In March 2018, fresh from winning a prestigious World Habitat Award (see the spring issue for details) affiliated with the United Nations, Mutual Housing at Spring Lake in Woodland, Calif., broke ground on Phase Two of its innovative housing development for agricultural workers and their families.

Mutual Housing at Spring Lake’s original 62 affordable apartments and townhomes opened in 2015. Designed and built specifically for Yolo County’s low-income agricultural workforce, the community was the first multifamily development certified by the U.S. Department of Energy as zero-net energy, meaning it was designed to produce as much energy as residents are projected to use.

The next Positive Net Energy phase advances that efficiency even more, adding another 39 dwelling units designed to produce slightly more energy than the community needs.

“Mutual Housing at Spring Lake has been a great success,” said Roberto Jiménez, Mutual Housing California’s chief executive officer. “We are delighted that the financing and all the other hard work came together to add more units and make the community even more energy sustainable.”

Mutual Housing at Spring Lake uses energy efficient building construction techniques, materials and all-electric equipment, such as heat pump water heaters and HVAC system to create energy savings for its residents. The solar panel system is designed to offset those lower energy bills.

Part of Mutual Housing’s mission is to empower residents to help manage their own communities and to train future community leaders. Mutual Housing at Spring Lake residents also have a vested interest in using energy efficiently. They are trained to use energy efficient equipment installed in their homes and are involved in learning and sharing ideas on other sustainability behaviors such as recycling and water saving.

The project is funded from a variety of sources, including federal and state tax credits and loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the city of Woodland.