will only be able to move forward by addressing housing as a gateway to

opportunity. Only by adopting a regional perspective that places the quality of life of all of the regions residents first, and ensuring that housing choice is not influenced by discriminatory behavior or practices, will the Richmond region be able to build the requisite linkages between housing, education, jobs, and transportation to ensure that opportunity is accessible to all of us, regardless of where we live.

The report is available on HOME's website: [www.phonehome.org/opportunitymap](http://www.phonehome.org/opportunitymap)

Twitter @HOMEofVA

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/homeofva](http://www.facebook.com/homeofva)  
[www.phoneHOME.org](http://www.phoneHOME.org)