

THE COOPERATOR

News and updates for leaders of resident-owned communities

A new dawn in Gaylord, Minnesota

By Dan Gordon

Northcountry Cooperative Foundation welcomes the newest resident-owned community to the network, El Nuevo Amanecer Cooperativo (pronounced el new-ā-vō ah-mahn-a-sayr) which means The New Dawn Cooperative. With their transition to cooperative ownership, this small community is preserving sixteen affordable homes, with room and plans to double that number. El Nuevo Amanecer (ENA), on the southern shore of Titlow Lake, in Gaylord, MN, becomes the fourteenth co-op in NCF's service area.

In the Fall of 2022, the former owner of the park, South Central MN Multi-County HRA contacted NCF about the option of selling the park to the residents. Many of you will be familiar with what came next for these homeowners. They may never have expected to be on the path toward taking democratic control of their community, but they worked beside a team from NCF through months of negotiations, recruiting members for the new cooperative, choosing a name to represent themselves, selecting a Board of Directors, and succeeded in buying the land



Falling snow didn't dampen the spirits of Board members Blanca Nuñez, Humberto Padilla, and Amanda Salazar, the day they signed the purchase agreement.

beneath their homes in March.

"I'm looking forward to turning the park into a beautiful site and having it stand out with a nice sign", said Amanda Salazar, the co-op's vice president. Salazar says the experience of being a Board member has helped her learn more about decision making and caring for everyone and their needs.

The newly minted Board is tackling several challenges in order to start the co-op off on a good foot. One of their biggest challenges is that the community has twice as many lots as there are homes. They are actively trying to attract new residents

"I'm looking forward to turning the park into a beautiful site and having it stand out with a nice sign."

and bring in homes. If you know someone who owns a manufactured home and is thinking of moving, please tell them about the benefits of living in a cooperatively owned park. In addition to controlling costs through co-op governance, other perks of moving to El Nuevo Amanecer is their lakefront location, and the nearly 5-acre park sits across the street from a

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Big numbers = construction season

An update on community infrastructure projects

By Sam Estes

Projects Completed in 2022:

Sungold Heights (Worthington MN) completed park-wide upgrades to its water and sewer systems and complete road reconstruction in 2022. A few small landscaping projects remain bringing that project to a close this spring. The work was funded by a \$2.2 million grant from the Manufactured Home Community Redevelopment Program (MHCR) and a \$200,000 loan from the Southwest Initiative Foundation.

Madelia Mobile Village (Madelia, MN) also completed an infrastructure project last year, upgrading water mains, sanitary sewer lines, and storm sewer lines in a portion of the community. The co-op received a \$700,000 MCHR grant for the project, but only needed about half of the funds to complete the work. The remaining grant funds will be used for a different project (see below).



A view of the construction site, Summer 2022, with the sewage treatment plant at the lower right.

Zumbro Ridge Estates (Rochester, MN) was connected to the City of Rochester's sewer system in November 2022. Prior to municipal sewer connection, Zumbro Ridge treated its sewage on-site in a wastewater treatment plant and required a contractor to haul the treated sewage to a waste processing facility. Their treatment plant was nearing the end of its useful life, and it was

decommissioned and demolished in January 2023. Completing this project means that sewage is now piped directly to the waste processing facility. The community no longer needs to worry about the logistics and environmental risks of treating sewage on site and hauling it out every day.

The total cost of the city sewer connection and sewer plant decommissioning was almost \$400,000. Two government grants covered the costs: a \$335,000 grant through Minnesota Housing's Workforce and Affordable Homeownership Development Program and a \$420,000 grant through Olmsted County.



View of the construction area after the project wrapped up, leaving a large, flat area near the river waiting for the community's next plan.

Scheduled for Summer 2023:

This summer, **Zumbro Ridge Estates** will replace the oldest sections of water and sewer lines on community property with funds remaining from the Olmsted County grant after last year's work. The project was open for bid until mid-May and is scheduled to be completed by the end of August.

