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Habitat Breaks Ground on Historic Affordable Housing Development

Alexandria, MN (July 11, 2024) – Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County broke ground on Summer Meadows, the first affordable housing development in Alexandria since 2002 and the largest project in the 27-year history of the organization.

The community gathered at the Ground Blessing ceremony held July 9 to celebrate the momentous occasion. “Today is not only a historic day for Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County, but a truly transformative one for the City of Alexandria,” stated Lori Anderson, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County. “Through building 42 affordable homes, we’re not just building houses, we’re helping families stay afloat and build a brighter future.”

Among those present included Alexandria City Mayor, Bobbie Osterberg, who commented on how Summer Meadows is an example of the “coming together of so many people and resources to create something greater than the individual parts,” further stating, “That is the culture of the Alexandria community. We come together and make things happen.”

Through the partnership of the City of Alexandria with approval of the Planned Unit Development, the guidance and insight from the Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission to achieve TIF financing, and the USDA Rural Development site loan, the Summer Meadows development is a testament to the unwavering support of the Habitat founders, volunteers, donors, supporters, and everyone who believes in the mission.

Tony Loosbrock, Habitat Board Chair, commented, “I am so excited for the 42 future Habitat homeowners, who are such strong and determined people, striving to better their lives and keep growing. We are blessed to serve them. [This project] supports Habitat’s strategic plan to build and serve more, as well as the City’s comprehensive plan.”

“You are doing amazing work,” added Colleen Landkamer, State Director for USDA. “Safe and affordable housing makes a huge difference in the lives of families and you are making it happen. [Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County] is the first one in the state to take on a site like this. Congratulations, this shows the strength of your private and public sectors.”

Habitat homeowner and Board Director, Jenna Hill, explained, “My family has been in our home for two years and we are still in awe. Habitat has impacted our lives now and forever. I used to feel ashamed that I could not provide my children with a home they were proud of and have friends come over,” adding, “Life hasn’t always been easy for me, but one obstacle I no longer have to worry about is affordable housing and a place for my kids to feel safe and loved because we *have* that! We can now create memories and build a future – this is the feeling for 42 more families here. Without hope and this community believing in Habitat’s mission, I wouldn’t be standing here today to tell you all thank you.

Because of this community, not only does my family have a home, but we will continue to bless many other families. Thank you.”

A moment of reflection was taken at the ceremony to honor Board Director Tom Klemenhagen who recently passed away. Tom “spearheaded the concept of this large-scale development. His expertise on our Construction Committee, his keen eye for land selection, and his unwavering mentorship to [our team and Board] were invaluable to this project,” remarked Anderson. “We know Tom is beaming with pride thinking about the 42 families who will call Summer Meadows home, and the children who will be riding bikes through the neighborhood, playing in the park, and the families who will become neighbors.”

The homes of Summer Meadows will serve area residents earning 80% or below of the area median income. “Summer Meadows isn’t just about addressing the critical need for housing today, it is also about creating a sustainable community for tomorrow. Habitat homes incorporate energy-efficient features and promote affordable upkeep. This ensures that these homes remain affordable for future generations, continuing to address Alexandria’s housing needs for years to come. Summer Meadows is a beacon of hope, not just for the families who will call it home, but for the entire city of Alexandria,” said Anderson.

Infrastructure work, including a new road, sewer, water, and boulevard trees is underway. The first homes of Summer Meadows are expected to begin construction in spring of 2025.

Habitat’s strategic plan is to build five homes this year. In addition to building within the Summer Meadows development, Habitat will continue to build homes throughout Douglas County as opportunities arise.

For more information about Summer Meadows, visit our website at hfhdouglascounty.org.

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About Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County

Habitat for Humanity of Douglas County has been an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International since 1997 and has built or renovated 88 houses and completed 88 Aging in Place projects throughout Douglas County. Habitat works in partnership with people in need to build or renovate affordable housing. Homebuyers are selected according to established criteria: need for housing, willingness to partner with Habitat, and ability to pay. They purchase the homes from Habitat with affordable mortgages. Tax-deductible donations of money, land, and materials are provided by individuals, organizations, churches, foundations, and businesses. Habitat is an equal housing opportunity. For more information on how to support Habitat or get involved contact the affiliate at 320.762.4255, e-mail at info@hfhdouglascounty.org, or the website at hfhdouglascounty.org.



Pictured left to right: Scott Allen (City Council – Ward III), Heather Smith Ahrens (Habitat Director of Operations), Mayor Bobbie Osterberg, Roger Thalman (City Council – Ward II), Lori Anderson (Habitat Executive Director), Marty Schultz (City Administrator), Bill Franzen (City Council – Ward 1), and Nicole Fernholz (Executive Director, Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission)



Pictured above: 3D rendering of the Summer Meadows Development