



MUTUAL HOUSING

CALIFORNIA

SHAPING PLACES • SHAPING LIVES

Before moving into an apartment at Mutual Housing at Spring Lake, Maribel Díaz and her husband lived in a mobile home along with her mother and two young sons. Affordable housing was hard to come by on her farm laborer wages, a common issue in Woodland. The city's economy is built on agriculture – not many jobs are high paying and many are seasonal.

"A lot of our workforce are people of modest means, and they need places to live," said Tom Stallard, Woodland city councilmember. "A lot of people are under-housed or not housed at all.

To help meet the city's affordable housing needs, Mutual Housing California developed Mutual Housing at Spring Lake in 2015. The residential community has 62 apartments and townhomes dedicated to agricultural workers and their families.

In addition to affordable rent, the community provides myriad supports and services that enable residents to thrive. Broadband services are available to everyone, as is a computer lab. Residents enjoy shared spaces like playgrounds, gardens and a community room for events. Programs such as financial literacy classes, ESL, college planning and leadership development give residents the tools to improve their lives, as well as the lives of their families.

Mutual Housing at Spring Lake was certified by the U.S. Department of Energy as a 100 percent zero-net energy rental housing development, later established as the first of its kind in the nation. With energy-efficient systems and appliances, LED lighting, and water efficient plumbing, together with solar panels that generate electricity, residents enjoy reduced utility bills that can help their paychecks stretch farther.

According to Stallard, such programs and supports are the main difference between Mutual Housing and other housing communities. "We have a great deal of Section 8 housing...in our community, but there's no program development," he said. "These are privately owned accommodations that just don't have the amenities that Mutual Housing at Spring Lake does." In addition to creating affordable, sustainable and quality communities for residents, Stallard said Mutual Housing was adept at working with the city to meet their regulations and requirements.

"From the city's perspective, it was a pleasure to work with them," he said. "I knew they were interested in building up lives. Their residents are not just the workers, but the families, their children."

Since moving into Mutual Housing at Spring Lake, Díaz said her family's life has improved because housing is no longer a source of stress and uncertainty.

"I have my own place, I have my own space, my kids have their own rooms. They have somewhere to play – before they didn't have anywhere to play," she said. "It's peaceful, everybody gets along."

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