

NEWS FROM CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST | SPRING 2022

At Home





ONE OF THE DIFFERENCES with living in a Champlain Housing Trust apartment is the relationship we have with our residents. We conduct an annual survey to understand how we're doing from our residents' perspectives, and to identify ways in which we can better engage with people living in our housing and what we can do to build community.

This year 746 of our residents responded to the annual survey, which means that 40% of our residents participated. This information is shared with our Board of Directors and staff to inform our work supporting residents.

In January, after a year of service and work, we formally amended our by-laws to create the Rental Resident Advisory Committee to assist and guide this work. This Committee of residents represent communities across CHT's portfolio and review the survey results, provide additional advice, and deepen our understanding of what residents want or need.

To keep us informed on how to support you, please reach out to your property manager or our Resident Engagement Manager Kristen Ciambella at Kristen.Ciambella@champlainhousingtrust.org.



95% Rate overall satisfaction with maintenance staff as average or better than average.

91% Say condition of their property as average or better than average.



87% Report overall satisfaction with property management as average or better than average.

Dear Members and Friends,

SPRING IS HERE! And like the hundreds of flowers blooming in front of our King Street office, there's so much happening at Champlain Housing Trust.

Spring green-up at various properties is underway. After staying distant and safe, maintenance staff are now back to responding to non-emergency work order requests. There's lots of work to do and we appreciate the patience of our residents.

CHT continues to focus attention on the quality of life of our residents. On the facing page you will see results from our recent resident survey which guides us in creating programs and services. You'll find information on pages 8-9 about gardening and other resources available during these warmer spring and summer months.

The need for more affordable housing across the board is incredible. CHT remains committed to our mission; our promise to you is to build and create as much affordable housing as we can over the next few years.

Construction of 20 new homes is winding down at Butternut Grove Condominiums in Winooski, while new construction of 36 affordable apartments is just starting up at Stuart Avenue in Colchester. In the next few months, work will begin to move the operations of Harbor Place in Shelburne across the road to the newly-purchased Days Inn. Soon thereafter, redevelopment at the old Harbor Place will begin with a planned 90-100 affordable homes. Renovation is just about underway at



Zephyr Place, the former TownePlace Suites in Williston, where 72 affordable apartments will soon be available for people with a variety of incomes.

Our lending programs are gearing up, and now includes the newly created Farmworker Home Repair Loan Program which allows farmers to make essential repairs and necessary improvements to their farmworker housing. The goal is to preserve this important affordable housing resource and also help improve the health and welfare of farm workers. We were awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board to carry out this work.

Once again, CHT has been named one of the Best Places to Work in Vermont! Our staff are our most important assets and I appreciate their work every day. Knowing that they feel great about working at CHT is just icing on the cake.

Michael Monte
CEO



Feeling Connected at Fort Ethan Allen

MARY WILSON understands the value of having great neighbors.

Before moving into her condo at Fort Ethan Allen, she was living with her daughter in the Adirondacks. One February morning, while her daughter was at work, Mary slipped and fell while walking in the driveway. Thankfully she wasn't hurt, but it dawned on her just how isolated she was. The properties on either side of her were seasonal vacation homes. Who could she have called out to if she needed help?

For Mary, this was one of the many steps along the way that led to a Shared Equity home through Champlain Housing Trust.

Mary spent most of her life across the lake in New York where she and her husband raised a family together. When her husband passed she took a job at a hospital in Massachusetts. She had always been drawn to the ocean, so once retirement arrived she moved into a small condo near the beach. Still, after a few years, she felt something was missing.

"There were no beautiful mountains and Lake Champlain wasn't there."

That realization led her back the region and her daughter's house in the Adirondacks. Mary explored all over to find a place, but like so many others, the high cost of housing limited her options. She learned about CHT through a childhood friend who she is thankful to now have as a neighbor.

Once she purchased and moved into her home, Mary immediately felt at peace.

"I love a front door and a back door. I like to go out. I have flowers in my yard and this place allows me to have a home that is accessible."

As temperatures warm up, she's able to walk her dog at Fort Ethan Allen on the Colchester and Essex Town line and point out all of the homes where her friends live.

"At my age, I have a nice community. I'm not alone; I have plenty of people I can relate to— and

as you get older that is a big deal."

Mary immediately appreciated how vibrant the neighborhood was and how it wasn't just people her age. She saw young people and families walking together.

"I love that aspect of it. A lot of communities they have for older people isolate them into one demographic. Here you're very much a part of an actual community."

And it fit her budget. "It wasn't so expensive that it has prohibited me from enjoying other things in my life."

In CHT's Shared Equity program, buyers get assistance to purchase their home which results in a smaller mortgage. In return, they promise to share a portion of the home's future increase in value with the next owner – in essence, paying it forward – so the home remains affordable forever.

The affordability of the home provided freedom to enjoy other things in life, combined with the vibrant sense of community that exists in her neighborhood is why Mary feels other older people on a fixed income should consider Shared Equity homeownership.

"This allows you as an older person to build a community. There are some wonderful [retirement] communities out there, but they're pretty expensive. We get to a certain age and have to look at what our options are."

With warmer weather on the way, Mary is ready for what the spring and summer have to offer. Whether it's walking her dog, spending time on her porch with neighbors, or volunteering on the Colchester Bike Trail.

She's also excited to get back to growing her own produce in the community garden. That's one of the ways she's been able to connect with her neighbors, and also supports another one of her favorite hobbies: baking.

"I really can't wait to bake a rhubarb pie this spring."



