Celebrating a Life Well Lived

Jesse Watkins
1934-2020
Dear Friends,

In a normal year, we would celebrate with our residents during potlucks and picnics, outings and events, boundless opportunities to learn and grow together. This year we couldn’t set the tables, chat on the couch together, or see each other’s smiles behind the masks. Nonetheless we remained connected.

In fact, what emerged from the quiet was a newfound sense of community — and ultimately even stronger connections — as we doubled down in caring for one another and realized how much we depend on each other.

We received an outpouring of support from donors, partners, government agencies and friends, residents and families. This mutual aid society uplifted the work of our amazing staff, who rose to challenges that seemed to change daily and never skipped a beat in adapting to meet them. They kept our residents safe, they kept themselves safe, and they kept our communities strong and connected, all the while staying on track with their “pre-pandemic” workload.

We were fortunate to experience just 12 cases of COVID among our more than 1,300 residents. One family member whose mother was stricken with the disease reached out to praise and comfort our staff, recognizing their heroic work:

Thank you. This is not your fault, as I am grateful for you. You have been there every single day to take care of my most precious gift, my mother. Thank you for your compassion. I hear the exhaustion in your voices.... I am so grateful for you.”

Through it all, we stayed the course, ensuring our pre-pandemic work did not get lost in the COVID shuffle. Construction and lease-up of Juniper House, our newest housing community for adults 55+, continued unabated. We partnered with ANEW Place to create low-barrier, COVID-safe housing for people experiencing homelessness, transformed Independence Place to serve participants in ANEW’s transitional housing program, launched an anti-racism initiative and committed to that important work, and so much more.

Thank you for being with us this year across the pandemic divide. We feel connected to each of you, the work you are doing, the care you are providing, the love and goodwill you are sending. We are so proud and grateful to have you by our side.
## Cathedral Square by the Numbers

(December 2020 Snapshot)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Communities</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>1,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are low income or very low</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income as defined by HUD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive rent subsidies</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or other type of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduced rent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are handicapped or disabled</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were homeless before coming</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Cathedral Square</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households are on</td>
<td>1,300+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the wait list for Cathedral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outrage in 2020 at the murder of George Floyd and others at the hands of police sparked a long-overdue awakening to racial injustice and calls to dismantle systemic racism. We at Cathedral Square shared this outrage and immediately committed to take action, recognizing there surely was more we could do to assess and address unrecognized racism within our own organization.

We drafted a plan of action and created an Anti-Racism Committee in June 2020 to examine our policies and procedures, to plan anti-racism education and training for staff and residents, and to develop goals and a timeline for reaching them. The following month, we joined 30+ organizations and agencies in signing on to the City of Burlington’s declaration that racism is a public health emergency — an issue the pandemic brought into sharp focus.

Our seven-staff-member Anti-Racism Committee started by reviewing our current staff makeup (13.6% non-white). By year’s end we had examined our housing and job applications, reviewed our job descriptions and hiring procedures with Human Resources, created a list of people and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) organizations that HR now notifies directly when we have key job openings, made recommendations that were incorporated into the 2021-2023 Cathedral Square Strategic Plan, and successfully applied for a grant to cover the cost of professional staff training in implicit bias and anti-racism.

We will continue to examine our policies and priorities through a racial-justice lens to ensure that our organization and our work proceed with racial justice and equity at top of mind.

We recognize that this is a process and that it will never be finished. We also recognize that we may make mistakes as we move forward, but when that happens we will correct our course and continue forging ahead. We are committed to doing our part to remedy the scourge of racism and to advance people of color within our organization.
**All COVID, All the Time**

By the time the first COVID-19 case was reported in March, Cathedral Square and SASH* (Support and Services at Home) leaders had been meeting for weeks — and several times a week — to prepare for what was to come.

We developed comprehensive policies, phasing protocols, educational handouts and other materials that served as a model for other organizations and even the state of Vermont. Meanwhile, SASH’s statewide reach and ability to use data to target high-risk individuals proved invaluable in helping to prevent and contain the virus. Weekly COVID webinars with statewide SASH staff kept everyone informed and ensured consistent outreach and interventions.