You can tour the work sites at Zumbro Ridge Estates when you join us for Common Ground 2023, in September. Zumbro Ridge will be hosting the in-person sessions.

Woodlawn Terrace Cooperative (Richfield, MN) has begun work to upgrade its water and sewer systems and improve road surfaces. The community

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What's your problem?

Four tips for managing rules violations like a pro

By Kathleen Richert

Having a safe and attractive looking community benefits your cooperative. Your community looks more inviting, which is important if the cooperative is trying to sell homes or fill vacant lots. Eliminating safety hazards lessens the chances someone will be injured and file an insurance claim, thereby keeping policy costs lower. A neat and tidy park says to everyone living there, "We respect our neighbors in this community." It also says to your non-park neighbors, "This is a good place to live. We are good neighbors."

Everyone agrees to the Community Rules when they join the cooperative, but it seems like every co-op has a certain number of households that aren't in compliance at one point or another. Maybe there is debris around their home and yard, or they have a shed that is decaying and looks like it will collapse at any moment, maybe the house number has fallen off or is no longer visible on their home, or they have too many vehicles parked where they shouldn't be parked. These are just a few of the complaints heard from different communities in the ROC network in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Each community has its own process for responding to rules violations. If your community has an onsite property manager, the task of issuing violation letters often falls to that individual. Not all communities have on-site managers, though, so what do they do?

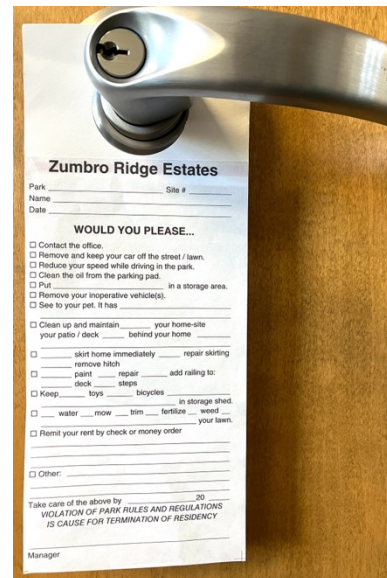
The next best solution is a committee charged with rules enforcement. This group of two or three people should regularly walk the community making note of situations that violate the Community Rules. Other communities make it part of the Board of Directors' responsibilities.

Here are tips from ROCs across the NCF network:

1. **Treat everyone equally.** Showing favoritism is one of the quickest ways to create problems among co-op members. For example, if people notice or even suspect that Board members or friends and family members of Board members are granted more leeway in complying with rules, it undermines the community's trust.
2. **Develop a checklist.** This keeps the evaluations

objective. It also lessens the time people who volunteer to go around the park need to spend writing notices for homeowners.

3. **Keep a record.** Write down the date the violation is observed and what action will be taken in response. Record whether the homeowner was given a verbal notice or a written notice. Is this a 1st, 2nd or 3rd violation for the same problem? Include the date by which the violation must be corrected. All this information should be included in the Notice of Violation.
4. **Create a form.** Creating a two-part form means that the inspections team automatically has a record. Design it with a hang tag top, and you can hang them on people's door handles right then, saving both time and energy for your volunteers.



Board member Amanda Mata, at Zumbro Ridge Estates (ZRE), shared the two-part, carbon-less door hanger they use in their community. ZRE had them printed at Office Depot. They are a custom print job. If you would like to order from Office Depot Kathleen Richert, at NCF, has the file and the contact information for the person

who handles special projects. If you're going to go with another printer, you'll want to ask for a two-part, carbonless (NCR) door hanger, 8.5" x 3.25". Order a white tag back with a paper tear away. It may be a specialty die-cut order. Plan to order 250 or 500. The Board at ZRE says that the next time, they would not spend the extra money to have their name printed on it. A blank form means that several communities could place a joint order and divide them. This is Cooperative Principle 6: Co-ops helping Co-ops.

Thank you to the team at ZRE for sharing this great idea!

