

NEWS FROM CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST | FALL 2023

At Home



CHAMPLAIN
HOUSING TRUST



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Dear Members and Friends,

OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS, Champlain Housing Trust has been both a national leader and international model for the development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing. Innovation may be an overused word, but the ability to adapt, change, and create new programs has been in our DNA ever since the early days when we established one of the first community land trusts in the country and developed our signature shared equity homeownership program.

We get asked to share our experience a lot, and last winter I had an hour meeting over Zoom with representatives from a potential donor wanting to learn more about our work. After the conversation, we provided additional information that described how we feel our work is distinctive.

Last month I was at a conference with colleagues from around the northeast, just a little north of New York City, when I was contacted as a follow up to that conversation last winter.

I was not prepared for this news, however: MacKenzie Scott, a writer and philanthropist, was making a \$20 million grant to support our work. This generosity brought tears to my eyes, and we cannot thank her enough.

“MacKenzie Scott, a writer and philanthropist, was making a \$20 million grant to support our work.”

Our pledge to the community is that we'll use this gift to impact thousands of lives. Our Board, which includes residents of our housing, people representing municipalities, and members of the general public, has developed and is asking staff to implement a plan to fulfill this promise.

As large as this gift is – and it is the largest in our almost 40 years – we know that this donation alone won't solve homelessness or our region's housing crisis.

What it can do is act as a catalyst: to develop more housing, to reduce homelessness and increase access to homeownership, and to support community centers and community building. As always, we'll do this work in collaboration with and side-by-side with our amazing public and nonprofit partners serving our communities. We've described the framework on how we'll spend this gift on page 8.

Examples of the types of successful, proven programs that we'll be able to do more of are included in this newsletter:

- On the next two pages, you can read about the Adhikari family's road from living for 20 years in a refugee camp in Bhutan to becoming a homeowner thanks to CHT's partnership with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity to build affordable homes and keep them affordable forever.
- The centerspread features one of my favorite days of the year: CHT's annual Members' Day Picnic. We feel community building activities like this one are important, and we've invested more in this work in recent years to connect residents to each other.
- On pages 6 and 7, at Fort Ethan Allen in Colchester, we purchased three dorms from St. Michael's College which had originally been barracks for the 10th Cavalry – also known as the Buffalo Soldiers. We'll turn these historic buildings into 65 apartments.
- Lastly, we couldn't do any of this work without the leadership of our volunteer Board. I'm happy to welcome two new additions on page 9: Liz Gamache, a public member representing St. Albans, and Lisa Lord, a resident member of the Bright Street Co-op.

Thank you for your partnership in this work.

Michael Monte, CEO



MISSION

Champlain Housing Trust is a Community Land Trust that supports the people of Northwest Vermont and strengthens their communities through the development and stewardship of permanently affordable homes and related community assets.

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* Left Board and joined CHT Staff on August 21, 2023.

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We're Paying for our Future

SEATED ON HIS COUCH IN A LARGE OPEN LIVING ROOM AND DINING SPACE in his home in the Old North End of Burlington, Ganesh Adhikari is surrounded by pictures of loved ones, family heirlooms and decorations. On one wall there's a video game console connected to the TV with games stacked on top. It's the perfect illustration of a family room.

"We were very happy and excited to have a new home," says Ganesh.

But there wasn't always so much space for Ganesh, his wife Indra, and their sons Aadhitya and Ayan.

Before becoming shared equity homeowners, Ganesh and his family were renters, living in various apartments across Burlington and Winooski. While they were able to afford rent, finding enough space for the whole family was a challenge. Family-sized apartments in the Burlington area are hard to come by, and many new developments focus on building smaller places for single young professionals and students.

Ganesh and his family needed a home that was designed for a family, and they found a solution thanks to a partnership between Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity (GMHfH) and Champlain Housing Trust (CHT), which gives qualified homeowners access to a new home built by GMHfH and sold through CHT's Shared Equity Program. Qualified buyers are required to go through CHT's Homebuyer Education Workshop, including financial counseling. And because of CHT's program, the home will remain affordable to another buyer if Ganesh and Indra's family ever decide to move.

Ganesh found CHT's process to be especially beneficial for understanding the often-complicated process of becoming a homeowner.

"In person classes were so helpful because we could ask questions and they would clarify everything right then and there," says Ganesh.

In the spring of 2021, the family moved into their brand-new home. One that Ganesh and Indra helped build. As part of their agreement with Habitat for Humanity, Ganesh and Indra are required to put in "sweat equity" creating homes like the one they now live in and learning invaluable home improvement skills. It's a total of 400 hours for two heads of household. Though it's a major time commitment for working parents like Ganesh and Indra, it is also rewarding.

Ganesh says, "I love it. It's great meeting different people with different skills. Whatever we learn there we can use here instead of hiring someone!"

Meanwhile at home, the added space has made a big difference. Their kids, ages 13 and 8, have lots of room to play in the living room and basement. There's also a backyard for the family to enjoy on sunny summer days. Now there is space for everyone. It's a far cry from their days renting tiny, cramped apartments and always being on the lookout for a larger one to move to.

"We're really happy with this place. Especially for the kids, they need room to play. Sometimes they are downstairs and we are upstairs, they can be outside."

Becoming a homeowner has provided stability and equity for Ganesh's family. After years of renting and not knowing how long they'd be in the same location, they appreciate being in control of their future. It's a special feeling for Ganesh and Indra who after leaving their home country of Bhutan and before moving to Burlington, Vermont, spent 20 years living in a refugee camp in Nepal.