Collaboration and Funding to Support Farmers and Farmworkers with Better Housing

THIS SPRING, CHT launched a new lending program to support farmers to make improvements to the housing that they provide for their workforce. The program is funded by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board with a \$500,000 grant and is being carried out in collaboration with University of Vermont Extension program, Rural Edge and other housing nonprofits across the State.

The program is aimed at addressing growing understanding and concerns over the quality of the living conditions of farm workers. A report commissioned by VHCB in April 2021 found that there were over 550 dwellings on or adjacent to farms in Vermont, housing roughly 2,000 laborers – and the economic realities of agriculture made it difficult for farmers to make the investments needed to improve housing conditions.

The program provides loans to allow farmers to make essential repairs and necessary improvements to their farmworker housing. The goal of this program is to preserve this important affordable housing resource and to help improve the health and welfare of farm workers.

The loans will be for up to \$30,000 and won't charge interest. After 10 years the loans will be forgiven – as long as the improved housing continues to be maintained and used for farmworker housing.

Typical health and safety related repairs or improvements could include: wastewater systems, air sealing and insulation, noise mitigation measures, overcrowding relief, food prep and storage improvements, mold remediation, electrical and plumbing upgrades, and roof replacements.

In just it's early days, the program has already received interest from over 60 farms located in nine of Vermont's 14 counties.



Stuart Avenue Apartments



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EVERNORTH and with support from the Town of Colchester, Champlain Housing Trust began construction in March on a new building in Colchester featuring 36 affordable apartments that will add brand new one, two, and three-bedrooms to a very tight Chittenden County housing market. The energy efficient four-story building will be on newly constructed Stuart Avenue as part of Sunderland Farms, a larger development by SD Ireland on the southeast corner of Route 2 and Severance Road that will have 200 apartments and condominiums along with retail and commercial space.

Stuart Avenue Apartments and the Sunderland Farms development are located close to schools, bus lines to and from Milton and Burlington, and Exit 16 – this location is ideal for commuting to jobs in surrounding towns and cities like Essex, Winooski, and Burlington. Designated as a growth center by the Town of Colchester, this new community development is adjacent to the Sunny Hollow Natural Area which has miles of trails for walking, biking, or skiing that residents can enjoy. A new playground near Stuart Avenue Apartments is also in the plans. Future work by VTrans will increase bike and pedestrian safety



ILLUSTRATED BY RABIDEAU ARCHITECTS

and ensure access to the nearby Green Mountain Transit bus stop.

Expected to be ready by April 2023, Stuart Avenue Apartments will have 14 one-bedroom; 14 two-bedroom; and eight three-bedroom apartments available. Designed to meet the need for larger apartments with permanently affordable rents, the overall living space will range between 600 to 1,200 square feet. Building plans include a community room, on-site laundry, a parking garage, and space for garden beds.

The lack of available apartments has been widely publicized, as has the skyrocketing rents.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in Chittenden County the household wage to afford a two-bedroom apartment is more than \$31 per hour.

The rents for the apartments include heat and hot water and will be well below market rents and be affordable to a wide range of incomes. As construction is closer to completion, Champlain Housing Trust will announce when applications are open for Stuart Avenue Apartments. Stay tuned to our website, www.getahome.org, for updates.

Welcome

to our New Resident Engagement Manager

What is your role as the Resident Engagement Manager at CHT?

My role is to cultivate a positive resident experience through the leadership and support of various activities and projects that promote inclusive, connected, and engaged communities.

What about your new role has you most excited?

I'm very much looking forward to getting face time with residents and hearing what they have to say— what is and isn't working, what programs or activities they would like to see implemented, how can we do better? The opportunity to collaborate

and to build a relationship and trust with our residents is exciting. I'm also looking forward to implementing new projects and activities that will foster a stronger sense of community for our residents.



Why is it important for CHT to have a Resident Engagement Manager?

It allows CHT to be physically present. Seeing a familiar face and knowing that there's a dedicated person that only focuses on resident engagement shows our residents that not only do we hear them, but we care about them and their experiences. Home should be a sanctuary—a safe space—it's important to us that our residents feel that way about where they live.

Get Involved!

We are excited to highlight a few opportunities on the facing page that are available to Champlain Housing Trust residents this summer. For more information about these programs and to see what's available where you live, contact Resident Engagement Manager Kristen Ciambella at kristen.ciambella@champlainhousingtrust.org or by calling 802-861-7322.



Community Gardens

Spring has arrived and that means it's time to get into the garden. We've heard from so many residents over the last few years about how community gardens offer a gathering place to meet and connect with other residents. Champlain Housing Trust supports community gardens at 15 CHT properties. These gardens support a stronger sense of community and serve as a fantastic educational opportunity.



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The DREAM Program



The DREAM Program is a locally based nonprofit which supports kids from low income housing communities with free programming. This includes after school programs, overnight camps, mentoring and college prep support. CHT has made DREAM programming available to residents at Salmon Run and Winchester Place, and hopes to expand the program to other sites later this year.

We encourage residents of Salmon Run and Winchester Place to look out for details that will be coming out this spring. For more information visit dreamprogram.org.

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Composting

Your food scraps can always be composted. Using a compost collection container is the easiest way to collect your food scraps and allow you to compost as you prep, cook, and cleanup. If you need a composting bucket for your home, contact our maintenance team by phone at 802-861-3076 and leave a message with your address. Place your container wherever it's most convenient in your home. Your compost bucket lid will contain odors and keep pests away. Don't forget that containers are not allowed in common areas. If you ever have a question about what can or can't be composted, visit the Chittenden Solid Waste District's website at cswd.net.





Save the Date!

Members' Day PICNIC

Saturday
August 20, 2022

NORTH BEACH, BURLINGTON
more details coming...



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