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## **State grant of \$500,000 will make affordable housing more energy efficient**

By Timothy McQuiston

Heating should be cheaper next winter for 80 homes near Saint Michael's College in Colchester. A \$500,000 Vermont Community Development Program grant, announced by Governor Peter Shumlin Monday morning, will help lock-in their affordability by making them more energy efficient. The apartments are part of Winchester Place, a mixed-income development of 166 apartments owned in partnership by the Champlain Housing Trust and Housing Vermont. The long-term affordability of the homes was secured through the purchase of the land for about \$2 million. The land had been leased from Saint Mike's.

"Keeping these apartments affordable is a priority for us, and it's a Vermont-style, common-sense approach to preserve what we have," said Shumlin. "We can invest in energy efficiency and extend the affordability of these apartments much cheaper than we could ever replace them. At the same time, this redevelopment will put Vermonters to work."

Joining the Governor for the announcement was Vermont Treasurer Beth Pearce, who said, "Winchester Place is a great example of getting work done the Vermont way. Working together we can make real progress in accomplishing the affordable housing needs of Vermont. As a VHFA Board member I have seen first-hand the exceptional work of Champlain Housing Trust and Housing Vermont."

Pearce said it was a "win-win" for the residents, Housing Vermont, CHT and the state: "It's community development. It's affordable housing. It's a good project for the Treasurer's office."

The grant was awarded to the Town of Colchester to help fund the work at the property, which will include air sealing, adding insulation, replacing leaky windows and obsolete appliances, and other energy efficiency upgrades; improved storm water management and other site work; and creation of a playground and improved basketball court for the nearly 150 children living at the property.

"Because of the support of the State of Vermont, the Town of Colchester and all of the numerous other partners and funders on this effort, the families at Winchester Place will be able to continue to call Colchester home," said Nadine Scibek, chair of the Colchester Selectboard. "It is so important for our community to keep this housing affordable."

The redevelopment has also been assisted by the state with more than \$1 million from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. These funds are leveraging other sources to complete the project including the HOME program, state and federal tax credits, and NeighborWorks America. The Town of Colchester is also contributing additional funding to install LED lighting on site, which will cut energy use in half. Lastly, the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Burlington made a contribution to help fund the playground.

“Not only will this project mean that we can preserve and improve affordable housing in a very tight rental market, but it also provides more than 200 jobs in the construction trades and related industries,” said Kathy Beyer, Housing Vermont’s Vice President of Development.

“Winchester Place is a critical piece of CHT’s affordable housing in Chittenden County, and we’re looking forward to its next chapter,” added Brenda Torpy, CEO of the Champlain Housing Trust. “There’s such a need for housing in our region and across the state. Preserving Winchester ensures we’re not slipping backwards.”

The 28-year-old development was championed by the late Dudley Davis, president of Merchants Bank, who was instrumental in arranging financing for several affordable housing projects in the region. Approaching the end of its 40-year lease, Beyer said it was a good time to secure the future of Winchester Place.