"With renting, everything we pay them is finished. It's gone. As a homeowner we're paying for our future, says Ganesh. "Champlain Housing Trust is doing an incredible job for families like us."



Members' Day Picnic!

We had a sunny day and a crowd at North Beach for our Members' Day Picnic! What a treat to gather and catch up with so many members while sharing a meal. Chasing bubbles was a lot of fun, too! A big thanks to Owen Leavey for photos, DJ Melo Grant for vibes, FaceMania! for fabulous face painting, Kismayo Kitchen for sides and the Beach House for creemees! And thank you to our dedicated volunteers who made the day run smoothly.





Architect's rendering of the redevelopment of Hamel, Purtil and Dupont Halls at Fort Ethan Allen in Colchester.

Bringing New Life to Barracks in Colchester

CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST and our development partner **Evernorth** will redevelop three vacant buildings in Colchester recently purchased from St. Michael's College who used them as dorms and offices. These beautiful buildings, part of the Fort Ethan Allen Historic District, were initially constructed as military barracks and CHT plans to convert them into 65 affordable one-bedroom and studio apartments, sizes identified as critically needed in this area. The apartments will be occupied with people of a variety of income levels. Creating more housing options is one step CHT is taking to address the challenges of homelessness and 11 of these apartments will be for people formerly unhoused.

In the early 20th century, long before they were college dorms, these three buildings, Hamel, Purtil and Dupont Halls, served as barracks to the 10th Cavalry, one of the first peacetime U.S. Army regiments made up of all Black soldiers after the Civil War. Nicknamed "Buffalo Soldiers," the Cavalry also had a troubled charge: they were deployed to western regions to clear land from Indigenous peoples and claim it for new settlers. This history is documented on a plaque at the property. In recognition of this past, the buildings have been named 10th Cavalry Apartments.

Taking on a project that includes historic preservation adds complexity, but reusing existing buildings adds some efficiencies and

aligns with other preserved housing styles at the fort, a neighborhood so many people enjoy living in. The location includes a large grassy playing field, is on the bus line, and is close to walking trails, a grocery store and many other restaurants and businesses. Champlain Housing Trust is excited that the conversion of these existing buildings from dormitory use to affordable rental homes not only offers much needed new housing, but also prevents deterioration of historical resources, brings vacant buildings back to life, and generates vibrancy to this well-liked neighborhood.





Mackenzie Scott Makes \$20 Million Gift to CHT

CHT HAS RECEIVED A \$20 MILLION

DONATION – the largest in its nearly 40 years of operations – from philanthropist and writer MacKenzie Scott through her philanthropic fund, *Yield Giving*.

We are extremely grateful to Ms. Scott. Her generosity gives our community the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in proven programs that will impact thousands of Vermonter's lives.

CHT will use the grant to invest in these strategic initiatives:

• **Building and Preserving Permanently**

Affordable Housing – Vermont has a well-documented shortage of affordable housing, and this gift won't replace the need for public funds or solve the problem. In addition to public funds, CHT uses private debt to move development projects forward and to reinvest in properties, especially properties that serve the most vulnerable. Having internal capacity to replace this borrowing will make development less expensive, more sustainable, and allow CHT to act quickly when opportunities arise.

• **Supporting and Increasing Access to**

Homeownership – Homeownership is a primary way many build wealth and achieve financial stability. Beyond affordability challenges, BIPOC households experienced racist policies that prevented them from becoming homeowners. With this gift, CHT can expand

its Homeownership Equity Program statewide working with partner agencies, support our existing homeowners and support the foundational education and counseling that helps all prospective buyers.

• **Addressing Homelessness** – CHT continues to play an integral role with our partners to end chronic and family homelessness. Services for people in need are critical to these efforts. Twenty-three percent of CHT's rental housing is occupied by people exiting homelessness, a number that CHT has committed to increase in the coming year. This gift will create an ongoing, stable stream of funding to help support this work.

• **Building Community** – CHT created the Old North End Community Center in Burlington five years ago and is embarking on a new effort to redevelop the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski. This gift will help sustain the nonprofit and public use of the building, stabilize the rents for the tenants, and make needed improvements to supply top-notch community resources.

• **Supporting our Residents** – CHT's resident services and community building staff provide support and programming to connect people to resources, to each other, and to opportunities to be engaged in their neighborhood and communities. Being able to sustain and grow this work is important priority in our strategic plan.

Meet the Newest Members to our Board of Directors!



Liz Gamache

LIZ GAMACHE has been a resident of St. Albans since 2001 during which time she served as Mayor for 6 years (2012-2018). She works at United Way of Northwest Vermont where she holds the position of Chief Development Officer. Previously, she served as the Interim Director of the Preservation Trust of Vermont, Director of Efficiency Vermont, and on the leadership team of Vermont Electric Cooperative. She also serves on several boards including Agewell VT, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation, and Franklin County Home Health.

LISA LORD grew up in New Hampshire and dreamed of moving to Vermont. Now a Burlington resident for 18 years, Lisa is the Director of Workforce Development for Recovery Vermont and the Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery, a non-profit organization that celebrates recovery through training, advocacy, and innovation. Through her work, she is inspired daily by examples of the power and possibilities of recovery, and by how transferrable the tools for recovery are to all other aspects of life and work. She serves as an ambassador for Champlain College's Single Parents Program, and is one of the original members of the Bright Street Co-op where she lives with her two teenage children.



Lisa Lord



Become a Sustaining Member!



Please consider giving monthly to help maintain CHT's life-changing and vital programs. With your support we can provide safe, decent, and affordable housing.



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