

# Urban Studio Apartments

Duluth, Minnesota (opened December 2008)



**Developer/Sponsor** Women in Construction Company LLC (WiCC)

**Architect** DSGW Architects

**General Contractor** Women in Construction Company LLC

**Units** 9

**Project Description** The project was developed to create high quality, energy efficient, and affordable housing options for people who work in the downtown Duluth area and make less than 80 percent of area median income. Women in Construction already owned a downtown building that was purchased in 2006; the building was in need of renovation and half of the building was vacant. WiCC moved its offices and cabinet shop into the first floor, rented out the basement to another business, and then started to develop the nine units of housing on the second floor of the building.

Each unit has its own kitchen and bathroom and range from 425–450 square feet. The average monthly rent of a unit is \$450 including all utilities. On-site laundry is available as well as a rooftop patio for tenants to use for entertaining and gardening. Tenants are able to bike, walk, or bus to work and shopping, banking, recreation, and other amenities. A sushi bar, restaurant, and lounge is located on the first floor of the building along with the WiCC offices.

**A Green Advantage** Urban Studio Apartments features an array of green and sustainable improvements in order to best serve the community and the residents. These include:

- Re-use of existing vacant building—next to public transportation and close to downtown amenities.
- Energy Star appliances and lighting.
- Low-flow faucets and showerheads.
- Dual flush toilets.
- No-VOC paints.
- Heat Recovery Ventilator System.
- Exhausted Energy Star bathroom fans.
- High efficiency gas boiler.
- In-floor heat with programmable thermostats in each unit.
- Triple-pane, low-e windows.
- Solar domestic hot water system.
- Solid surface flooring that meets “GreenGuard” specifications.
- Green roof planting.
- Dense-pack cellulose insulation in walls and ceilings.



## Project Financing

<b>Minnesota Green Communities</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>
Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (Challenge Funds)	\$343,665
Hanaloi, Inc.	\$225,000
Duluth Economic Development Authority (Loan)	\$124,301
North Shore Bank (Mortgage)	\$124,301
LISC	\$100,000
WiCC	\$98,000
Duluth LISC/Home Depot	\$32,500
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (CIP)	\$6,000
Energy Rebates (Comfort Systems)	\$10,207
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>\$1,086,697</b>
*Interim financing	

[www.mngreencommunities.org](http://www.mngreencommunities.org)

A collaboration of the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, the Family Housing Fund, and Enterprise

**Rents** Urban Studios provides affordable, high quality housing for low-income downtown workers. Approximately half of the units are affordable to individuals at 60 percent of area median income and the remaining units to families at 80 percent of area median income.

**Amenities** Urban Studio Apartments includes a rooftop patio area with gardens, barbeque area, and fantastic views of Lake Superior. Women in Construction’s office is located on the first level of the building. Next to the office is a new restaurant *Hanabi-Japanese Cuisine*, featuring a sushi bar and dining area. Urban Studios is located in the downtown area with direct connection to transit and convenient access to walking/biking trails within a few blocks. Tenants are able to walk to business, shopping, and entertainment.

**Developer** Women in Construction Company LLC is a subsidiary LLC owned by Women in Construction Training Program, a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide training and employment opportunities to low-income women and men who lack the resources or access to jobs in the construction industry. Women in Construction is the developer, general contractor, and owner. Women in Construction was developed in 2000 and since then has built and/or renovated over 120 units of affordable and market-rate housing. WiCC is a sustainable company specializing in historic renovation, energy efficient and green building practices, and creating local jobs for low-income people.

**Contact Information** Property Management by Women In Construction. Please contact (218) 733-1451 or visit [www.womenworking.org/solarhouse/urbanstudios.htm](http://www.womenworking.org/solarhouse/urbanstudios.htm).

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**Lessons Learned** “The creation of high quality, affordable, energy efficient housing for downtown workers has proven to be a great success. Within 30 days of opening, we had 100 percent occupancy and now have an active waiting list. The building is fully sustainable—with rents from the apartments and the commercial space paying for all operating costs. The building is so efficient that the total utility costs are one-third of what we had anticipated. Our building exceeds even Minnesota Energy Code for new construction, and while these measures did increase the cost of construction, it has reduced the operating budget.

The only challenge we experienced was working with the utility companies in determining a rebate amount that would match the CIP grant. Making a building more efficient does not necessarily mean higher rebates from the utility companies and can be a very frustrating process. Make sure to get in writing a schedule of what kinds of improvements will generate a rebate and use that as a guide in determining your budget.”

—Michelle LeBeau, Executive Director, Women in Construction Company LLC



Minnesota Green Communities, a collaboration of the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, the Family Housing Fund, and Enterprise, is an initiative designed to foster the creation of affordable, healthier, and more energy-efficient housing throughout Minnesota. The initiative will support the production of affordable housing with markedly reduced energy costs, use of materials beneficial to the environment, conservation-minded land use planning, and attention to the creation of healthy environments and lifestyles for individuals, children, families, and communities. For more information, please visit [www.mngreencommunities.org](http://www.mngreencommunities.org).

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