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Equal Opportunity Housing and Equal Opportunity Employment

Date: October 22, 2015

To: All Administrators of New Construction and Acquisition-Rehabilitation-Resale Awards

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Subject: Green Communities Criteria

Congratulations on your Impact Fund award through the 2015 Single Family RFP!

As an initial step, we have requested and will review your Green Communities Intended Methods form or forms. We offer the following tips and guidance to assist you in completing this form. Compliance with the most current Enterprise Green Communities Criteria, as amended by the most current Minnesota Overlay and Guide to these Criteria, is a contractual requirement. Compliance is subject to inspection. Failure to implement the criteria as described in your Intended Methods form and as otherwise required by the Criteria may constitute default under your grant/loan agreement.

General Tips about the Intended Methods Form

- Do not mix multiple activity types on one Intended Methods form (E.g. New Construction and Substantial/Moderate Rehab), as specific criteria apply to different activities. Complete only the criteria that apply to your activity.
- Focus on the mandatory criteria first (i.e., the “grey” boxes on the Intended Methods forms)
- Earning optional criteria is encouraged. Certain criteria are more easily achieved for single family ownership projects.
- The first column is required. The second column is for additional detail, indicated as required for some items in first one. It is also used to detail an alternative method of meeting the criteria, or to explain the first column.
- Enterprise tip: Integrate the Green Communities criteria into your building specifications.

How to Avoid Common Errors in Completing the Intended Methods Form

- **1.1a** (Integrative Design Meetings). You must provide documentation of integrated design meetings (e.g., meeting minutes).

- **2.3/2.4** (Compact Development). Many applicants didn't compute the Project Net Density correctly (as per EGCC). It is important to distinguish between Surrounding Net Residential Density and Project Net Density.

1. **The following steps should be used to correctly compute the Surrounding Net Residential Density:**

- a. Go to <http://apps.cnt.org/residential-density/>
- b. Enter a sample address in the target area. Hit search.
- c. The tool will compute a "households per acre" number. Multiply this number by 1.5 to get the Surrounding Net Residential Density for purposes of identifying the correct classification for your project. The three categories are:
 - **Urban / Small Cities:** 7 dwelling units per acre or more.
 - **Suburban / Mid-Size Towns:** Fewer than 7 dwelling units per acre.
 - **Rural / Tribal / Small Towns:** Many greater Minnesota qualify for this classification.
 - Projects classified as rural as defined in Section 520 of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490); any open country or any town, village, city or place that is not part of or associated with an urban area, and that:
 - Has a population in excess of 2,500 but not in excess of 10,000 if it is rural in character, or
 - Has a population in excess of 10,000 but not in excess of 20,000 and is not contained within a standard metropolitan statistical area
 - Projects eligible for funding under USDA Rural Housing Services programs
 - Projects located on Native American Reservations

The number that is computed will tell you which classification applies to your project.

There are different requirements for each classification.

2. **The following steps should be used to correctly compute the Project Net Residential Density:**

- a. Calculate project net density by taking the total dwelling units after construction, divided by the acreage of the entire tract down to one decimal point, minus the dedicated acreage of public street rights of way, riparian and wetland buffers, open space that has been dedicated through a conservation program, and other non-buildable areas. **NOTE: Many projects consist of existing lots in built-up areas, so subtracting off areas held in common or designated for public infrastructure may not be a relevant step.**
- a. Net density calculations do not include land that is set aside for future building phases or development. For multi-phased projects, the project net density should include only the portion of the parcel that is being used for that particular phase.
- b. If the project has a mix of development types, then the project team should calculate net density using a weighted average. Project Net Residential Density Requirements:
 - **Urban / Small Cities:** A minimum of at least 10 dwelling units per acre or at least 75% of surrounding net residential density, whichever is greater.
 - **Suburban / Mid-Size Towns:** A minimum of at least 7 dwelling units per acre or at least 75% of surrounding net residential density, whichever is greater.
 - **Rural / Tribal / Small Towns:** A minimum net density of 5 units per acre for detached or semi-detached houses; 10 units per acre for townhomes; 15 units per acre for apartments.

