

At Home



CHAMPLAIN
HOUSING TRUST



WWW.GETAHOME.ORG



Need Help Paying Your Bills?

With so many Vermonters struggling due to the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wanted to make you aware of State programs that can help. Funds will be made available for both renters and homeowners. We encourage residents to apply if they qualify.

Rental Assistance

The **Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP)** makes it possible for qualifying households to receive payments for back rent, utilities, moving costs, and security deposits. For translation services at VERAP call (833) 488-3727.

1 To Qualify Applicants Must:

- Make under 80% Area Median Income
- Qualify for Unemployment, have experienced a reduction in income, or financial hardship due to Covid-19 (including any increases in your spending due to the pandemic)
- Be at risk of homelessness or housing instability (including past due rent notice or utilities or unhealthy living conditions)

2 To Complete the Application You'll Need:

- Social security number and date of birth for each household member
- Address
- Annual Income
- Proof of income
- An estimate on how much funding the household received in the previous round of emergency rent payments

3 Ready to Apply?

- Application for Reach-Up participants: www.dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/reachup/ERA
- Application for all other renters: www.erap.vsha.org/

COMING SOON! Mortgage Assistance

For homeowners, mortgage assistance will be available soon. Please visit **Vermont Housing Finance Agency** at VHFA.org for more information. In the meantime, CHT counselors are trained and ready to help you access funds to keep up with payments.

Dear CHT Members



Spring always brings rebirth and renewal. This Spring feels especially sweet and hopeful, as vaccines are rolling out and families are beginning to feel safer – even as we remain cautious and careful.

This is in stark contrast to the past year. The fear and anxiety of the pandemic was overwhelming for so many. In our community, many are still homeless and face uncertainty. Food insecurity and job loss are still impacting our residents. We can see the trauma of the past year in the overall health and well-being of our residents, something we work daily to address.

The housing market also has new pressures as people seek to move to Vermont. Homeownership prices are rising and the availability of rental housing is still scarce, while our motels are still filled with people seeking a permanent home, just when Vermont is “opening up” to tourism.

I am regularly inspired by the work of CHT staff, at every level, in every department. For many of them, the last year has also been challenging in many ways. A staff member recently wrote:

I've been reflecting lately on the partnerships within CHT, and how we work together for the larger community's benefit. Recently, I've had the pleasure of working side by side with a few of the property managers to address concerns with some of our residents. These meetings have been leading to positive behavioral changes around troubled tenants, and this has been leading to more overall peace within

our communities we manage. To watch my colleagues work so hard and continue to give all of themselves to support our residents is truly inspirational.

We did tremendous work here at CHT over the past year: creating new apartments, supporting the response to the pandemic amongst homeless people, building new shelters and adding new support and services. The call for racial justice has rallied all of us here at CHT to be vigilant in being anti-racist, and to make sure that access to housing has no barriers because of a person's race or ethnic background. We are embracing this challenge.

This next year looks to be even more monumental. As new resources are being announced at the national, State and local level, we are ready to respond. We have nearly 450 apartments and homes ready to go. Not just shovel ready, but shovel worthy.

As I said, we're feeling more hopeful – and we're looking forward to creating more housing for more of our neighbors.

Michael Monte, CEO



Residents and volunteers Regina O'Flaherty and Sal Millichamp have worked to create community at Laurentide Apartments in Burlington. (photo taken after both were fully vaccinated)

Volunteerism at Laurentide Apartments

"This will be the last place I plan to live. I intend to age in place. I'm committed to this community and I want to use my time here to help others," said Regina O'Flaherty.

She was referring to Laurentide Apartments, a new building in Burlington that is home to a wide variety of people in need of affordable housing. Residents moved in October 2019 to this new neighborhood called Cambrian Rise being developed with a new City park and overlooking the shores of Lake Champlain.

Inside amenities such as the community room and library encouraged residents to build connections. Sal Millichamp, an experienced social worker, and Regina, an immigrant from Germany with a background in assisted living, recognized the potential in these spaces.

Together they took the lead in organizing weekly coffee hours, meetings with property management,

and connecting with CHT's resident engagement staff to bring in community partners to organize educational workshops on things like composting as well as local artists to initiate a participatory art project. These events were just underway when the pandemic suspended all in-person inside gatherings.

