Revitalizing the Rural Economy in Windham County: Housing and Conservation Investments

Since 1988, VHCB has made strategic investments in Windham County totaling $33.33 million in state and federal funding to revitalize towns through the creation, preservation, and rehabilitation of affordable housing and the conservation of farmland, recreational land, forestland, natural areas and historic properties. VHCB investments have leveraged a total of $180 million in federal, private, and local funds.

Creating and Preserving Affordable Housing
$23.29 million in VHCB housing funds has leveraged $162 million in federal, private, and local funds to develop 1,364 affordable homes in Windham County. Housing types vary from rental housing for families, elderly and disabled households to mobile home parks, shelters, and home-ownership. The Windham & Windsor Housing Trust, Groundworks, and Evernorth have used VHCB funding to invest in housing in Brattleboro, Guilford, Rockingham, Townshend, Dummerston, Dover, and Putney.

- With Coronavirus Relief funds awarded by VHCB, the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust purchased The Chalet in West Brattleboro, creating 27 permanent homes for households experiencing homelessness. Support services are provided by Groundworks.
- When flooding endangered elderly and disabled residents at Melrose Terrace, the Brattleboro Housing Authority and Evernorth partnered to build replacement housing, constructing 73 new homes at Red Clover Commons, with state and federal funds.
- At Putney Landing, WWHT and Evernorth built 18 new, energy efficient apartments around a central green. A biomass system provides heat and hot water.
- Groundworks Collaborative improved an existing shelter on Royal Road. Their new, 2-building campus on South Main will provide offices, program space, and a seasonal shelter for homeless individuals.
- 5 mobile home parks in 5 towns with 111 lots have been purchased and improved, giving residents a say in management decisions and upgrading essential park infrastructure to protect the housing equity of residents, many of whom have very low incomes.

Conserving Land, Supporting Agriculture
Conservation investments protecting 16,928 acres in Windham County total $10.04 million, leveraging an additional $18 million in federal, private, and locally raised funds. VHCB funding has helped to protect 43 natural area and recreational projects, 8 historic preservation projects, and 20 agricultural conservation projects. Federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service matches state funding almost 1:1 to conserve farmland.

- In partnership with the Windham Hill Pinnacle Association and the Pinnacle Mountain Association, VHCB has supported the acquisition and conservation of 2,700 acres with a trail system through 5 towns, including a 1,500-acre preserve used by schools, the public, and visitors to the area.
- Working with the Vermont Land Trust, VHCB and federal NRCS funds have been used to conserve 15 farms in Windham County ranging from dairy farms to diversified livestock farms and vegetable operations.
- Large conserved tracts include the Dover Town Forest (1,392 acres), Black Mountain (596 acres); Glebe Mountain in Windsor (3,469 acres), and the new Deer Run Preserve in Dummerston (914 acres).
- VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability program has provided business planning and technical assistance to 61 working lands enterprises in Windham County; 22 clients were assisted in accessing COVID relief funding; 16 clients received grants totaling $138,122 for dairy infrastructure, water quality, and on-farm improvements.
- Funding for general stores in Putney and Guilford, for the Latchis Theater in Brattleboro, Jamaica Town Hall, and Next Stage Arts in Putney has helped restore these historic buildings to serve their communities.
Recent Windham County Housing Developments (# homes) supported with VHCB, HOME, NHTF, CRF, and Housing Revenue Bond $$:

- Snow Block (23)
- Groundworks Royal Road Shelter (16 beds)
- Groundworks South Main facility (20 seasonal beds)
- Red Clover Commons I & II (73)
- Clark and Canal Street/Co-op (24)
- Great River Terrace (22)
- The Chalet (27)

Women’s Freedom Center shelters (3 sites)
- Putney Landing (18)
- Bellows Falls Garage (27)
- Algiers Family (17)