Eagleville Green: Community-Driven Housing Development

Submitted By: Dorgan Architecture & Planning



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Mansfield Nonprofit Housing Development Corporation

Organization Type: Civil society

Website: https://mansfieldnonprofithousing.org

Practice Details

Country(ies): United States of America

City(ies): Mansfield

Start Year: 2014 **Ongoing:** No **End Year:** 2025

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing & Climate Mitigation
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning
- Housing Policy, Legislation & Governance

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

Billions lack adequate housing. Climate change is increasing this gap by 8.3 million homes a year. A lack of inclusive housing policies inhibits access to education, jobs, health care and more. Eagleville Green, envisioned by community volunteers, to address this challenge, demonstrates that neighbors can be welcoming, housing can use less energy than it produces, and that affordable and healthy homes for low-income families are possible.

Transformative, recently completed homes are supported by the neighborhood, healthy, sustainable, accessible, walkable, and inclusive. Project planning and design was participatory, resulting in an innovative approach to integrating multifamily housing in a rural area. In a community of opportunity, 42 households (a small fraction of the over 2400 who applied) are housed and the initiative built support for additional affordable housing in the municipality, where rents are rising, and inspired others to do the same in the region.

Solution Developed

Area residents took the need for affordable housing into their own hands. Volunteers developed a model to plan and fund quality environments with new policies and practices.

1) This community-based development strategy has directly resulted in the construction of 42 units of high-quality housing that meet a range of housing needs from those of formerly homeless families to to their mark rate fellow residents.

2) Volunteer neighborhood residents led a process of local engagement, permitting, funding and constructing housing, which is being replicated throughout the region.

3) Innovation includes public process, architectural design that integrates with the building fabric in a small town, energy efficiency including consideration of embodied carbon, and sharing learning with others through presentations of environmental and social innovation recognized by peers including:

- Energy and Environmental Building Alliance Summit 2025
- Northeast Sustainability Energy Association Pro Tour & Presentation 2024
- NYS Green Building Conference (Operational and Embodied Carbon) 2025
- ASHRAE Building Decarbonization Conference 2025
- American Planning Association 2025 Awards Presentation

Implementation

A model development is:

1) Producing housing required formation of a new development corporation, a robust community process, working with state and local policy to obtaining planning and zoning approval, innovative financing including many funders, obtaining investors, and much more.

2) This project really took a Village led by community volunteers with active and sustained participation by local, state and federal agencies and officials, professional service providers, technical assistance providers, Eversource the utility provider, and many others

3) Planning for this new strategy for providing housing began over 10 years ago with several years of developing a delivery structure and obtaining site control, a year of community engagement in design, three years of restructuring zoning and local approvals, a couple of years of funding and two years of contracting and construction. Units filled very quickly with over 2400 applicants for these initial units. This groundwork will make future projects quicker and smoother.

4) There are many partners in this project including community volunteers who formed and operate the community development corporation, neighbors who participated in planning supported the development, an architect who carried risk and fees for many years, public and private funders, the non-profit equity investor Grow America, property manager and lender the Mansfield Housing Authority, public officials and non-profit technical assistance providers.

Enablers & Obstacles

1) Community volunteers led the initiatives to build local support and the focus on justice and inclusion. They patiently built buy in from officials and the numerous changes in permitting and funding necessary for this and future projects to serve low income families and community priorities

2) Public policy for affordable housing production in the US is built on a strategy of larger developers undertaking projects using multiple resources including low income housing tax credits. This system drives development in poor neighborhoods instead of communities of opportunity where there is often public opposition and cumbersome permitting processes. Predevelopment of more just projects is expensive and time consuming.

Results & Impact

At the model project Eagleville Green:

1) 80% of units are tiered for incomes below 60% of median income with 20% at market rate. Local service providers support 5 families that are formerly homeless or with special needs. In addition to affordable housing families enjoy a walkable community, recreation opportunities, access to services, high-quality education and access to jobs.

2) The acceptance generated for affordable housing in this and surrounding communities is important to all people of limited income. This project embodies justice and inclusion,

3) The Town of Mansfield is convinced of the value of affordable housing in the community by the success of Eagleville Green. Residents and officials are convinced by the quality of the built

project and the manner it successfully employs design strategies to integrate in the community. An inclusive zoning ordinance was established that has already secured $3.5 million in support for future affordable housing in the municipality.

Replication & Scale Up

This model is having significant impact with 28 more units planned in the same municipality, a similar initiative in the area town of Hebron community volunteers established Commons CDC in which recently received approval for 50 units of housing for about 175 people and has began exploration of two additional development with a total of 125 more dwelling units. Volunteers in four other towns are in conversations about repeating the model in their communities.

We are currently working with technical assistance providers to help scale up a community-driven approach to affordable housing development that is welcoming, inclusive, sustainable, accessible and walkable. Though UN and other outreach we believe more residents will work collaboratively to affirmatively build housing that does not degrade the environment as this net zero project demonstrates.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

In many ways:

1) Zoning policy incorporates more strategies that are inclusive

2) Community groups are organizing to repeat the successful development model

3) design professionals and their consultants are learning from the successful strategies to develop net-zero housing using available funding programs and technology

4) Syndicators are funding smaller locally driven projects

5) Public and private funders are interested in replicating this model

Lessons & Takeaways

Develop strategies for accelerating the timeframe and conduct more outreach earlier to elected officials and independent media.