

# ENTERPRISING RURAL FAMILIES



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## Guernsey Success

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Guernsey is an example of small actions leading to community-wide success. The six members of Growing Guernsey (G2) saw a need for affordable housing in their community and formed a nonprofit to tackle the challenge. Each member approached the venture as a good deed for Guernsey instead of a profit machine. After building or renovating six homes and apartments, G2 happily broke even.

*This newsletter is an instrument of the Enterprising Rural Families:*

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*For further information concerning the Enterprising Rural Families*

*Program or on-line course contact [information@eRuralFamilies.org](mailto:information@eRuralFamilies.org) or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.*

## Projects

- \*Purchased and renovated an empty downtown building, which now has full occupancy.
- \*Purchased at auction the “pink apartments”, a former town eyesore, and sold to a contractor for renovation.
- \*Purchased an oversized lot with a rundown trailer, split into two lots and built a home on each.
- \*Purchased a second lot and built a home.
- \*Helped the Wyoming Housing network build a new, 12-unit apartment.

## What worked..

- \*Doing a lot of the work themselves, thus saving money – sweat equity.
- \*Took advantage of sales, (i.e. Menards 11% rebate).
- \*Town cooperation was key. The group took one oversized lot and made it into two lots (lots supposed to be 7,700 square-feet, got approval for two 6,500 square-foot lots).
- \*Knew going in it wasn’t going to be a money maker.
- \*Built on the momentum of two activists focused on creating positive change in the community.
- \*Mostly in-community owners.
- \*Building a sense of community support was essential (parades, movies, community gatherings).



## Unintended Opportunities

\*Bunning @ industrial park (A new nail and hair salon has found success thanks to an increased population with disposable income thanks to affordable housing).

\*Renewed community pride.

\*More business sprucing up their buildings and restoring older buildings.

\*Two older hotels downtown undergoing renovations.

\*Other homeowners improving their property.

## Continuing Housing Needs

Guernsey continues to need workforce rental housing in the \$1,100 – \$1,400 range. Camp Guernsey estimates 90% of their workforce live outside of Guernsey due to lack of housing. About 100 more units could be utilized by this employer alone.

Building downtown purchase by G2. G2 members did all the cleanup themselves and started a trend toward other businesses on the block fixing up their buildings. Four other businesses on the block have completed, or are working on, improving their properties.

Before



After



## Guernsey Success



Purchased at auction, the “pink apartments”, were an eyesore in town. A contractor updated the apartments and the property now provides much needed affordable units.

Two of the houses built by G2. They picked modest floor plans from a book and hired a contractor to build both houses.

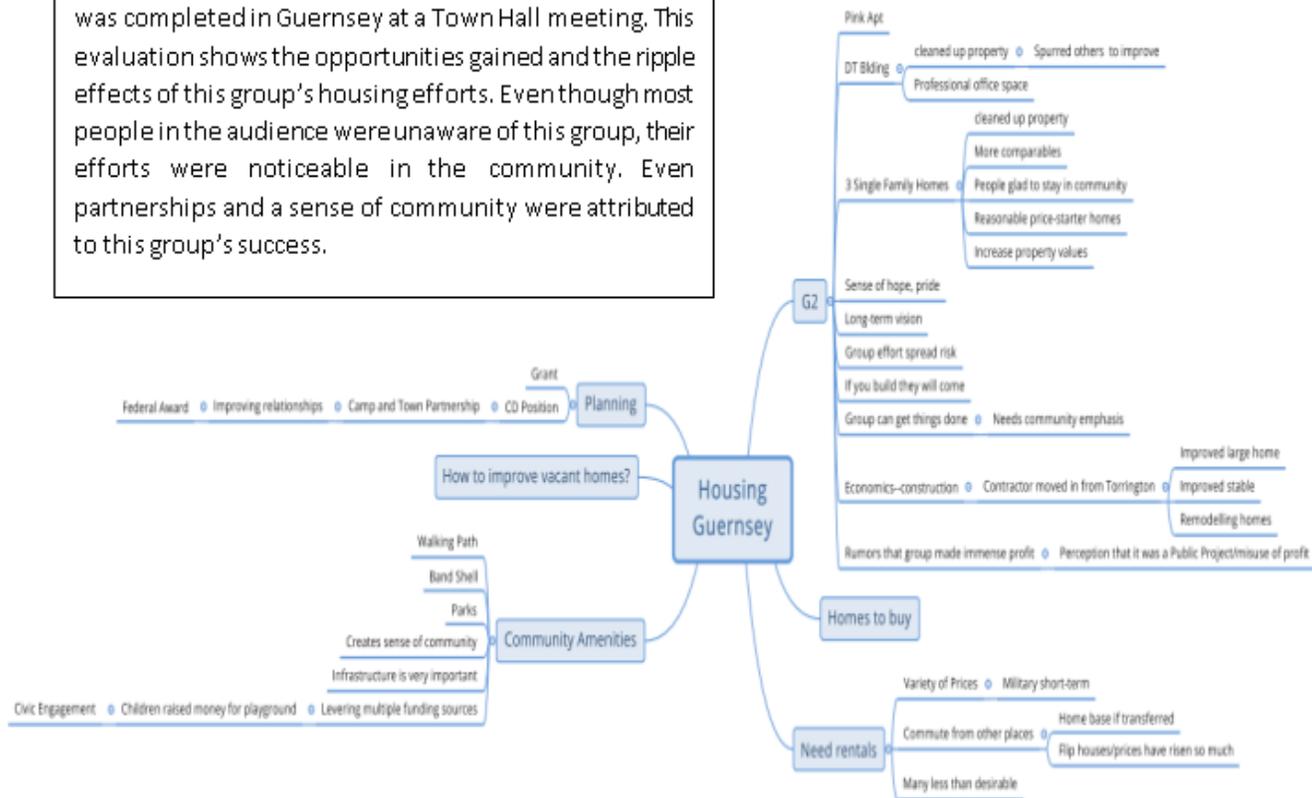


The house above features three bedrooms, two baths and a two-car garage. It sold for \$147,000.



The house above features three bedrooms, two baths and a two-car garage and sold for \$154,000.

A process called "*Ripple Effect Mapping for Evaluation*" was completed in Guernsey at a Town Hall meeting. This evaluation shows the opportunities gained and the ripple effects of this group's housing efforts. Even though most people in the audience were unaware of this group, their efforts were noticeable in the community. Even partnerships and a sense of community were attributed to this group's success.





### **Advice for others**

\*A small investor group could partner with a contractor to finance work and keep costs down, while providing a job to contractor.

\*Look at infill in your town (empty lots, abandoned properties).

\*The value of a community leader, organizer, and firecracker is immeasurable. Bruce Heimbeck is a shining example. He led the housing effort. Guernsey was also awarded 10 grants totaling more than \$3M. He used the group's Economic Development Committee money to stretch those dollars. He used the Community Plan, funded by the WBC as a job description and a checklist. Guernsey's future plans include a master plan to link trails to Camp Guernsey and significant historic sites in the area, in addition to creating new service sector businesses, such as a tire repair shop.

\*Stay in contact with the contractor to make sure deadline and budgets are met.

\*Watch for sales and buy in bulk.

### **The Process**

The Wyoming Business Council first met with G2 to determine the value of the story. To take a deeper dive, the team went back into the community and hosted a series of focus groups to create a more well-rounded picture. The Business Council held a public meeting at the end of the process to include all perspectives on the housing projects and use "Ripple Effect Mapping" to show the unintended opportunities G2 created with their projects.