The faces of manufactured housing cooperatives

Meet a Board member

By Emily Stewart

Gary Olson
President, Hillcrest Community Cooperative,
Clark's Grove, MN



Board President, Gary Olson, standing on the back steps of his home in Hillcrest Community Cooperative.

The Cooperator: Tell me a little about your background.

I grew up in Owatonna, Minnesota. It was a nice area, and I grew up on a farmstead - working on dairy farms. My dad was a carpenter, and I guess that rubbed off on me. I developed a lot of construction skills growing up. When I was 17, I left home and served six years in the Army; three active and three inactive. After the Service, I worked for oil companies in Wabasha, MN. Then I moved back home to Albert Lea and bought a liquor store. I owned Skyline Liquor for over seventeen years. It was in a strip mall behind the Skyline Mall. During my stint as a business owner, I acquired more property and expanded my business to include food service, opening the Skyline Restaurant. But as business came and went, I saw my opportunity to exit and sold the real estate I'd acquired and went back to working as a foreman and control operator for various companies across Minnesota.

"There isn't much I haven't done in this lifetime. There really isn't."

How long have you lived in Hillcrest and why did you move in?

I have lived in Clarks Grove for twenty-nine years, and I have lived in the community for eleven years. I decided to move into Hillcrest when my kids got old enough to move out; I wanted to downsize. My house sold more quickly than I had expected, and I did not have another place lined up. A guy I used to work with, Rod, used to own the park. Rod had often suggested I come live in the park, so I called him up. I had ten days to get out of my house, so I went over to look at a home that was available. "It was really nice. I can do this."

I have been here ever since. I really enjoy it, and it's really cost effective. "It's affordable housing, that is what it is. I wish I had done it years ago."

At first, I rented from Rod, but when RV Horizons bought the park, I bought the home outright from him. In 2015, the community converted to resident ownership.

Why did you join the co-op Board of Directors?

"Because no one else would take it."

It is hard to buy a park and set up a Board. When we first converted to resident ownership, we didn't have anyone that knew what to do. As a result, nothing was happening, and the in-fighting started. I became frustrated that nothing was getting done; someone needed to step in and take charge. So, I did. That was six years ago.

What challenges does your community face?

The biggest challenge is battling to come up with the money to do the repairs around the park. When people move out their homes, it is really hard to bring new residents in. Pretty soon you are going to have an empty park with high lot rents if you don't do something. So, the Board focuses on making sure they do whatever it takes to keep lot rents stable and bring new homes into the park.

Over the last five years, I have built up a relationship with a dealer that works with Highland homes, and it has worked out really well. In the last three years, we have brought in five new homes. The sixth one is ready to go in now.

How did you build a relationship with a dealer to do infill?

First, I called Highland, a manufacturer of homes. But they told me if we wanted to buy a home, I would not be able to buy it direct from the

manufacturer. They said I needed to go through a dealer. The guy from Highland mentioned a particular dealer, and they connected me to him. I shared my goal of bringing homes into the park. If they were willing to put in a home, Hillcrest would bankroll the lot prep then, when home sold, they would want to pad prep money back so they could revolve it. Since we came to this agreement, we have not put in a penny in. In 2022 we put in two new homes. In February, we got another one and they are delivered it. All new homes. The price of the new homes can be steep (\$70k- \$97K), so it can be a real challenge to sell them. I find most people are financing the homes these days.

Other thing HCC is doing: if people are going to sell their home, I recommend them coming to the office. The co-op buys the home from them, rehabs it, then resells it. Currently, I am working on a 3 bed, 3 bath. I renovate it, then sell it, which keeps the home in the park. I have done this eight times now. When I first started as Board President, three homes were sold and removed from the park. That's the thing that is hurting most parks.

“You should do whatever what you can do to save these homes.”

I work with the onsite manager to rehab the homes right now. It is specialized work, completely different than residential homes.

What do you like about your community?

It has become a really nice, quiet community. The people here are all really good. That is what pushed us to renovate our storm shelter – so the kids in our community will have access to computers.



