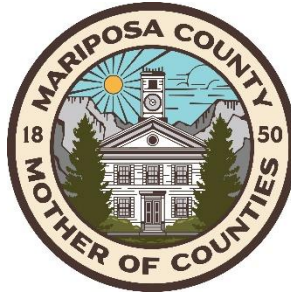


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CSAC Challenge Awards

Category: Housing, Land use, Infrastructure. (Rural)

Overview: Mariposa County, in partnership with Self-Help Enterprises, recently completed its first multifamily housing development in more than 24 years. Creekside Terrace, a 42-unit affordable housing complex, is the result of a reorientation toward County-led affordable housing and active transportation projects in the wake of a housing crisis and the 2017 Detwiler Fire that made that crisis more severe.

Challenge: Like many areas in the state and nation, Mariposa County is struggling with a dramatic shortage in available housing. In addition to outside market pressures including rising costs to import materials and labor, Mariposa's housing market is complicated by relatively low capacity among local contractors, environmental and pandemic-related reductions in available housing in Yosemite National Park, a rapid growth of short-term rentals, limited flat terrain, water and wastewater utilities that serve less than one percent of the area of the County, and other development constraints.

Even with an appropriate site, more than two decades without a significant development required Self-Help Enterprises and the County had to navigate outdated policies, bring along staff from multiple agencies who had not supported a similar development in their careers, and overcome a deep-seated tradition of NIMBYism that had successfully staved off so many projects it had become part of the County's reputation among developers.

Solution: Sometimes the goals of California counties require the same approach our 19th century explorer-founders often took: set a direction, assemble the best available crew, and head into the unknown.

In 2017, rising homelessness and the loss of 80 homes to the Detwiler Fire were final straws in the County's discussions about the need for housing. The Board of Supervisors directed staff to actively pursue new housing development and approved the creation of a housing development specialist position in administration. The County's Health and Human Services Agency recruited Self-Help Enterprises to partner with the County and began working on grants and other funds that could be used for housing development.

With the help of staff from many county departments and a variety of agencies, consultants and subcontractors, a site was identified and, eventually, developed with community support. Partners include the local arts council, native tribe, Sierra Foothill Conservancy and countless community members.

The result is a 42-unit affordable housing complex that includes 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units to support the families of Mariposa. Simultaneously, some policies, processes and attitudes have changed to allow future development in Mariposa and establish the Mariposa Creek Parkway as a future development corridor.

Innovation/Challenge: There may not be anything completely unique about the work that was done to build the Creekside Terrace, though much of it was new for Mariposa. Imagining and implementing affordable housing in this landscape relied on the financial support of the state and a new partnership with Self-Help Enterprises, who had not previously completed a project in Mariposa County. The County's vision and support combined with Self-Help Enterprises' persistence and development experience was a winning combination.

The initial conditions for project approval were laden with exceptional barriers including acquisition of access easements, major road and water pressure improvements, General Plan Zoning Amendments and CEQA determinations. As the project progressed the associated cost and efforts associated with satisfying these conditions intensified to include the need for additional land, which the County purchased and sold to the developer under the framework of the Surplus Land Act. A major water line was required to be installed under a waterway, necessitating Department Fish and Wildlife permitting and careful timing to also meet local water utility district codes.

These and other events pushed staff to find creative solutions to meet the financial demands of the project. Original seed funding was from round one of No Place Like Home for the construction of 11 units within the project as permanent supportive units for the chronically homeless. The project then submitted for the 9% California Tax Credit Allocation and began to develop an application to the Infill Infrastructure Grant Program. As the project unfolded and cost increased, Self-Help contributed organizational funds and the County contributed Whole Person Care and Permanent Local Housing Allocation funding to the project. In the end we walked away with a stack of agreements (and reporting requirements) that will continue to support the project for years.

Overcoming significant challenges to develop housing for our community represents the beginning of a transformation for Mariposa County and the larger Mariposa Creek Parkway project.

Results: A beautiful 42-unit multifamily complex with community room, on site management, playground, barbeque area, halfcourt basketball court and opportunity for people to thrive in a health home facing one of California's precious waterways.

Replicability: This project is a piece of a bigger vision based on shared community values and hard working relationships that extend far beyond the County and our Development partner as it includes, the local Arts Council, Tribe, Land Trust and countless community members. As we look to implement a second phase of this project we encourage others to turn around and face their waterways, the true arteries of our great State. Our States environmental and social challenges can find common ground when we look to our rivers and streams, and we now have the understanding and technology to restore the natural systems and integrate a human element into them.

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