From the beginning, Cathedral Square has played a leadership role in the development of local and state policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We actively participate in the Burlington Senior Provider Group, weekly Vermont Department of Health COVID-response meetings, Vermont Housing & Conservation Group roundtable discussions, among others.

We take pride in having successfully pushing for more antigen testing at long-term care facilities and changing guidelines that overly restricted “all people 65 and over” to instead apply to people 65 and older with pre-existing conditions. We continue to stand up for policies that help residents without overly burdening them.

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**Juniper House Prepares to Open**

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, construction crews have come through with flying colors in preparing Juniper House to welcome its first residents in late March 2021.

Part of the Cambrian Rise neighborhood being developed just off North Avenue in Burlington, Juniper House features 70 mixed-income apartments, from affordable to market rate, for adults ages 55+. Like other Cathedral Square communities, it offers a variety of amenities, including free access to SASH® services and programming. We look forward to hosting a grand opening celebration soon!
A New Partnership with ANEW Place

Last spring we learned that Lund would no longer be leasing Independence Place, part of the three-building, multi-generational housing community McAuley Square in Burlington. Since opening its doors in 2001, it had provided seven apartments for young parents and their dependent children involved in a Lund parenting program.

Enter ANEW Place, a Burlington-based nonprofit that helps adults living without a home gain the skills and confidence they need to get on solid footing and end the cycle of homelessness.

Cathedral Square invited the organization to assume the former Lund space and, with the help of Cathedral Square staff volunteers, worked quickly to refresh the building and turn it over to ANEW Place on July 1.

Residents participate in ANEW Place’s transitional housing program and receive case-management services, including financial coaching, and attend rental classes offered through the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity.

Creating a Low-Border Facility — in Record Time

Just two months after the transition at Independence Place, Cathedral Square jumped in to help ANEW Place with another project, one we at first thought to be impossible: to re-purpose the Champlain Inn motel on Shelburne Street in Burlington into a COVID-safe, low barrier facility to house 50 individuals who had been living temporarily at a South Burlington hotel — and to have it ready for move-ins by December 31.

This unanticipated project was a direct result of the pandemic and the State of Vermont’s call for proposals for COVID-safe housing for people who were experiencing homelessness before and during the pandemic.

We recruited an architect and general contractor to inspect the property and develop the scope of work and an estimate, then developed the budget and helped ANEW Place secure a $2.5 million grant from the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board. On Friday, Oct. 23 — the day after the neighborhood appeal period ended — ANEW Place closed on the property. Renovations began at 7:30 a.m. the following Monday.

With everyone working full throttle, the necessary work — a new electrical system, new egress windows, two ADA units, an upgraded fire panel, fresh paint and more — wrapped up in under six weeks. We appreciate Duncan • Wisniewski Architecture and Wright & Morrissey for stepping up to the challenge and meeting it.

We continue to support ANEW Place in its role as owner and manager of the facility through an asset-management agreement, by which we review the financials and help with capital-needs planning and implementation.
The pandemic did nothing to slow progress on our work with CIDER (Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources) to bring affordable, service-enriched housing for older adults to the Champlain Islands.

We ended 2020 with site control of land and septic capacity secured in a prime South Hero village location, and the enthusiastic support of local residents and officials. The project is now in the design stage as we nail down the final pieces of the funding puzzle. We anticipate having all permits in hand by August 2021 and starting construction the following month.

The project, named Bayview Crossing in homage to a railroad that once crossed the land and its location by Keeler Bay, will provide 30 independent-living apartments for older adults as well as office space for CIDER.

It will be located in the village center, next to the Champlain Islands Health Center, the Worthen Library and a café. The post office and town offices are just a short walk away.

Well known and highly regarded by locals, CIDER embarked on an ambitious campaign to raise $250,000 for the project during the summer. People were so eager to help — so much so that CIDER exceeded that goal. As a result, the organization will be able to purchase its office condo debt free, which will support CIDER’s long-term sustainability.

