

"The People of Northgate will own Northgate."

Mayor Bernie Sanders, 1986,
responding to the owners'
announcement of intent to sell.

In 1986, the 1300 citizens renting apartments at Northgate faced the prospect of having their homes sold out from under them. The owners had completed their 20 year low-interest federal mortgage and wanted to sell Northgate or turn it into condominiums. For many families, this meant they'd lose their homes.

As mayor, Bernie Sanders directed city departments to help the resident association in the struggle. A city-wide task force was devoted to finding a way to fund the buyout of Northgate. Sanders then directed City Attorneys to research every possible way that the tenants could own their own housing.

The first victory which Sanders fought for and won was passage of the state's toughest condo conversion ordinance by the City Council. This law brought the owners of Northgate to the negotiating table and helped make their property affordable because they could no longer sell it to the highest bidder. Bernie personally made it clear to the owners that, if necessary, the city would use its power of eminent domain in order to prevent the loss of over 300 of the affordably priced homes in Burlington.

Over the next two years, at Bernie's direction, the city devoted thousands of staff hours and \$180,000 in Community Development grants to raise the cash to buy Northgate. The residents and the city worked hard on this buyout effort and their cooperation succeeded. Together the residents and the city and several state agencies raised \$21 million to buy and upgrade Northgate.

Northgate is a living example of what a people-oriented government can do. The determined residents of Northgate backed by a city government dedicated to the needs of people did something to prevent homelessness here in Burlington. Northgate is not only a community of housing that will remain affordable forever but it is one that is controlled the its residents -- not by private landlords from out of state.

When Bernie and the residents started this project, there were no programs and no models for doing this. Northgate was the first and it is an example that has helped many others. Some people call the new Northgate a miracle. But the residents of Northgate know that it is the result of hard work and commitment on the part of themselves, their mayor and their city government.

On Tuesday, November 6, we will have a chance to send this kind of hard work and commitment to Washington by voting for Bernie Sanders for Congress. Bernie won his first election as Mayor by only 9 votes.

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