

Innovative Affordable Housing Development in New Glarus Creates Unique Community

Written by Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp, Brenda Levin

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Prairie Haus Integrated Housing Concept First of its Kind in Wisconsin.

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp. (WHPC), a leader in the preservation and development of quality affordable housing for low- to moderate-income populations in Wisconsin, is pleased to announce the grand opening of Prairie Haus, an innovative affordable workforce housing development located in New Glarus, Wisconsin.

Prairie Haus is the first affordable housing concept of its kind in Wisconsin to integrate high-demand workforce housing with independent living apartments for people with disabilities where all residents live together within a strong, vibrant, and compassionate community.

In partnership with Home of Our Own (HOOO), an organization advocating for young adults with special care needs, WHPC has developed a unique, affordable housing model that meets the needs of both working individuals and families and those with disabilities within a larger affordable housing development.



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"Prairie Haus is an example of what can be accomplished when the developer, investor and community collaborate to envision and complete a financially complex project, said WHPC President Mary Wright. "Along with the strong commitment and the hard work of HOOO, we responded to a need and provided a housing model and solution for New Glarus."

Recognizing the need for supportive housing for many residents in New Glarus, WHPC and HOOO collaborated to create a safe, stable, and suitable independent living community for young adults who want to live on their own.

HOOO will have an ongoing presence at Prairie Haus to facilitate social connections with all residents within the development and to create opportunities for individuals with disabilities to connect with the New Glarus community at large. Other amenities include a spacious interior common area and community kitchen for family and friends to gather in a comfortable setting, underground and lot parking, onsite manager's office, a business center, outdoor patios and grills and outdoor recreational spaces with swings. Learn more about Prairie Haus at whpccorp.org/prairie-haus

"We knew our adult children needed a safe, affordable place to live their adult life and it wasn't going to be in a group home," said HOOO Co-founder Susan Wallitsch. "Our goal was to explore options for a permanent home for our children, and perhaps build something together."

Like many rural communities throughout Wisconsin, New Glarus faces challenges meeting a growing demand for affordable workforce housing for individuals and families living on modest incomes.

Housing has been a scarce and expensive commodity particularly for people who work in the village but cannot afford to live there. Prairie Haus will add to the village's much needed housing stock.

"The village is excited about the new development and national attention Prairie Haus has received and the creative housing solution WHPC and Home of Our Own developed," said New Glarus Administrator Drake Daily. "The project was heavily influenced by members of our community who were looking to build a safe place for family members and friends to live and exercise some independence. It was an exciting opportunity to provide more options for people who want to move into our community, and the village was glad to be able to play a small role to help get the development off the ground."

"We have jobs at all income levels and housing for seniors but have a desperate need for workforce housing, not just in Green County but throughout Southwestern Wisconsin," said Green County Development Corp. Executive Director Cara Carper. "Hats off to HOOO who had the vision and worked on it all these years and for partners like WHPC and others who stepped up to make Prairie Haus a reality. It is a wonderful project and a special place that other rural communities will want to emulate and build in their communities."

"I've heard many great heart-warming stories from people who have adult children who are differently disabled who never imagined an opportunity like this would come so close and now

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know they have a safe place for their adult child to live,” Carper added. “The fact Prairie Haus includes people with different abilities within one community is what really puts it over the top as being very special and exceptional.”

Prairie Haus is situated on a spacious site featuring steep rocky bluffs and panoramic views overlooking the Little Sugar River and historic downtown New Glarus. The mission-style development was designed by Midwest Modern and construction performed by 1848 Construction, Inc. The project was completed within 18 months and officially opened in December 2020.

The \$9 million, 40-unit apartment community offers a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. Thirty-eight units will rent to individuals and families at 50%-80% of the area median income (AMI) in Green County who cannot afford the higher market-rate rents in the New Glarus area. Ten units will rent to extremely low-income individuals at 30% AMI. These units are single-story, grade-level apartments specifically designed for individuals with disabilities and feature multiple entry and exit pathways to accommodate and enhance the safety of residents, caregivers, and visitors. They include high ceilings, accommodating floor plans, fixtures that meet or exceed ADA standards, and other specially designed features. Two units are leased at market rate rents.

Prairie Haus required funding from multiple sources before construction could begin in 2019. Primary funding for the project was a \$5.6 million Section 42 low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) allocation awarded to WHPC by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Agency (WHEDA). WHPC partnered with Cinnaire, a respected nonprofit community development investment firm based in Michigan, who purchased the tax credits from WHPC to become a co-owner and lead investor in the Prairie Haus development.

Other funding sources included the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago through its Affordable Home Program, the Capital Magnet Fund, a Federal HOME loan awarded by the State of Wisconsin, and Johnson Bank. Both WHPC and HOOO also contributed financially to development costs.

Prairie Haus is an exemplar of what can be accomplished with positive synergy between public and private groups working together to achieve a common purpose. “Partnership can be an overused word in many business settings, but in this case, it’s actually true,” WHPC Vice President David Ginger said. “You have a Housing Finance Authority in WHEDA that allocates the resources, developers, lenders, investors, parents and the community all working toward a common goal. This project does not get done without all partners working together.”

The ten special needs apartments are now fully leased. WHPC and its management firm, ACC Management, are currently accepting leasing applications for other units at Prairie Haus.

To celebrate the completion and opening of Prairie Haus, WHPC will host an open house on September 16 at Prairie Haus with project partners and invited dignitaries and community residents from New Glarus.

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About Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp.

Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp. (WHPC) is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a prominent leader in the affordable housing industry. Its mission is to preserve, provide and protect affordable housing for the most vulnerable low- and moderate-income populations in Wisconsin. It believes housing is a basic right and the first step in building a better life for the people it serves.

WHPC is a \$503 million housing provider with annual revenues of \$74 million and net worth more than \$172 million. WHPC has invested over \$110 million in private equity for some of the largest investment entities in the country, including Boston Capital, Richman Group, Redstone, Cinnaire, Advantage Capital, Sugar Creek Capital, and BMO Harris, all of whom trust WHPC for skilled real estate closing and refined financial management.

As WHPC continues to grow its presence in Wisconsin it will work with its valued partners and, most importantly, its residents, to meet the challenge of helping communities provide affordable housing worthy to be called "home." Learn more at whpccorp.org.