

Albany County funding boosts affordable housing units

\$325,000 grant to be divided among projects in Watervliet, Cohoes, Colonie and Albany

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ALBANY -- Watervliet, Colonie, Cohoes and a homeless shelter will share in a \$325,000 affordable housing grant from Albany County for work on a total of 40 units.

The projects were recommended by the Housing Trust Fund Task Force and the money comes from an appropriation in the 2008 county budget, which each year sets aside funds for County Executive Mike Breslin's affordable housing initiative.

Last week, the County Legislature unanimously approved a resolution that effectively gives the green light to the projects.

Watervliet will receive \$75,000 in county money to be matched by the Watervliet Local Development Corp. to either repair or bring up to code 18 units with about 54 bedrooms in multifamily dwellings, mostly in two-family houses. About \$8,333 will be spent on each.

A significant number of apartments in multifamily homes in Watervliet are going unoccupied, Mayor Michael Manning said. "The monies will be used to identify, target and get these units ... fixed up. Maybe they just need to be brought up to code."

Once the unit is repaired, the Vacant Apartment Management Program, staffed by the housing authority, will assist landlord-owners with screening prospective tenants, handling tenant relations, accepting rent payments and arbitrating problems. A small fee will be collected from the landlord for the service. The units are not public housing but in privately owned structures.

Legislator Phil Steck, whose district covers part of Watervliet, called the program innovative and commended the mayor for trying to do something about the estimated 300 vacant units in the city. Steck is a candidate for the 21st Congressional District seat.

Other awards are as follows:

Colonie will get \$145,000 from the housing fund to rehabilitate 10 units at about \$15,000 per unit for occupants at or below 50 percent of area median income.

In Cohoes, Local Development Corp. will rehabilitate 237 Remsen St., a vacant building that was damaged by a fire next door. That project will receive \$30,000 for two housing units and commercial rehabilitation.

The Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless received a \$75,000 grant to help construct 10 units at a Sheridan Avenue building in Albany.

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