A combination of rising unemployment, closing of school, and the Governor's *Stay at Home, Stay Safe* order exacerbated already stressful lives. Seemingly more than ever, there was a need for stronger supports.

In addition to programs that helped people cover their rent, other Covid-19 relief programs helped establish and fund the *Vermont Everyone Eats* program to provide free, nutritious meals to Vermonters affected by the pandemic. With staffing stretched and the need great, Sal and Regina stepped up at Laurentide, allowing CHT to host events at other sites, support more residents

as volunteers, and help feed many more people in need of this resource. With the backing from our partners and resident leaders like Sal and Regina, over 2,700 meals were distributed.

The pair at Laurentide also volunteered to keep the community art project going in coordination with local artists Corrine Yonce and Lydia Kern. It was fitting that in this time that people needed to stay home that the project involved people sharing what home means to them. Now the art piece hangs completed in the community room, awaiting a time we can celebrate the final design together.

Looking toward the future, we hope to engage more residents in community leadership opportunities, recognizing how together we can build more unity in our neighborhoods. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Meghan at mtedder@getahome.org.

Vermont Everyone Eats Benefits Residents and Local Businesses

Vermont Everyone Eats is funded by the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund and made possible through a grant provided by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to Southeastern Vermont Community Action. The program provides nutritious meals to Vermonters in need of food assistance, and is a stabilizing source of income for Vermont restaurants, farmers, and food producers. There are over 134 distribution sites statewide managed by 18 regional partners.



Grazers Restaurant

Survey Says!

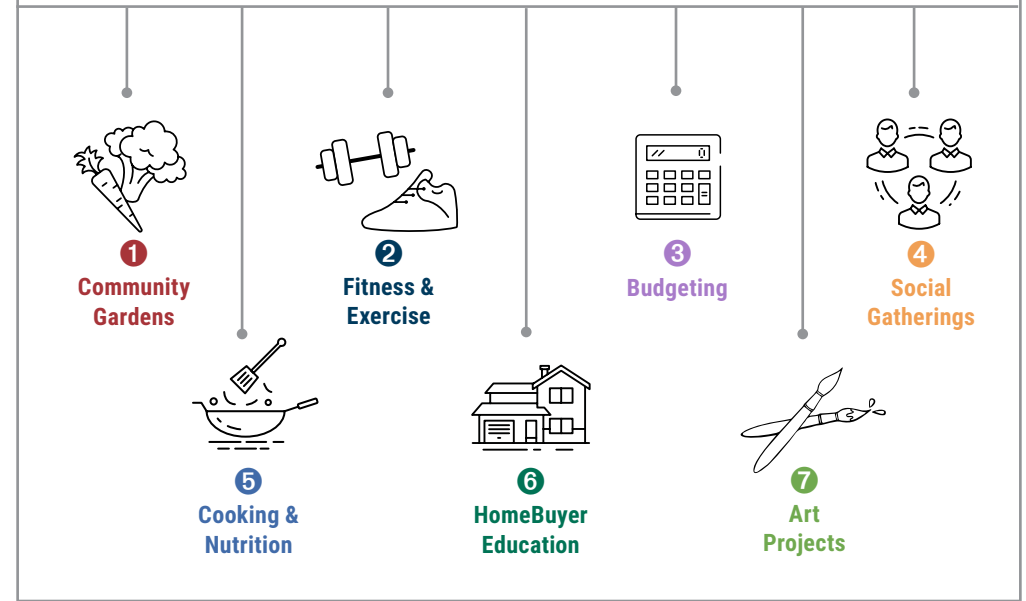
One of the differences with living in a Champlain Housing Trust apartment is the relationship we have with our residents. We conduct an annual survey to understand both how we're doing from our residents' perspective, but also to identify ways in which we can better engage with people living in our housing and what we can do to build community.

This year over 700 of our residents responded to the annual survey – a 40% jump from 2019. This information is shared with our Board of Directors and staff to inform our work supporting residents.

In January, we formed a Renter Feedback Committee comprised of eight residents representing communities across CHT's portfolio to look into these 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 specialist Meghan Tedder at mtedder@getahome.org.

