Infill Single Family Homes

Duluth, Minnesota

Developer/Sponsor
Northern Community Land Trust (NCLT)

Architect
Wagner Zaun Architecture

General Contractor
Common Ground

Units
27

Project Description
Through Minnesota Green Communities, Northern Communities Land Trust is able to incorporate increased environmental sustainability, energy efficiency, and durability into the construction and rehabilitation of 27 units of permanently affordable, detached, single-family homes in Duluth, Minnesota. Common Ground will build 17 new homes on scattered, vacant, in-fill lots throughout the city. Three existing blighted homes will be deconstructed and new homes will be built in their place using some of the deconstructed materials. Six homes will undergo substantial rehabilitation.

All 27 homes will remain affordable in perpetuity as part of the Northern Communities Land Trust. The community land trust model assists people in need of immediate housing while permanently preserving affordable housing for future generations. The program provides an opportunity for lower income home-buyers to receive significant down-payment and rehab assistance to purchase new or existing homes. In exchange for this assistance, NCLT maintains ownership of the land, which homeowners lease for a small fee. When homeowners move, they pass on the benefits they received by selling their home below market price to another low-income, land trust qualified buyer. This is the strength of the land trust model—creating community controlled, permanently affordable homes for people through the stewardship of precious financial resources.

A Green Advantage
The NCLT projects will be constructed with green and sustainable elements for the benefit of both the residents and the surrounding community, including:

- Preservation and rehabilitation of six homes.
- Energy Star modeling and integration including appliances and lighting.
- Healthy flooring materials (non-carpet and non-vinyl flooring).
- Heat Recovery Ventilation (HRV) systems for proper ventilation and moisture control.
- Solar orientation of homes on sites where possible.
- Cement fiber board siding.
- Rain barrels for managing storm water and reducing water used for irrigation.
- Homeowners manual outlining green building and landscaping features and maintenance.
- Low-VOC paints, sealants, and adhesives.
- Water-conserving appliances and fixtures.
Ownership Costs

Homes will sell to qualified buyers for prices ranging from $88,000 to $154,000. Through Northern Communities Land Trust, all units will remain permanently affordable to households earning less than 80% of area median income.

Amenities

Located on urban in-fill sites within existing neighborhoods and communities, the single family homes are within close proximity to services, transportation, employment, and retail and commercial development. Through rehabilitation and preservation of these homes, NCLT is providing families with an opportunity for homeownership in an established neighborhood while extending the life of an existing building and improving the economic viability of the community.

Developer

The mission of the Northern Communities Land Trust is to create affordable homes and strengthen communities through the wise stewardship of land and resources. NCLT utilizes the community land trust method of affordable home ownership to preserve the affordability of homes in perpetuity, creating a stock of permanently affordable homes exclusively for low to moderate income households in the communities in which it works. As of February 2007, NCLT has developed 132 homes and has served a total of 153 households. These homes have either been acquired through a buyer-driven purchase rehab program, or are in-fill homes built by NCLT in Duluth.

Common Ground, NCLT’s construction company, has been instrumental in the organization’s effort to increase the environmental sustainability of homes and develop NCLT’s Sustainability Index—a decision making tool designed for greener affordable housing construction that is informing NCLT’s sustainable building technology choices. In its deconstruction work, Common Ground has recovered up to 85% (by mass) of materials from homes. These materials were diverted from the waste stream by being reused on-site in constructing new homes or sold in the Common Ground Deconstruction and Reuse Center.

Minnesota Green Communities, a collaboration of the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, the Family Housing Fund, and Enterprise, is an initiative designed to foster the creation of affordable, healthier, and more energy-efficient housing throughout Minnesota. The initiative will support the production of affordable housing with markedly reduced energy costs, use of materials beneficial to the environment, conservation-minded land use planning, and attention to the creation of healthy environments and lifestyles for individuals, children, families, and communities. For more information, please visit www.greencommunitiesonline.org/minnesota.

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