

Rockcross Commons: Homes Families Can Afford

NeighborWorks Great Falls | Great Falls

Goals and Activities

Rockcross Commons is a 124 family Multi-Family Low Income Housing Tax Credit development located in Great Falls Montana. This development is a partnership between GMD Development and NeighborWorks Great Falls. The project was the first in the state of Montana to combine both 4% Competitive Tax Credits and 9% Tax Exempt Bonds allowing for significantly more apartments to be created. The project includes 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units spread over 10 acres in 7 buildings and a community building. The project targets families under 60% of area median income. Prior to completion partners felt that this market was under served in terms of quality, affordable housing options. NeighborWorks Great Falls commissioned a market study that found only 11% of renters live in units built since 1990, while 78% live in units older than 1980. A full 20% of rental units were built prior to 1940. We believe the project allows us to better serve the housing needs of our community and workforce.



Major Outcomes

A major goal of combining the 4% and 9% tax credits was to provide a greater number of affordable homes in Great Falls. The larger project also allowed for greater efficiencies of scale, lower operating cost, and lower per unit construction cost. The thirty-two 9% units were placed in service in December 2019 and completely leased in January of 2020. The project is still under construction with units/buildings being filled as completed. The ninety-two 4% units will be completed and leased by July 2020. Long term success measures will be high and sustained occupancy rates to serve the need of affordable, quality rental options in Great Falls.

Questions?

Contact NeighborWorks Great Falls Executive Director

Sherrie Arey | sarey@nwgf.org

Populations Served

The project intends to serve families and individuals under 60% area median income with 80% of the units at 60% AMI and 20% of the units at or below 50% AMI. The project is located on 10 acres on the south side of Great Falls in a Qualified Census Tract, adding a 30% bonus to the basis points. Rockcross is located near several large employers including Great Falls College MSU, Benefis Hospital and University of Providence, as well as many smaller service employers.

Major Partners and Funders

GMD Development of Seattle; NeighborWorks Great Falls; Montana Board of Housing Glacier Bank – Construction Lender; NeighborWorks Montana; WNC – Equity Investor; Rotherham Construction; Intrinsik TD &H – Engineering Design; REMS – Property Management; City of Great Falls

Advice for Others

This was NeighborWorks Great Falls first tax credit allocation as a major partner, as such, a strong development team is critical to the success of a complicated project. Overall lessons learned:

- When value engineering, make sure you are looking at long term domino effects of change. They may not seem obvious at the time but could cost more in the long run.
- The quality control of a large project is a full-time job and should not be underestimated.
- The lowest bid of certain trades should be reviewed very closely. - Hire a proven general contractor who understands the challenges of tax credits, as this is a very important partner.
- Expect the unexpected – Extremely high construction bids, longest winter in 100 years, national trade wars, labor shortages, and a pandemic are hard to factor into project planning, but were all challenges Rockcross has had to overcome.
- Keep your end goal and mission impact in mind, challenges can be tall – but the impact of the project outweighs many.

Impacts Under the Big Sky

2020 Montana Housing Partnership Conference