Gary Olson and onsite manager Tricia Lau in the completely renovated, handicap accessible, 3,100 sq ft, storm shelter. It will include a computer room, a small library, big screen TV, counter with a sink and more. “We want to bring people back together and have fun.”

**Farewell
Bill
Glidden,
your
neighbors
at Prairie
Lake
Estates
will miss
you**



William “Bill” Glidden passed away peacefully on February 2, 2023. Bill was one of the founding members of and a long-time homeowner at Prairie Lake Estates Homeowners Cooperative, Kenosha, WI, serving on the cooperative’s interim Board of Directors during the co-op’s formation and the community purchase process. After the community became resident-owned in 2013, Bill served as Vice President of the Board until November 2022. For over 20 years, he organized Wednesday night community bonfires. Bill will be remembered fondly by fellow homeowners for his commitment to park ownership, affordability, and the PLE community.

Born on July 1, 1944 in Racine, Wisconsin to parents, Richard and Emily (Podoba) Glidden, Bill grew up in Kenosha, attended local schools, and Gateway College. He received an associate degree in Drafting and furthered his schooling in industrial engineering. Over his nearly 40-year career, Bill worked at Ladish Tri-Clover/Alfa Laval as an industrial engineer, retiring in 2002. He met his wife of 56 years, Patricia (Murphy) in his early days at Ladish Tri-Clover. They were married in October of 1966, at St. Casimir Catholic Church.

Bill enjoyed spending time with his wife, Pat, daughters, Carrie and Wendy, and five grandchildren. He was extremely proud of all of them. He enjoyed camping with a group that began as the St. George Camping Group later becoming life-long friends. Bill loved spending winter months in Florida and summer weekends up north with his family. He was a deer hunter and an avid fan of NASCAR, the Green Bay Packers, UW Badger football, and the Chicago Cubs.

Manufactured home owners stand to win as 2023 MN legislative session winds down

By Joel Hanson

As you may have heard, or read, or seen on TV, the 2023 Minnesota legislative session has been one for the history books. Much has been accomplished. From free school lunches and breakfast for all students, to legalizing recreational marijuana, Minnesota's government has been moving at breakneck speed.

However, do not miss the legislative wins for manufactured home owners. The Minnesota Legislature and Governor agreed to spend a billion dollars on housing over the next two years. That is a nearly 700% increase in the state's housing budget! As a part of that, here are a few of the recently passed programs and policies that will benefit manufactured homeowners in Minnesota:

- ***\$15 million increase in funding for the Manufactured Home Community Redevelopment Fund***

The Governor signed into law a \$15 million increase in funding for the Manufactured Home Community Redevelopment (MHCR) program at the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). Many resident-owned cooperatives have used this grant program to pay for critical infrastructure projects for their communities, including storm shelters, sewer replacement, and roads. Last year, the program awarded \$9.5 million to manufactured housing communities across the state, with ROCs receiving \$5.9 million, nearly two-thirds of the available funds. However, communities in Minnesota requested over \$25 million in funding, showing a desperate need for money for this program. After the Senate and House increased funding for the program, there will be \$17 million available over the next two years for manufactured housing communities in the state.

- ***\$10 million for the creation of manufactured home lending grants***

The legislature and governor allocated \$10 million one-time for the creation of lending products that can be used by resident-owned manufactured housing cooperatives. MHFA will award grants to community-based lenders who will then create loan

products that:

1. Provide affordable interest rates to manufactured homeowners for their home loan;
2. Provide down payment assistance to new manufactured homeowners; and
3. Provide assistance and affordable loans for the rehab of existing manufactured homes.

This could help existing and new cooperatives expand their communities through new homes and rehab. Once these lending products are created, the hope is that they will be offered for years to come.

- ***\$10 million for the creation of a manufactured home park acquisition fund***

The state legislature created a \$10 million manufactured housing community acquisition fund that will be available to Minnesota residents of manufactured home parks to purchase their communities. Managed by NCF, the fund will be revolving, meaning residents would use it to buy their community, and then quickly pay the fund back so that other communities can use the fund. This should hopefully increase the number of resident-owned cooperatives and allow manufactured housing residents to compete in the marketplace against well financed out-of-state buyers.

