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## Watkins housing project nears completion

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Staff Writer **Date:** December 24, 2014 **Section:** NEWS

Features were preserved wherever possible, in the former **Watkins school**, right down to the chalkboards in the classrooms-turned apartments. “There’s chalkboards in living rooms,” project superintendent Kerry Whetmore said. “There’s chalkboards in some of the bedrooms. We built around what was here.”

Work is nearing completion on the brick building, constructed in 1897 and purchased by the Housing Trust of Rutland County. The Trust has converted the building into apartments and constructed an additional apartment building, referred to as the carriage house, on the **Watkins Avenue** property.

The Trust is already taking applications for the apartments, which will be available in February. The \$4 million project was funded by state and federal grants and tax credits.

The apartments are all one-bedroom, roughly 900 square feet. The main building has six — two per floor — and the new carriage house has another eight. All will serve as senior housing.

“From what I’ve heard, we have more people (who) want the apartments than we have room for,” Whetmore said.

Work was done in compliance with federal historic preservation guidelines.

“We kept all the original trim,” Whetmore said. “We took it off, labeled it, marked where it came from, did our construction and put it back the way it was 117 years ago. All the old trim around the windows, all the old trim around the doors, stairwells, stairways — it all looks the way it did.”

On the ground floor, workers discovered a much older tin ceiling beneath a dropped ceiling. That was restored. One major change came

in the basement, where they raised the floor by three feet.

“We had to because of the windows,” Whetmore said. “The windows couldn’t be lowered. They were at about 6 feet.”

Accommodations at the carriage house include an elevator and private balconies. Both buildings include on-site laundry.

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