



Community Preservation Corp. achieves carbon neutral operations

December 15, 2020 - Front Section

New York, NY The Community Preservation Corp. (CPC), a leading nonprofit affordable housing and community revitalization finance company, has achieved carbon neutral operations. CPC is the first real estate nonprofit to set and achieve this goal, demonstrating a commitment to industry leadership in sustainability, while providing innovative and practical financing solutions for building owners and lenders.

“With the lending industry’s influence over the economics and conditions of our housing stock, we have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to lead by example with respect to reducing our carbon footprint,” said Rafael Cestero, president and CEO of CPC. “As a nonprofit organization, our work to achieve and maintain carbon neutrality is a natural continuation of our mission to improve the quality and sustainability of the communities in which we live and work. We set ambitious goals as a company, and I’m proud of our team for buying into our plan and adopting real changes that allowed us to achieve our carbon neutral status.”

“As the climate crisis grows more urgent, CPC is proud to be a leader in the multifamily real estate industry’s movement toward high-performance buildings,” said Sadie McKeown, EVP, head of construction lending and initiatives at CPC. “Pollution, global warming, severe weather events and other impacts of climate change are affecting the health and stability of our communities. When we talk to our borrowers and peers about bringing energy efficiency to the multifamily sector, it was important to us that we’re having those conversations from a place of accountability as a carbon neutral company.”

CPC achieved carbon neutral operations in 2020, reflecting operational emissions from activities in fiscal year 2019. The company used a three-pronged approach: Measuring operational carbon emissions, developing an emissions reduction strategy focused on employee education and engagement, and offsetting remaining emissions. The first step was completing a Greenhouse Gas Assessment (also known as a “carbon footprint”) to measure and track total emissions annually for Scope 1, Scope 2, and select aspects of Scope 3. CPC retained EcoAct, a respected international sustainability consultancy, to help develop and implement its carbon neutral strategy.

“Reducing our climate footprint is crucial in the fight against climate change and carbon neutrality is a tool that can help achieve a healthier and more sustainable environment for all, said Lindsay Robbins director, energy efficiency for all at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). “CPC’s achievement of carbon neutral operations is a great example of their leadership in

sustainability efforts in the field of affordable housing.”

Greg Hale, senior advisor for energy efficiency markets and finance, The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) said, “As an advisor on NYSERDA’s Carbon Neutral Buildings Roadmap, the Community Preservation Corporation is already leading by example, and by adopting carbon neutral operations CPC is now positioning itself as an industry leader in New York’s transition to a clean energy economy. By achieving this important milestone, CPC is highlighting how businesses and the private sector are playing an essential role in meeting the state’s climate and clean energy agenda under Governor Cuomo’s leadership.”

The company executed on a set of ambitious goals to achieve carbon neutral operations, including instituting energy saving measures at all of CPC’s six field offices, establishing a Carbon Neutral Working Group with representatives from each department and field office to help identify carbon reduction opportunities and execute on the corporate goals, and by implementing a composting program. A key component of CPC’s success was its employee engagement campaign which focused on education about the benefits of energy conservation, composting and recycling; low-carbon commuting and business travel; and waste reduction strategies.

Additionally, through the direct funding of emissions mitigation efforts, CPC was able to achieve carbon neutrality by supporting projects that are in close proximity to the communities it serves and align with the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These carbon offset projects are validated, verified and registered under internationally recognized offset standards.

Achieving carbon neutral operations demonstrates the company’s longstanding commitment to sustainability and energy efficiency, and is an extension of CPC’s leadership in financing sustainable buildings, and providing the multifamily industry with the tools to take action on reducing their own emissions.

According to New York City’s One City: Built to Last plan, the city’s buildings are responsible for the overwhelming share of its emissions. Increasing opportunities to move the built environment towards energy efficiency represents an enormous opportunity to improve the quality and resilience of the housing stock, lower operating expenses, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing value to building owners, tenants, and communities.

The company recently launched a comprehensive guide for high-performance new construction, a resource for all multifamily building stakeholders that demonstrates the practical benefits of designing, financing, building, and maintaining high-performance new construction, as well as the non-energy benefits that add value to the physical asset and to the lives of the tenants and communities it serves.

The new Financing High-Performance guide is the latest contribution of CPC’s sustainability platform, formed in 2008 to carry out the organization’s energy efficiency and de-carbonization initiatives. Its mission is to promote energy and water conservation measures to improve the financial and physical quality of the buildings and communities in which we live and work. Since

2013, CPC has financed nearly 7,000 units of energy efficient, affordable housing. The cost savings associated with energy efficient measures plays a key role in ensuring the long-term economic stability and affordability of multifamily properties.

In 2017, CPC launched its Underwriting Efficiency handbook to serve as a free resource for lenders in their efforts to incorporate energy and water efficiency features into the financing of first mortgages for multifamily building owners. Underwriting the energy savings and providing additional low-cost, long-term capital can help reduce the financial barriers that building owners of all sizes currently face in implementing sustainable property improvements. In 2018, CPC launched CPC, a free interactive software application that calculates the potential cost savings of energy-efficient upgrades to multifamily buildings.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540