Renovations to historic Ruggles House in Burlington’s Hill Section were completed this year. The building is back in tip-top shape with a new roof and porch and several new windows. Ruggles offers 13 efficiencies and two one-bedroom apartments for adults 55 and older. Residents share the main living room, dining room and kitchen.
SASH: Leading the Way in COVID Response

SASH’s immediate and robust response to the COVID-19 outbreak — first out with comprehensive policies, data-informed outreach, and phasing protocols — helped guide Vermont’s work in this area as the state geared up to meet the COVID challenge.

Weekly COVID webinars with statewide SASH staff started in March and continue today. Administrative staff worked overtime to ensure SASH teams received recommended phased workflow protocols and timely and accurate information to share with participants. As always, the goal was to ensure consistency through all SASH panels (i.e., groups of participants).

SASH remains embedded in a number of COVID policy-making groups at the state level — including the Vaccine Implementation Advisory Group, whose members include Casey Doerner, SASH wellness nurse lead — and is maintaining data on cases, testing and vaccinations. Staff also are developing materials and planning for the time — and it is coming! — when in-person activities will be the norm once again.

SASH Participants Show Improvements in Blood Pressure and a Decline in the Number of Emergency Room Visits

It’s a fact: Blood pressure increases as we age. In the U.S., adults over 40 can expect their systolic blood pressure to increase about 7 mmHg per decade, and more than 75% of those over age 70 will have dangerously high blood pressure (Stage 1 or Stage 2 hypertension).

SASH intervenes to turn these statistics on their head — and a December 2020 analysis of SASH data found that it is working.

Of the 3,610 Vermont SASH participants with a documented Stage 2 blood-pressure reading anytime in their history, the first Stage 2 reading averaged 148.8 mmHg systolic (the upper number in a blood-pressure reading). The average reading for this same group now is 132.7 mmHg systolic — a reduction of 16.1 mmHg.

SASH also analyzed statewide data on emergency room (ER) admissions for SASH participants with a history of high ER utilization, defined as four or more ER visits in a single year. The analysis looked at three years — January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2020. From year to year and over the three-years, there was a median decline of three ER visits per person among this population of SASH participants, which ranged from 225 to 338 individuals.

The Vermont Department of Health pegged the average cost of a mid-level ER visit in 2019 in the state at $843 just for the hospital and physician (i.e., excluding tests and any procedures). Considering that each of the 225 to 338 individuals averaged three fewer ER visits per year, the savings in healthcare costs are significant.

For more details about these analyses, email sash@cathedralsquare.org.
Jesse’s Obituary


Jesse was born in 1934 in New York City. A child piano prodigy, Jesse studied under Eva Marshall through a Ford Foundation Scholarship and played a concert at Carnegie Hall at 15. Jesse won a scholarship to Juilliard at 16 but was pulled away from music by the practical concerns of the world, and studied electrical engineering at New York Institute of Technology. Jesse was the first Black electrical technician for both AT&T and Xerox in New York and later worked for the Environmental Protection Agency in New York City in the same domain. Jesse faced tremendous obstacles in his professional life due to systemic racism but prevailed through sheer force of spirit and will.

Jesse studied mechanical engineering at UVM and swiftly fell in love with Vermont,
“God’s Country,” the state he called home for decades. Jesse worked at General Dynamics, for the Department of Defense and Homeland Security, Bombardier, and the Vermont Immigration & Naturalization Service Center. Ever the entrepreneur, Jesse ran two companies under JRW Enterprises specializing in air and hydronic systems and the painting and cleaning of steel structures.

Jesse was accepted to West Point but declined. He served in the armed forces soon after they were desegregated. He was drafted into the Korean War and rose to the rank of sergeant. Jesse asked to be transferred to the front but worked in air traffic control instead. He later served in the Naval Reserves and was a member of the Vermont Air National Guard for decades, receiving an honorable discharge. He would have been one of the nation’s first Black air traffic controllers, assured a job by a perfect score on his exam, if race hadn’t been a factor.