- **3.6** (Surface Stormwater Management) – If pursuing this optional criterion, be sure to provide a brief narrative of the design strategies and systems that will be implemented, and **indicate the calculated volume of water which will be retained, infiltrated, or harvested on site for all sites.**
- **6.3/6.4** (Construction Waste Management) – The requirement is to reduce non-hazardous construction waste by at least 25% by weight. **One way to respond is to provide a Construction Waste Management Plan.8.2** (Resident’s Manual) –You must provide a Resident’s Manual and product manuals to homebuyers. You **may also** choose to cover this material during a homebuyer education class (e.g., the intent, benefits, use, and maintenance of green building features, and a routine maintenance plan), but **a homebuyer education class alone is not sufficient.** In the past, **Enterprise Green Communities has provided a template for a Resident’s Manual for ownership units, at <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/solutions-and-innovation/enterprise-green-communities/resources/tools>. A specific example is here <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/resources/ResourceDetails?ID=65051.pdf>.** Contact **Minnesota Housing for other examples.**
- **8.3** (Resident Orientation) - A walk-through orientation is required. The Resident’s Manual might also serve as a guide during the New Resident Orientation.

Recommendations

- Consider Enterprise Green Communities Criteria Certification. Projects which fail to meet the Criteria - in critical ways that impact building performance - generally do so not a result of cutting corners, but because of a lack of detail in design documents, scopes of work, misreading of design requirements or documents, or small details which are missed in the midst of the complexity of building. Enterprise Certification provides an extra set of expert eyes checking that details are not missed. Completing certification through Enterprise – which carries no direct cost –provides assurances that the building is designed to meet the Green Communities Criteria and that it is built as designed. See the Minnesota Overlay for streamlined (non-portal) submission process. Additional details are here: <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/solutions-and-innovation/enterprise-green-communities/certification>
- **All acquisition/rehabilitation/resale project administrators** should contact the local county-based **CAP agency** (at <http://www.mncaa.org/ourmembers.html>) to determine if weatherization subsidy is available. CAP serve any qualified low income household at 200% of the federal poverty level, adjusted for family size (i.e. likely between 50-60% of the area median income).
- Utility conservation programs from CenterPoint and Xcel or your local utility to achieve 5.1a (new) or 5.1c (rehab). The project may be able to access residential utility of rebates and technical assistance. If the project has not already done so, connect with both natural gas and electric utilities as soon as possible, as their resources may influence building or mechanical design AND greater rebates are available if they are contacted very early in the design process.
 1. Xcel Energy – If units are residentially metered (every unit pays own electric), contact Yvonne Pfeifer, yvonne.m.pfeifer@xcelenergy.com, 612.330.5740
 2. CenterPoint Energy – If units are residentially metered (every unit pays own utilities), contact Ryan Setterholm, 612-321-4482. He can connect you with insulation air sealing program and rebates.
- Strongly consider earning optional points for 4.2, Advanced Water-Conserving Appliances and Fixtures. Water conservation is the most cost-effective item to implement, after integrative design. The

incremental cost to go beyond mandatory conservation standards in the Criteria has a short pay-back period.

- Give careful consideration to occupant behavior during design. Placement of light switches and thermostats, the model of programmable thermostats and ventilation fans, the durability of finish materials, and many other details impact on the way residents live in their homes – including whether they use less or more water or heat, or manage moisture effectively. Here is a basic tip:
 - Make the preferred behavior the default behavior. For example, install programmable thermostats pre-programmed to set back during work/school hours, rather than programmable thermostats that residents are responsible for programming. (It is possible to purchase them pre-programmed this way.)

Technical Assistance

Minnesota Housing staff are available to answer your questions regarding Green Communities Criteria. Contact Nick Boettcher at nick.boettcher@state.mn.us or 651.296.9567 with questions or for more information.