

## MAKE THE PROMISE OF ACT 186 A REALITY. FUND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COSTS FOR VERMONTERS WITH I/DD.

Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) historically have been segregated in institutional settings, limiting their choices and independence. The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Supreme Court Olmstead decision affirm the right of individuals with I/DD to live in community-based settings. Progress in creating housing options has been slow, so the Federal Government required all states to comply with Medicaid “Settings Rules” by March 2023. In response to this, The Vermont State Legislature created Act 186 in 2022, which funded pilot planning grants aimed to explore new housing options. Grantees were tasked with developing innovative implementation plans while adhering to federal laws and regulations.

### REALITY CHECK: A PLAN WITHOUT FUNDING IS JUST A PLAN

Champlain Housing Trust (CHT), together with the Howard Center, Champlain Community Services, adults with I/DD, families, and other community members, were awarded one of three planning grants. Their resulting model is a 10-unit building complete with architectural designs and implementation and operating instructions for interdependent, supported housing. The property, referred to as St. Paul Street Supportive Housing, consists of traditional, independent affordable apartment-living with community spaces for residents, friends, and neighbors to gather in accessible downtown Burlington.

Models like St. Paul Street are essential for adults with I/DD because it allows them to access Medicaid’s Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) which prioritize choice, self-determination, and inclusion. However, the model will not come to fruition without funding for capital costs associated with development and rehabilitation of the building. **Increased investment in housing resources is needed to provide safe, affordable, and integrated living options for adults with I/DD.**

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Without funding to develop the project, tax dollars invested in planning will not have produced anything: Vermonters with I/DD will continue to lack appropriate housing. In addition, failure to fully fund these projects puts Vermont in jeopardy of complying with the Medicaid Settings Rule and losing valuable federal funding to support adults with I/DD.

Most importantly, **adults with I/DD are entitled to equal housing.** That means that resources need to be made available in a manner required to accommodate their needs: including developing larger units and larger common areas which are more expensive. More room is critical for tenants with I/DD to navigate wheelchairs/other assistive devices, and accommodate challenges related to personal space awareness. Finally, because isolation and loneliness is so common among people with disabilities, it is critical to have space to gather with friends and family. The cost of the additional space required should not be held against them.

### Ask for Legislators:

- **Increased Capital Funding:** Provide additional funding for affordable housing construction, including costs for larger units and common spaces essential for adults with I/DD.
- **Support Innovative Models:** Address funding gaps in traditional affordable housing programs that hinder projects from prioritizing accessibility and inclusion.

## SUPPORTED PEER RESIDENCE AT ST. PAUL STREET: AN OVERVIEW

**Location:** Downtown Burlington, Vermont

**Purpose:** Affordable, permanent housing with individualized support services for adults with I/DD

**Design:** Developed with input from individuals with I/DD, the model prioritizes accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability

### Key Features:

- **Individualized Housing:** Each tenant will have a private apartment with a lease.
- **Community Inclusion:** Shared common spaces foster community engagement and reduce social isolation<sup>1</sup>.
- **Accessibility:** Larger units and common areas accommodate wheelchairs and provide space for tenants navigating personal space and sensory challenges.

### Community Benefits:

- **Independence and Dignity:** Supports tenants to live independently while receiving on-site services tailored to their needs.
- **Social Fulfillment:** Addresses social isolation through shared spaces for gathering, meals, and activities.
- **Proximity to Resources:** Located near parks, medical care, public transit, shopping, and educational institutions.

### Funding and Budget:

- **Total Cost:** \$6,735,719 for renovation of a 4,200 sq. ft. building and construction of a 6,600 sq. ft. addition.
- **Funding Sources Sought:**
  - Sustainable federal, state, and local funding.
  - Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP), Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), and Burlington Housing Trust Fund (BHTF).
- **Challenges to Development**
  - Larger spaces required for accessibility and community-building increase costs.
  - The project's small scale, preferred by adults with I/DD and an evidence-based best practice, limits eligibility for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

**Conclusion:** The Supportive Housing at St. Paul Street project demonstrates an innovative and inclusive approach to housing for adults with I/DD. By addressing accessibility, social inclusion, and affordability, this model can set a precedent for future developments while meeting the unique needs of this population. Legislative support is critical to ensure its success and sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Surgeon General declared social isolation a public health epidemic in 2023, disproportionately affecting adults with disabilities