Jesse loved serving his community and was active in the Special Olympics, the Boys & Girls Club, and AmeriCorps, from which he received a certificate of national service. Jesse also was Vermont’s first Black Police Commissioner for the City of Burlington.

Jesse had a smile like the sun and was filled with incredible energy, strength and unflagging optimism. He was a fifth don black belt Judo master, excellent tennis player, an avid fan of Shakespeare and a true Beethoven groupie.

He is survived by his three children, Steven Watkins, Sara Hunter Starbeck and Sybil Geddes; son-in-law Brad Geddes; and granddaughter Elora Sybil Geddes. He leaves behind cherished nieces and nephews, extended family and many beloved friends from all walks of life.

Everyone was welcome in Jesse’s heart, and all who knew him can hear his voice in the phrase, “Strong as a lion, and twice as fierce!”

ice cream and treat everyone, attend art shows and other resident gatherings, join in community meals at the “Top of the Square,” the community room looking across at Hotel Vermont and Lake Champlain.

“Jesse was a true neighbor. He made all of us at Hotel Vermont feel welcome and part of the community — and that’s unusual, for a business to be welcomed as a neighbor that way. He did that for his fellow residents, too.”

Hans hopes to be able to host an event in the summer to celebrate the lives of Jesse and others who have passed on this year from Cathedral Square. “I really miss him,” Hans said of Jesse. “He’d always be here for Jazz Wednesdays, and I’d always look out from my office window during the day and see him holding court from that bench.”

Jesse had his share of health issues but didn’t dwell on them. It came as a shock to all when he died unexpectedly in August, almost a month to the day after his 86th birthday.

Jesse’s Bench

On a warm fall day, a group of Jesse’s friends at Cathedral Square Senior Living gathered to install an engraved plate on the bench “where Jesse loved to sit and bear witness to the goodness of each day,” as one resident put it.

“The hope is that recognizing this spot as Jesse’s Bench will remind us of the joy he brought to our community, also remind us to respect and welcome each other in the same friendly spirit that Jesse did.”

“In memory of our dear friend, Jesse R. Watkins, who embodied the hospitality and kindness that is so treasured in our Cathedral Square community. August 2020

“Lives Well Lived” is a new section under development on the Cathedral Square website. We will be featuring stories of residents we have lost who, like Jesse, contributed in profound ways to their communities and our lives.
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Stephanie Miller Taylor
Vermont Department of Human Resources*
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*

MISSION ADVOCATES
Gifts of $5,000 - $9,999
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Hoehl Family Foundation*
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Margaret and David Gelines
Shaun Gilpin
John and Laura Green
Jennifer Green
Natalie Hall
Amy Hamlin

* Special contribution to support extraordinary COVID-related expenses, including hazard pay for front-line staff

OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS
Recognizing the hard work of staff at Cathedral Square Assisted Living, the Burlington Office of Community & Economic Development delivered lunch to grateful staff members on several occasions during the pandemic.

**TRIBUTE GIFTS**

*In Honor of…*
- Cathedral Square Board Members
- Cathedral Square Staff
- Cathedral Square’s COVID-19 Response
- Forrest Lander
- Cindy Reid
- Darlene Ryan

**CATHEDRAL SQUARE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

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Glenn Jarrett and Judy Barber
Michael Julow
Mary and Patrick Kearney
Darlene Lander
Colleen Lee
Roni Lesage
Martha Maksym
Sharon and Bert Moffatt
Polly Nichol and William Cyrus Jordan
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*Gifts up to $99*

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Ruby Roberts
Alice Rouleau
Jesse Watkins

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PARTNER AGENCIES
Burlington Housing Authority
Vermont State Housing Authority

FUNDERS OF PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT
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Enterprise Community Partners
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Vermont Gas Systems
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
Vermont Housing Finance Agency
The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

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Cathedral Square
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
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Community of Vermont Elders & Vermont Senior Medicare Patrol
Department of Vermont Health Access
Green Mountain Transit
OneCare Vermont
People’s United Community Foundation
UVM Center on Aging
Vermont Agency of Human Resources
Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living
Vermont Department of Health
Vermont Department of Labor
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care

