

West Rutland School Is Model Of Energy Efficiency

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Nina Keck, Produced by Lynne McCre



VPR/Nina Keck

Elisabeth Kulas of the Housing Trust of Rutland County stands in front of the newly opened Stanislaus School Apartments.

(Host) Senator Bernie Sanders was in West Rutland Friday to celebrate the rebirth of a historic elementary school into affordable, energy efficient housing.

As VPR's Nina Keck reports, Sanders calls the \$4.3 million dollar redevelopment project a model for the nation.

(Keck) West Rutland's Stanislaus School was built in 1924. By the late 1970s, however, the stately red brick building and the convent next door sat empty and unused. An effort to turn the school into condominiums failed.

But Elisabeth Kulas, Executive Director of the Housing Trust of Rutland County, saw potential.

(Kulas) "Schools are actually really conducive for redevelopment for housing. Because the classrooms are pretty easy for the person walking down the street to envision as an apartment. And they're large enough that you can get a sufficient number of units in them."

(Keck) To take advantage of every possible funding source, Kulas needed to create affordable and energy efficient apartments without harming the historic beauty of the building. Senator Sanders helped secure funding from the department of energy.

(Sanders) "You're taking what was an eye sore - we're now converting it into desperately needed affordable housing. And on top of that we're doing some of the most exciting energy efficiency work in the entire United States of America."

(Keck) Project officials say they reduced the property's carbon footprint 80% by installing solar panels on the roof.

You can't see from the road because of the building's historic brick façade. They beefed up insulation, used more energy efficient lighting, installed a wood pellet boiler and put in more energy efficient windows - but only on the back and sides of the building to preserve the historic paned windows along the front.

(Sanders) "When West Rutland does this, you can bet I will be telling the rest of the country about this project because this is the future."

(Keck) Elisabeth Kulas says her organization already plans to use some of what they learned on a new project in Brandon next spring.

For VPR news, I'm Nina Keck in West Rutland.