

FEBRUARY 26, 2014

GOOD MORNING AND THANK YOU FOR TAKING MY TESTIMONY.

MY NAME IS JIM LOVINSKY. I LIVE IN HARDWICK AND I AM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT LAMOILLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP. OUR OFFICE IS IN MORRISVILLE. FROM THERE WE SERVE LAMOILLE COUNTY AND HARDWICK. WE DEVELOP AND MANAGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTIES IN OUR SERVICE AREA. WHEN WE FINISH OUR CURRENT PROJECTS THIS SUMMER AND FALL WE WILL HAVE OVER 300 APARTMENTS PLUS COMMERCIAL SPACE AND A MOBILE HOME PARK IN OUR PORTFOLIO INCLUDING PROPERTIES IN HARDWICK, MORRISVILLE, JOHNSON, STOWE, AND JEFFERSONVILLE.

LAMOILLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP IS A SMALL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION. WE PARTNER WITH HOUSING VERMONT ON THE CONSTRUCTION PORTION OF MOST OF OUR DEVELOPMENTS AND WORK WITH OTHER PARTNERS ON THE FUNDING PORTIONS.

SOME OF THESE FUNDING PARTNERS INCLUDE:
VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION BOARD,
AGENCY OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT'S VCDP PROGRAM,
TAX CREDIT PROGRAMS,
VHFA AND OTHER LENDERS,
WEATHERIZATION,
AND VERMONT CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING.

WORKING TOGETHER WE MAKE AFFORDABLE HOUSING A REALITY FOR MANY VERMONTERS, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD.

LAST YEAR WITH HOUSING VERMONT WE PURCHASED TWO PRIVATELY OWNED PLACE BASED SECTION 8 SENIOR HOUSING PROPERTIES THAT WENT ON THE OPEN MARKET, ONE IN HARDWICK AND ONE IN MORRISVILLE. THE PURCHASE AND REHABILITATION OF THESE PROPERTIES WILL KEEP THEM AVAILABLE TO VERMONT SENIORS AS DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING INTO THE FUTURE WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT THEM BEING SOLD ON THE OPEN MARKET AND TAKEN OUT OF THE STATE'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING PORTFOLIO.

WITH THE HELP OF OUR FUNDING PARTNERS AND OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNER, HOUSING VERMONT, LAMOILLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP WAS ABLE TO COMPLETELY REHABILITATE LAMOILLE VIEW APARTMENTS IN MORRISVILLE, PRESERVING 25 UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND BRINGING THEM UP TO CURRENT OCCUPANCY STANDARDS, ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS INCLUDING THE ADDITION OF AN ELEVATOR AND ADD WEATHERIZATION AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES TO HELP WITH THEIR AFFORDABILITY IN THE LONG TERM.

WE ALSO LOCATED A LOCAL SASH OFFICE AT LAMOILLE VIEW. SASH IS A RELATIVELY NEW PROGRAM STARTED AT CATHEDRAL SQUARE IN BURLINGTON. SASH STANDS FOR SUPPORT AND SERVICES AT HOME. IT IS A MEDI-CARE FUNDED PILOT PROJECT TO HELP SENIORS LIVE LONGER, HEALTHIER LIVE AND STAY IN THEIR OWN HOMES OR APARTMENTS WHILE LOWERING HEALTH CARE COSTS. THE PROGRAM IS OPEN TO PROPERTY RESIDENTS AS WELL AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT LARGE. AT LAMOILLE VIEW WE HAVE A FULL TIME SASH COORDINATOR SUPPORTED BY A WELLNESS NURSE AND A LOCAL SUPPORT TEAM.

IN HARDWICK WE PURCHASED A SIMILAR PROPERTY IN THE SAME POSITION – BEING LISTED ON THE OPEN MARKET AND IN DANGER OF BEING TAKEN OUT OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PORTFOLIO. INSTEAD, WE PRESERVED THE SECTION 8 HOUSING VOUCHERS AND ARE IN THE PROCESS OF REHABILITATING THE PROPERTY. MAPLE STREET APARTMENTS IS HOME TO 16 RESIDENTS IN 14 APARTMENTS. THIS PROPERTY HAS NOT HAD ANY WORK DONE TO IT SINCE 1980 SO YOU CAN IMAGINE THE CONDITION IT WAS IN. THE BUILDINGS ARE BEING UPGRADED WITH A SPRINKLER SYSTEM AND NEW FIRE ALARM SYSTEM. ENERGY UPGRADES INCLUDE WINDOWS, INSULATION, ROOFING AND SIDING AND A WOOD PELLET BOILER TO KEEP HEATING PRICES DOWN WHILE PROVIDING NICE WARM LIVING SPACES FOR THE RESIDENTS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN SENIOR HOUSING. LAST WINTER ONE OF THE BOILERS QUIT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HEATING SEASON AND HAD TO BE REPAIRED WITH USED PARTS TO KEEP IT GOING.

TWO OF OUR THREE PROJECTS ARE SENIOR HOUSING. SENIOR HOUSING AND MIXED HOUSING WHERE SENIORS ARE PART OF THE MIX WILL CONTINUE TO BECOME MORE CRITICAL AS OUR VERMONT POPULATION CONTINUES TO AGE.