IN-KIND DONORS
Many of the businesses and individuals listed here contributed vital equipment to keep our residents and staff safe as we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are so grateful for the abundant support we received, both locally and from as far away as California.
American Honda Motors, Powersport Div.
Big Duck Canvas
Bimbo Bakeries
The Body Shop
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Hannah Brown
Burlington CEDO
Caledonia Spirits
Xio Callahan
John Canning
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Williston Wilkinson
Carol Wooster

It is important that our records are accurate. Please let us know of any errors or omissions, and please accept our apologies in advance.
### CONSOLIDATED ASSETS & LIABILITIES

**ASSETS**

- Cash & Cash Equivalents: $6,071,783
- Reserves & Restricted Accounts: $2,455,475
- Land, Buildings & Furniture (net): $12,142,348
- Equity Contributions: $2,769,842
- Accounts Receivable: $1,335,444
- Notes Receivable: $147,804
- Prepaids & Other Assets: $300,447
- Resident Security & Escrow Deposits: $160,681

**Total Assets:** $25,383,824

**LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**

- Notes Payable: $10,903,146
- Accrued Interest Payable: $23,730
- Other Liabilities: $4,157,849
- Resident Security & Escrow Deposits: $181,414
- Accounts Payable: $487,514

**Total Liabilities:** $15,753,653

**Total Net Assets:** $9,630,171

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets:** $25,383,824

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### CONSOLIDATED REVENUE & EXPENSES

**REVENUE**

- Property Management/Service-Enriched Housing: $9,652,977
- SASH (Support and Services at Home): $3,449,382
- Property Development Fees: $205,279
- Grants & Other Income: $1,716,780
- Equity Pass-Through: $205,000

**Total Revenues:** $15,229,417

**EXPENSES**

- Property Management/Service-Enriched Housing: $8,892,212
- SASH (Support and Services at Home): $3,217,151
- Property Development Fees: $370,653
- Unallocated Expenses: $393,399

**Total Expenses:** $12,783,415

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**CORPORATE & PROPERTY ASSETS MANAGED**

- Corporate: $9,220,105
- Owned & Affiliated: $18,712,390
- Partnerships: $69,391,148
- Management Agreements: $1,818,457

**Total Managed Assets:** $99,142,100
Onward!

As COVID-19 vaccinations ramp up worldwide, we look forward to gathering and celebrating once again with our residents and with each other — to laughing and learning and seeing smiles on faces we have missed for far too long.

Looking ahead, a top priority for Cathedral Square in 2021 will be pursuing ways to help meet the skyrocketing need for residential memory care for low-income Vermonters with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia. It is impossible to overstate the precipice we are on in the Green Mountain State. The number of Vermonters ages 65 and older with Alzheimer’s is projected to grow nearly 31% by 2025 — the highest percentage increase of any state in the U.S.¹ Meanwhile, private care homes for this population charge upwards of $10,000 and more a month — a ludicrous cost well beyond reach for all but the very wealthy. Those with no other option often end up in the hospital, where they can languish for months or even years with nowhere to go and without receiving the care they need. We must end this intolerable and inhumane scenario.

As well, we will build on our foundational mission to provide housing and support to older adults and people with disabilities, work to bring the benefits of SASH to more people throughout Vermont and beyond our borders, and act on our commitment to social and racial equity within our organization and in our communities. Thank you for joining us in this vital work.

¹Alzheimer’s Association, 2021 Alzheimer’s Facts and Figures, page 24
THE CATHEDRAL SQUARE
MISSION

Cathedral Square improves the lives of older adults and people with diverse needs by creating and maintaining quality, affordable housing with services tailored to their unique circumstances, recognizing that safe, affordable housing is the foundation of health, individual and community well-being, and economic, racial and social justice.

THE CATHEDRAL SQUARE
VISION

We envision a time when all people, regardless of age, background or ability to pay, will live and thrive in safe, quality housing that is diverse and welcoming, with access to support and services to help them remain healthy, living at home, and thriving in their communities.