



**RuralEdge**  
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Vermont Housing and Conservation  
Coalition Day at the Legislature  
Senate Institutions Committee

14 February 2025

*Strengthening Northeast Kingdom Communities, one home at a time.*

*RuralEdge envisions Northeast Kingdom communities where every individual can live in stable, affordable housing with access to the services they need to live a healthy and prosperous life.*

## Organizational History



- ▶ RuralEdge began in 1986 as the Gilman Housing Trust with a focus on providing housing for families, seniors, and those with disabilities. Its first development was Gilman Senior Housing, a restoration of the Manager's House associated with the Gilman Mill. The project still is in RuralEdge's portfolio today, continuing to serve the residents of Gilman.
- ▶ RuralEdge is a non-profit housing and community-development corporation that focuses on affordability. The corporation has served the Northeast Kingdom for 39 years with their main focus being to strengthen homes and communities in and around the Northeast Kingdom.
- ▶ In 1998, RuralEdge became a Chartered Member of the NeighborWorks America Network. NeighborWorks Organizations are held to the highest standards and are intensely monitored and assessed every three years for continued membership.
- ▶ RuralEdge is governed by a Board that includes representation from the public, private and governmental sectors and also includes resident representation.





## To our rural service area, VHCB funding brings...

- ▶ A diverse portfolio of nearly 1,000 perpetually affordable units by the end of 2025 spanning the Northeast Kingdom.
- ▶ A robust pipeline of new projects including both acquisitions and new construction to best serve the housing needs of the Northeast Kingdom, and additional funding for VHCB ensures that those projects move forward.
- ▶ Work with community partners and municipalities to meet the needs of residents throughout the Northeast Kingdom and develop properties that are compatible with local plans, market demand and wishes.
- ▶ Construction projects that bring millions of dollars of economic development to communities, businesses and workers throughout the region.
- ▶ A real estate portfolio that contributes over \$700,000 annually to local and school taxes in the Northeast Kingdom.
- ▶ Expertise and guidance to community partners, municipalities, and private developers regarding real estate development projects.
- ▶ Housing for the most vulnerable residents of the region. 43% of the households we serve moved in from homelessness and about 70% of our residents have household incomes less than \$20,000 annually.

# New Developments and New Units... at Newport Crossing

- 40 new rental units on three sites in both Newport City and Newport Town including redevelopment of the former convent at the Sacred Heart site.
- Remediation of two brownfield sites.
- Mixed-income targeting with 14 subsidized units of which 12 are for households moving from homelessness.
- Providing for diverse household composition with one-, two- and three-bedroom units.
- Community rooms as well as offices onsite for SASH and resident services.
- Recreational space and community gardens... and great views.



# Four Founders Circle Newport, Vermont

► Constructed beginning in 1951, the former Sacred Heart School and Convent sat vacant and on the market for the better part of the last generation.

► While many looked at the property, with its combined 65,000 square feet of buildings on an 8.5-acre, flat site overlooking Lake Memphremagog adjacent to existing neighborhoods and linked to the downtown by sidewalk, with municipal water and sewer on site, those interested in redevelopment were deterred.

► The challenges - apart from having to negotiate with nuns - the entire site was considered a brownfield - two underground storage tanks had been removed 25 years ago but nothing was known about what happened to the contaminated soils. Both buildings had extensive asbestos issues with remediation costs estimated at over \$1,000,000 - and the buildings, including the convent which was built in 1969, were considered historic.





# What the Communities Wanted and Needed

- ▶ Newport City wanted to create a new neighborhood that served a variety of income levels and was consistent with their town plan. They expressed a desire for as many new units as possible and cited RuralEdge's high quality developments as the "type of new construction they want to see"
- ▶ Newport Town wanted to see dilapidated eyesores replaced by new efficient properties that complemented their town and addressed contaminated sites.
- ▶ Both communities wanted a range of unit sizes and affordability with places that provide safe places for families.
- ▶ Without a shelter in Orleans County, having units for people experiencing homelessness was also a priority.