GOING BACK TO MORRISVILLE, WE PURCHASED THE ARTHUR'S DEPARTMENT STORE WHICH CLOSED SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THIS SITE CONSISTED OF 3 HISTORIC BUILDING WITH COMMERCIAL FIRST FLOOR SPACE AND TWO FLOORS OF ABANDONED APARTMENTS THAT HAD NOT BEEN OCCUPIED SINCE THE 1970'S AND 80'S. BEFORE WE COULD START THE REHABILITATION WE HAD TO WORK WITH THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES AS THE PROPERTY WAS IDENTIFIED AS A BROWNFIELD SITE THAT NEEDED REMEDIATION PRIOR TO DEVELOPMENT. THE CLEANUP TOOK PLACE OVER THE SUMMER. THE CONSTRUCTION PORTION OF THE PROJECT BEGAN THIS PAST FALL AND IS CLOSING IN ON 50% COMPLETE WITH OCCUPANCY SLATED FOR AUGUST. WE HAVE THE TWO COMMERCIAL TENANTS CLOSE TO SIGNING LETTERS OF INTENT AND ARE ALREADY TAKING APPLICATIONS FOR THE RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS.

BESIDES TWO NEW COMMERCIAL SPACES THE PROJECT WILL ADD 18 NEW APARTMENTS TO HELP WITH THE REVITALIZATION OF A BEAUTIFUL VERMONT DOWNTOWN.

MOST OF OUR PROPERTIES ARE LOCATED IN OR NEAR DOWNTOWNS. THIS IS STRATEGIC IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWNS WHERE PEOPLE CAN WORK AND LIVE IN THE SAME AREA AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE AMMENITIES THAT DOWNTOWNS ALLOW FOR. THESE 3 PROJECTS ALL ALLOW RESIDENTS TO ACCESS SHOPPING, SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES, HEALTH CARE AND OTHER SERVICES WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OR BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

ANOTHER STRATEGIC AREA OF CONCERN FOR US IS LONG-TERM AFFORABILITY WITH REGARD TO ENERGY USASGE. VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION BOARD HAS LED THE WAY IN DEVELOPING DEEP ENERGY RETROFIT STANDARDS FOR MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING THAT GO BEYOND REGULAR ENERGY CODES TO PROVIDE FOR MORE ENERGY SAVINGS THROUGH SHELL MEASURES AND CONVERSION TO ALTERNATIVES LIKE WOOD PELLET BOILERS AND PV SOLAR. THIS WORK IS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL AS WE RE-INVEST IN OLDER HOUSING STOCK TO KEEP IT AFFORDABLE AND ALSO TO REDUCE OUR IMPORTS OF FUELS TO KEEP OUR ENERGY DOLLARS HERE IN VERMONT.

AS A LANDLORD, LHP IS WORKING WITH LOCAL SERVICE AGENCIES TO “IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF HOUSING AND THE QUALITY OF TENANTS” IN THE AREAS WE SERVE. AS YOU KNOW HOMELESSNESS AND THE NEED TO HELP PEOPLE TRANSITION FROM HOMELESSNESS, UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, AND INCARCERATION IS PUTTING A STRAIN ON OUR STATE RESOURCES. WE WILL PROVIDE AT LEAST ONE TRANSITIONAL APARTMENT AT ARTHURS. THIS GROUP OF LOCAL PARTNERS – INCLUDING AHS, CAP AGENCIES, UNITED WAY, CORRECTIONS, LAMOILLE FAMILY CENTER, LARAWAY, LOCAL CLERGY AND OTHERS – IS WORKING TO STRENGTHEN EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS AND BUILD NEW ONES IN ORDER TO SOLVE OUR PRESSING LOCAL HOUSING ISSUES. WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO PROVIDE A PROVEN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CALLED “READY 2 RENT” TO HELP PEOPLE BECOME MORE RESPONSIBLE TENANTS AND KNOW HOW TO WORK WITH LANDLORDS TO SOLVE HOUSING ISSUES. IN THE FALL WE WILL HOST AN EVENT FOR LANDLORDS TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORLD IN ORDER TO GET THE HELP THEY NEED WHEN THINGS GO WRONG WITH TENANTS. TOGETHER WE HOPE TO BUILD SUCCESSFUL LANDLORD / TENANT RELATIONSHIPS. AGAIN, VHCB HAS BEEN SUPPORTIVE IN HELPING TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN THESE LOCAL INITIATIVES.

THIS YEAR, THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS IN VERMONT HAS BEEN CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS. VHCB HAS BEEN, AND CONTINUES TO BE, THE STRONG CENTRAL LEADER, KEEPING US POINTED TOWARDS TRUE NORTH, ON TASK AND MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION. BEYOND PROJCT FUNDING THEY PROVIDE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, TECHNICAL SUPPORT, AND MAKE SURE THAT WE AS LOCAL LEADERS GET TOGETHER AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR TO COMPARE NOTES, CELEBRATE OUR OWN SUCCESS STORIES, AND HELP EACH OTHER TO PROBLEM SOLVE. THIS NETWORK IS SUCCESSFUL, EFFICIENT, AND EFFECTIVE AROUND THE STATE BECAUSE OF THE STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AND UNSELFISH DEDICATION OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO ARE WORKING TO PROVIDE SAFE, DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO VERMONTERS ALL ACROSS THE STATE.

I AM HONORED TO BE A PART OF THIS NETWORK AND HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS AND FEEL THAT YOU SHARE IN OUR SUCCESSES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. I AM HAPPY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.