TOP 7 ACTIVITY INTERESTS OF RESIDENTS IN 2020



91%

report overall satisfaction with property management as average or better than average

95%

rate overall satisfaction with maintenance staff as average or better than average

95%

say condition of their property as average or better than average

94%

report feeling safe in their apartment, building, parking area, and neighborhood





2021 Annual Meeting

Champlain Housing Trust's membership gathered on January 28, 2021 for its 37th Annual Meeting. Of course this year's event was certainly different – over Zoom instead of a celebration at the Hilton Hotel in Burlington – but it still served as a vital opportunity to complete the business of the organization and recognize the people who kept CHT moving forward through a challenging year.

CHT's response to Covid-19 was a special focus of this year's event, as highlighted in Board President **Bob Robbin's** report to the membership.

CHT's membership elected two new board members and reelected three others. **Antoinette Bennett-Jones** was elected by residents to represent them on the Board. General members **Naima Dennis**, **Jeff Smith** and **Sarah Robinson** were all elected as general members, and **Jessie Baker** as a public member.

The Annual Meeting also provides an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the changes of the past year. This included remembering the impact of long time social worker **Susan Ainsworth-Daniels**, who passed away unexpectedly last spring. Susan was incredibly dedicated to her clients and was beloved by her co-workers. To honor her legacy CHT has created Susan's Fund, which will support the creation of a social work internship at CHT. We have also named a newly-acquired building in Essex as Susan's Place in her memory.

This year's annual awards recognized three individuals who have long supported the work of CHT. **Patricia Fontaine** was awarded the Hilton Wick "Give Until it Feels Good" Award for Fundraising. Patricia has been a dedicated donor to CHT and has provided for us through her estate planning. **Robin Barnett** was named the Carole Pack Volunteer Award winner for her years of board service. Last but not least, **Ken Schatz** was recognized with the Tim McKenzie Award for Outstanding Contributions to Perpetually Affordable Housing for his career in public service supporting the most vulnerable.

The Annual Meeting allowed us to recognize the outstanding career of **Brenda Torpy**, who officially stepped down as CEO at the end of January. Recognitions for Brenda included a note in the Congressional Record, submitted by Senator **Bernie Sanders**, and a proclamation by Burlington Mayor **Miro Weinberger** declaring December 19th, Brenda Torpy Day in the City of Burlington. Lastly, new CEO **Michael Monte** announced that Tim Mackenzie Award will be retired, and the inaugural Brenda Torpy Award will be awarded next year.

As rewarding as this year's event was, it was no substitute for seeing everyone in person. So here's to looking forward to safely seeing each other in person at the 2022 Annual Meeting next January!

Welcome to our New Board Members!

Antoinette Bennett-Jones

Antoinette was elected by her fellow CHT residents to serve as a Champlain Housing Trust resident Board member. She is a member of the AmeriCorps Everybody Works team at ReSOURCE, where she serves as the Workforce Development and Outreach Coordinating Assistant.

Antoinette is a graduate of both Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Foodbank's Community Kitchen Academy. Antoinette currently lives at Avenue Apartments in Burlington with her two children whom she calls her "heroes". She was driven to join the CHT Board out of a desire to give back to the community and help those in need.



Naima Dennis

Naima was elected by the CHT membership to serve as a general member of the Board. She has lived in Burlington for nearly 30 years. She was an original members of the Thelma Maple Co-op in Burlington, where she benefitted first hand from the opportunities made available through CHT.

Currently, Naima works at the University of Vermont as the Senior Assistant Registrar for Technology. She is especially interested in CHT's work to combat racism in the housing industry, and ensuring that safe affordable housing is available to all. Naima lives in Burlington's New North End with her family.

Winooski Welcomes Butternut Station



In February the Winooski City Council voted unanimously to advance plans for CHT’s newest shared equity housing development: Butternut Station. Once completed, the project will add 20 three-bedroom affordable homes for sale on Mallets Bay Avenue in the “Onion City.”

Butternut Station adds a twist to already complex real estate development by employing New Market Tax Credits as part of the financing. This program incentivizes development in economically disadvantaged communities, allowing CHT to offer the homes at a more affordable price.

Mallets Bay Avenue is near Winooski’s

downtown and has been identified for redevelopment in coming years. Butternut Station will be a cornerstone of this growth, while providing the quality, permanently affordable housing for which CHT is known.

Once completed, each of Butternut Station’s 20 homes will feature three bedrooms, and have between 1200-1300 square feet of living area. Each rowhouse unit will include a rooftop balcony and front door access to the street, just steps from Winooski’s vibrant downtown.

