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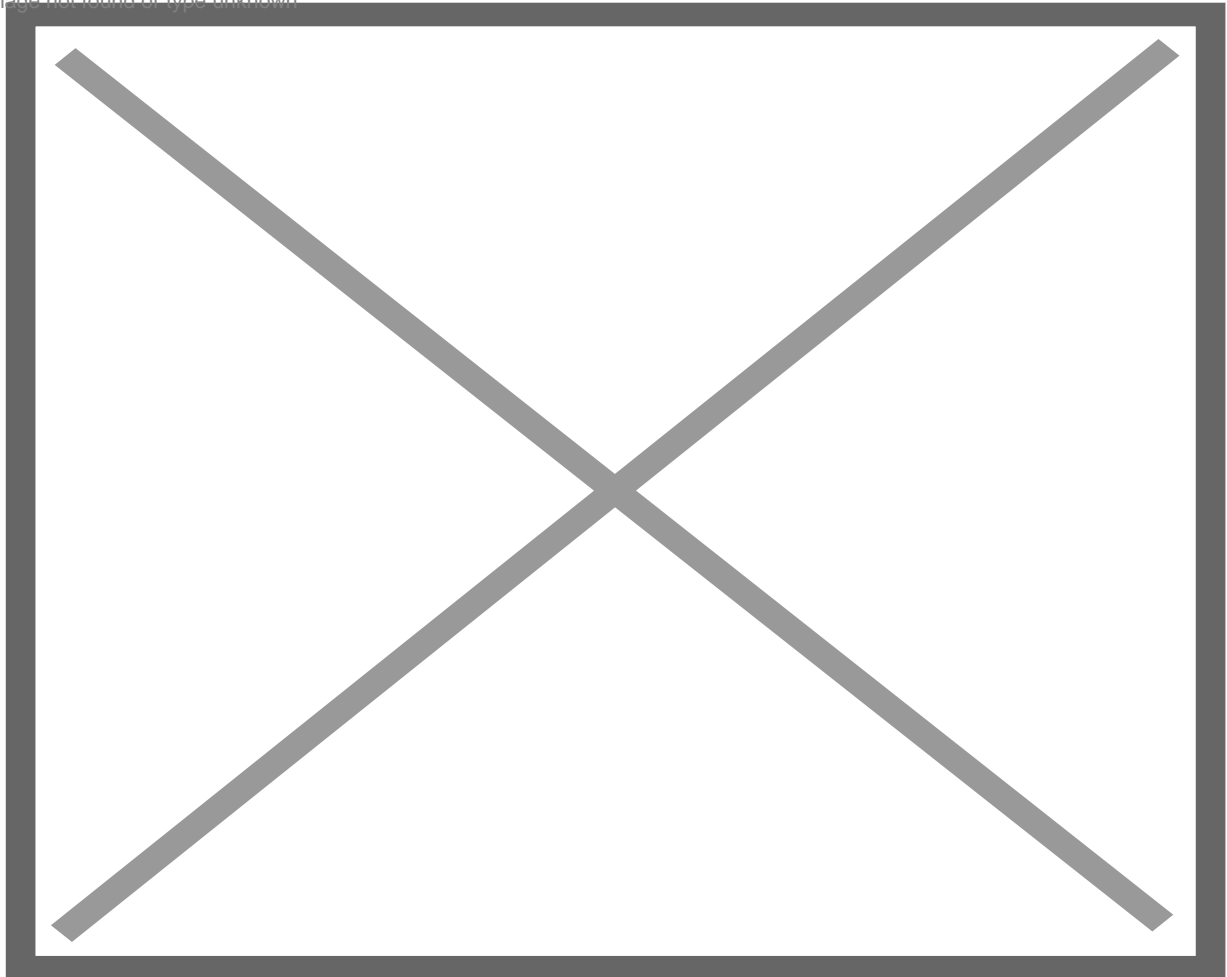
Robert Graham, Recently Retired From VIHA, Has Died

A 15-year tenure marked by resilience through storms and pandemic

Community Center / **Published On February 29, 2024 07:52 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **February 29, 2024**

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Robert Graham at the V.I. Legislature in February 2023. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Former V.I. Housing Authority Executive Director Robert Graham, who served in the position for 15 years, has died. He was 72.

Graham, who had a long battle against cancer, passed on Wednesday. He had recently retired from VIHA.

During his tenure, Mr. Graham led VIHA through several crises affecting housing in the territory — from the devastating storms of 2017 to the Covid-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the housing shortage.

He served under three administrations — Governors John P. de Jongh, Kenneth Mapp and Albert Bryan — owing to his steady helm at the authority, overseeing progression. During his tenure several communities were either [built](#), [renovated](#) and others are [currently in the pipeline](#).

In 2019, Mr. Graham announced an innovative "repositioning strategy" that sought to transform public housing by dispersing poverty concentrations. This strategy proposed a radical overhaul of approximately 3,000 public housing units across the territory, many of which were outdated and in a state of decay.

More recently and perhaps for realistically, Mr. Graham sought to bring 300 additional units online in 2023 as part of a ten-year plan.

“We have three development partners working on two projects apiece,” he said in October 2022. “Over the intermediate term beginning next year we expect to see on average of 300 units brought online, new or rehabbed, beginning in fiscal year 2023.”

Mr. Graham was a proponent of expanding housing availability beyond just low-income families, recognizing the necessity of broader job opportunities and increased income levels for this vision to become a reality. He understood the complex dynamics between employment, income, and housing affordability.

His commitment to reshaping the public housing landscape was evident in his advocacy for the "[de-concentration plan](#)." This initiative aimed to diversify the socioeconomic makeup of affordable housing residents, striving for a community that reflected a broad spectrum of annual incomes. Mr. Graham candidly addressed the challenges of this ambition, particularly within the context of existing public housing developments characterized by predominantly low and extremely low-income households. His pragmatic approach underscored the complexities of realizing such a balanced housing model.

The legacy of Robert Graham's work at the V.I. Housing Authority reflects a deep understanding of the intricate interplay between economic opportunities and housing accessibility.