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Governor Douglas announces \$630,000 in grants for five Vermont communities

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Governor Jim Douglas today awarded more than \$630,000 in Community Development Block Grants to South Burlington, Montpelier, Vergennes, Georgia and Bristol. At a ceremony at the American Legion Post 14 in Vergennes, the Governor announced funding for an affordable housing project for the elderly, as well as money for improvements to make the Georgia and Bristol municipal buildings handicapped accessible.

“This project will provide much-needed housing for seniors in Vergennes, with on-site services and easy access to nearby services and the community,” Governor Douglas said. “These kinds of projects are an important part of Vermont’s housing stock, particularly as more of our population seeks to remain in their communities as they age.” (*See list below*)

The \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant will be given to the City of Vergennes, then loaned to Housing Vermont, which will construct the new building and infrastructure improvements that together total nearly \$6 million on the 12-acre site. The building will have 20 one-bedroom units and 5 two-bedroom units, and will also feature a common area; community kitchen; private examination rooms; a “meals on wheels” storage area; and a business office for a part time resident service coordinator.

This project is part of a planned development that also includes the initial permitting of a new daycare center and additional residential development proposed for the future. Five of the units are market rate; the remaining 20 will be affordable housing. In addition to connecting to the city water and sewer systems and construction of a storm water treatment system, the site work will also include new sidewalks that extend to Monkton Road; pedestrian pathways that connect to city sidewalks; parking; and landscaping. This site is conveniently located within walking distance of downtown Vergennes and will provide seniors with access to many amenities, social opportunities and community services.

Another grant of \$17,500 will be used by the City of Montpelier to study the capacity of the former Senior Center at 58 Barre Street, which was damaged in a December fire, and the existing municipal Recreation Center at 55 Barre Street, for their respective uses. In addition, the feasibility of adding senior housing in the 58 Barre Street Senior Center building will be studied.

“Both of these buildings are presently underutilized and are extremely expensive to heat due to the inefficiency of the energy systems and the poorly insulated building envelopes,” the Governor remarked. “This analysis will be helpful as residents of Montpelier contemplate how these important services will be provided in the future.”

And two towns, Bristol and Georgia, received grants of \$50,000 and \$32,885 to make their municipal buildings handicapped accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“Built in 1885, Holley Hall serves as both the Town of Bristol’s town hall and town offices and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places,” the Governor said. “This historic building is a vital part of civic and cultural life in Bristol.”

The first floor of the building, which also hosts town meetings, public hearings, recreational programs, performing arts and other events, will be completely renovated to accommodate the town offices and will include a new vault, electrical upgrades, and energy improvements. The second floor – a large auditorium – will be made ADA accessible; its floor will be completely renovated and restored; the roof system and balcony will be repaired; and the doors, windows and the bell tower will be weatherized.

The Town of Georgia will receive \$32,885 to help pay for handicapped accessibility modifications to the Georgia Town Office, which is the town’s meeting space as well as its public records repository featuring a vault in the basement.

“These funds will help install a lift to make the building handicapped accessible to both floors, and complete other improvements to ensure that the bathroom, parking lots, entry ways, and other features of the building are ADA compliant, including way-finding signage; changing handrails; and reconfiguring parking spaces to accommodate side-loading vans,” Governor Douglas said.

In February, Douglas presented a \$30,000 grant to officials from the City of South Burlington to fund preliminary work on a new Burlington Aviation Technical Training Center.

Vermont receives about \$7 million annually in federal CDBG funds, which are used principally to benefit persons of low and moderate income. The state awards the competitive grants based on recommendations of the Vermont Community Development Board and approval of Commerce and Community Development Secretary Kevin Dorn.

“These grants are important because they leverage other financial resources and help address critical needs in our communities,” the Governor remarked. “The \$630,385 we are awarding will leverage more than \$6.4 million in other funds from private and public sources.”

For information about the Vermont Community Development Program, please see the Agency of Commerce and Community Development website at:

<http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/VCDP/index.htm>