Another aspect of the project is a focus on expanding homeownership opportunity for Black, Indigenous or People of Color. Winooski

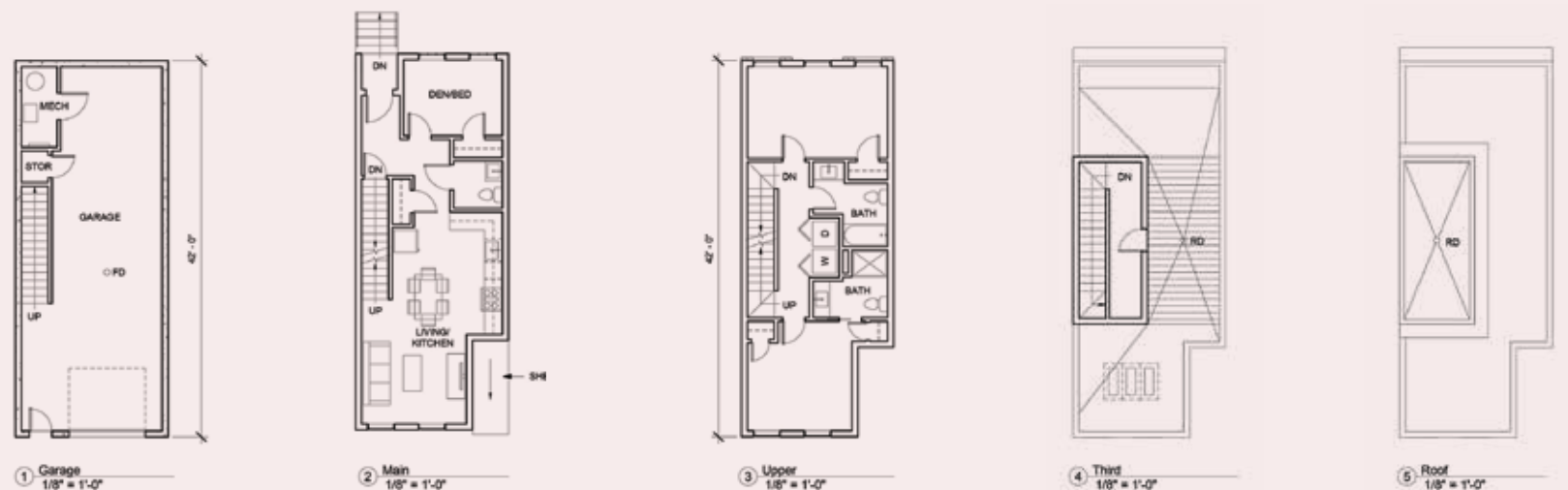
is Vermont’s most racially and ethnically diverse community and 15% of Winooski residents are foreign born. CHT will collaborate with the AALV (also known as Association of Africans Living in Vermont) and other BIPOC-led organizations to market Butternut Station homes, with the goal of increasing homeownership in a community with low rates of it.

The homes will be available for well under \$200,000, making them affordable to many households that would be otherwise priced out of Chittenden County’s expensive real estate market. At least 20% of the completed homes will be specifically made available to

households with incomes less than 80% of the area’s median income. The homes will be offered through CHT’s shared equity program, which has helped over 1,200 families secure homeownership since its founding in 1984.

CHT and the City of Winooski will continue to work together on the final development agreement and CHT is in the process of applying for the necessary permits needed for construction to begin. Once approved, construction could begin this summer in hopes of completion by July 2022.

Butternut Station Floor Plans



Renters! Have You Signed up for the Resident Portal?

Visit our new website at getahome.org.

Sign-up for easy online access to:

- Pay rent online
- Check your current balance
- Place a work order
- Be notified of upcoming events
- Receive updates about property maintenance and inspections
- Access info about utility providers

Things to Know:

- The email address you use to sign up will be the address connected to the portal unless you include a different one in the sign up email.
- You must have a bank account to pay rent on the Resident Portal.
- Only one email can be connected to the portal per household.
- If you forget your username or password, please email portal@getahome.org or call 802-861-7377 for a password reset.
- After submitting your information you will receive your login in 1-2 business days.



88 King Street
Burlington, VT 05401



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