- ***Tax-credit incentive for park owners to sell to residents***

The governor signed into law a tax incentive for manufactured home park owners to sell to their residents. This tax credit would make it so that any owner who sold to their residents, instead of another buyer, would stand to make more money from the sale. This should be a valuable tool for residents when negotiating the sale with their community owner.

- ***Notice of sale for manufactured homeowners***

As you know, manufactured home parks are often sold without residents being advised beforehand. This creates uneasiness and instability in the lives of community residents. A new provision passed into law creates a notice that manufactured home park owners are required to provide to their residents if they are considering selling the community. The notice would require the park owner to tell residents the terms of the offer they are considering.

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new elementary school.

El Nuevo Amanecer is home to many bi-lingual families. It is walking distance to the Gaylord Area Aquatic Center and a five-minute drive to Michael Foods, a nearby employer in this affordable town of 2,300 people about an hour west southwest of Minneapolis and a half hour north of Mankato, MN.

Like many parks, ENA inherited infrastructure that has suffered from years of neglect. One of the first things they will need to do is an intense amount of tree trimming and maintenance to protect their homes while trying to preserve as much of the tree cover as possible.

Please join NCF's staff in welcoming them to our resident-owned community network. It can be overwhelming in the beginning. They are only two months old; the Board would probably appreciate hearing from people with experience. Please reach out and say hello, perhaps let them know that you are available if they have questions, that it gets easier, and that it is worth all the effort.

El Nuevo Amanecer is on the shore of beautiful Titlow Lake



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It would potentially allow the residents to organize and meet or exceed the offer that the owner is considering. In addition, the state government would receive the notice from the park owner, and they would have to inform organizations who work in cooperative ownership that a park is for sale. Hopefully, this will allow for more transparency for manufactured homeowners.

In conclusion, Minnesota manufactured home owners should see real benefits to their lives from over \$35 million in additional legislative funding dedicated to programs that support them. Along

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will replace its water mains and connect to the City of Richfield's water system. Sewer work includes cleaning all lines, replacing some and relining others. An MHCR grant of just over \$1 million and \$350,000 from the City of Richfield will fund this project.



Beautiful new road surface at Sungold Heights Cooperative- ready for roller skating!

Design in Process, for construction in 2024:

Madelia Mobile Village received a new MHCR grant of \$500,000, which the community plans to combine with over \$300,000 in funds from its previous MHCR grant to build a new dual-use storm shelter and community center. The project is currently in the design phase. The community is meeting with engineers to specify building features and amenities that fit the community's needs and budget. Major construction will happen next year, and the building should be ready to use by Fall 2024.

Bennett Park Cooperative (Moorhead MN) and **Five Lakes Cooperative** (Fairmont MN) also received MHCR grants for major infrastructure projects. Bennett Park was granted \$2.6 million for upgrades to the community's water mains, sanitary and storm sewer, and roads. Five Lakes was granted \$2.2 million for upgrades to the community's sanitary sewer, storm sewer, roads, and sidewalks. Five Lakes may also use the funds to repair water lines and build a new storm shelter. Both Five Lakes and Bennett Park are meeting with engineers to define project details. For both communities, design work will happen this year and major construction next year.

with valuable policy changes, there is hope this legislative session has better positioned Minnesota manufactured home owners for the future. Stay tuned for more updates as these programs and policies get rolled out soon.



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Save the date!

**Common Ground Conference
Tierra Compartida Conferencia
September 12-16, 2023**

Join your colleagues from resident-owned housing cooperatives in MN & WI for a week of sharing, networking, skill building, and FUN.

- *Sept 12, 13 & 14 – evening virtual workshops*
- *Sept 15 – BBQ and networking social at Zumbro Ridge Estates*
 - *Sept 16 two hands-on, in-person workshops*