



# Capstone Project: Cornerstone to Development

**Carsey School student determined to help alleviate New Hampshire’s housing shortage**

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Having worked in community development for over a decade, James Vayo was looking to take a step forward in his career. “I had strengths in planning and technical knowledge of development but lacked the academic best practices and research knowledge used by community development practitioners,” says Vayo. In order to build those skills and knowledge, he enrolled in the [Carsey School of Public Policy’s Master in Community Development \(MCD\)](#) program.

Vayo was particularly drawn to the MCD program for its [capstone project](#) model where students put theory into practice through a major, yearlong applied project. “My long-term goal is to have a meaningful impact on housing conditions in southern New Hampshire,” says Vayo. “The capstone project allows me to apply my knowledge to a problem I am passionate about and use new concepts and skills from the classroom to develop real-world solutions.”

Vayo is undertaking his project while connecting with experts in the field and getting training in project design, implementation, management and evaluation. “The MCD program is providing me with new and useful tools that I can apply to both my work at Southern NH Planning Commission and to my project efforts to bring about new housing options for the residents of our state,” Vayo says. “I am learning what it takes to craft a fully considered development plan for housing... I understand now that the process of community development requires understanding the community’s needs and desires and garnering the support needed for success.”

Vayo encourages future MCD students to enter the program with a project in mind: “Think of something you are passionate about. If you understand the subject matter, know where you want to go and care about the outcomes you will be positioned to take full advantage of everything the MCD program has to offer and will receive the guidance needed to achieve your goals.”

## Learn more about the Carsey School of Public Policy's Master in Community Development.

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