# A Plan for the Future - A New Newport Neighborhood



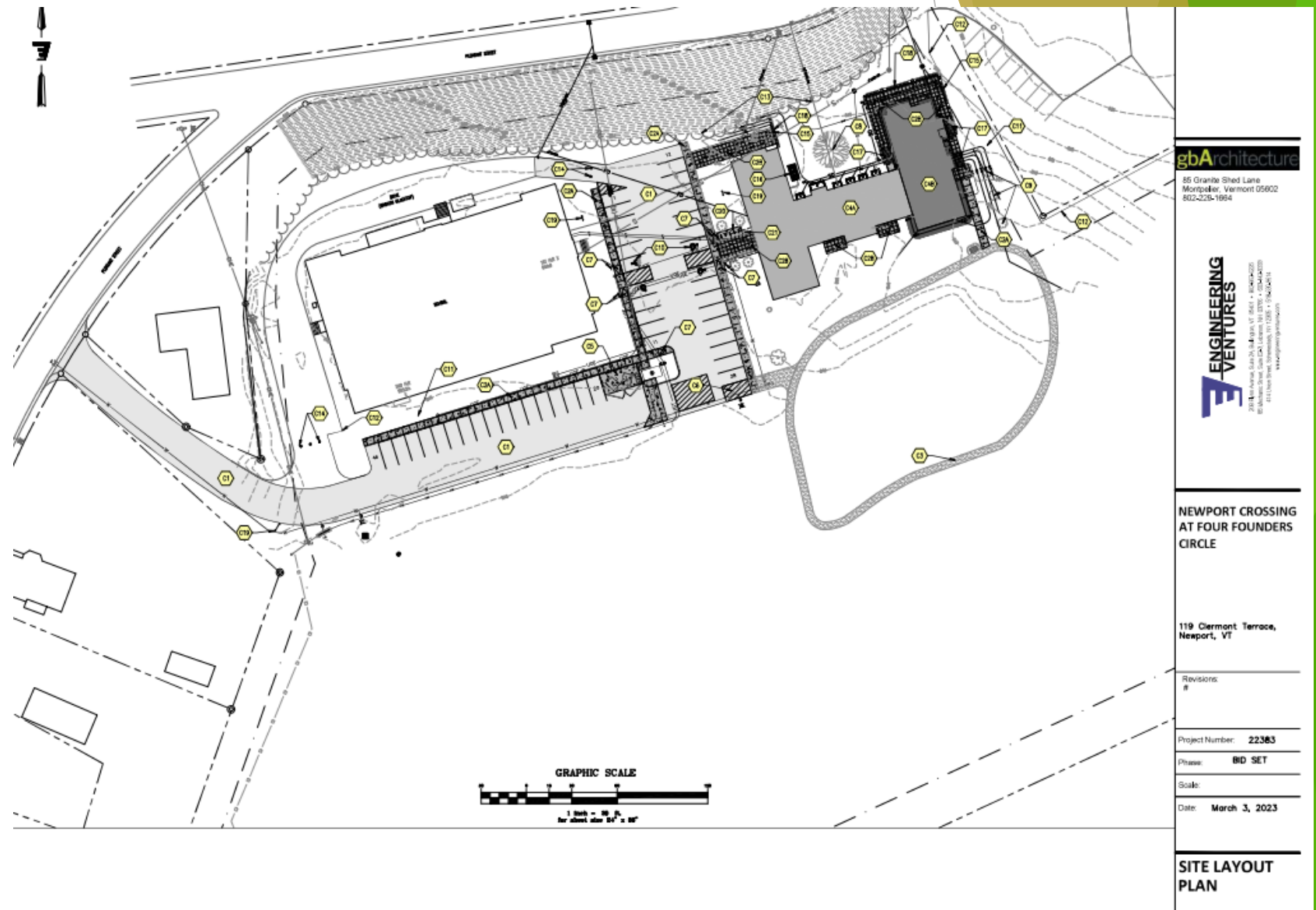
# Permitted and under construction in November 2024 as a PUD

## Planned Unit Development Allowed:

- Increased Density
- Shared Parking
- Municipal takeover of roads and infrastructure
- Flexibility with setbacks
- Helps with costs - infrastructure costs are captured and planned for up front

## What the Community Gained:

- Desperately needed net new units - both rental and homeownership
- Certainty about what the future would look like at the site.







## What Will the Future Look Like?

While the first and second phases, which include the development of 24 shared-equity condominiums in the former Sacred Heart School have been funded, VHCB funding is imperative to make sure that future phases of this development - which could add up to 120 additional units- are realized.

We are pleased to see that the Governor has recommended full statutory funding of VHCB in his budget recommendation, but funding at that level is not sufficient to ensure that this work that we, and our partner organizations across the State have begun continues.

We have worked with the community to create a vision - to bring an abandoned, forgotten space back to life and add a total of up to 170 new units to Newport City. The site has been acquired, the Planned Unit Development approved, brownfield remediation is complete, and new infrastructure is in the process of being installed. This investment can support additional new units which won't have the costs associated with site acquisition and development. These units won't be built however without full statutory and one time funding for VHCB.