

Colorado Mountain College celebrates the opening of 36 affordable housing units for staff, students

Faculty, residents and community members visit the new apartment building located next to the college's Vail Valley Edwards campus

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Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley student Gil Amaya cuts the ribbon during the unveiling of the new campus apartments Tuesday in Edwards. Two buildings were built in collaboration between the school and Eagle County, with each building having 36 units.

Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

EDWARDS — On Tuesday, Sept. 19, Colorado Mountain College celebrated the opening of the first apartment building next to its Vail Valley campus in Edwards. The building welcomed its first residents — a mixture of students and staff from the neighboring campus — before school started this fall.

Marc Brennan, the vice president and campus dean of the Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley campus, said that the project and new housing option represent a new step toward the college's mission of elevating the lives of those living in mountain communities.

"Affordable housing — and the availability of stable housing — is quite possibly the number one challenge facing our community. We at CMC know this is a challenge that something that clearly affects our students. Being a student is often a challenging enough experience, and a lack of housing inventory and the increasing cost of living can make the experience even more difficult," Brennan said at Tuesday's ribbon cutting.

"The affordable housing projects here complement what we get to do over there," he added, gesturing to the Vail Valley campus next door. "With affordable housing, our new programs, our existing offerings, we are poised more than ever to transform the lives of students. And in doing so, we hope to continue to contribute to the viability and vitality of this wonderful community we get to call home."

The building is one of two that is currently being constructed on the Edwards site. The second is being built in partnership with Eagle County and will be occupied by a mix of Eagle County government employees, CMC students, and staff members as well as eligible individuals who live and work full-time in the county. The second building is still under construction and is expected to be completed sometime this October.

Carrie Besnette Hauser, president and CEO of Colorado Mountain College, hinted that a third building on the site may be imminent: “Stay tuned,” she said.



The interior of one of the new apartments at the Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley campus in Edwards.
Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

Each building contains 36 rental units, 24 of which are studios and 12 of which are two-bedroom units. Each apartment has a full kitchen, full bathroom and living space, with “rents below market rates,” which are based on 60% of the county area median income (regardless of student income), according to the school.

Not only that, but the Edwards complex is part of the college’s “bold vision to create more housing options in our mountain communities,” Hauser said.

In 2021, the college’s board of trustees approved a [\\$45 million initiative](#) to bring affordable and student housing to its campuses. The school has constructed identical buildings at its Breckenridge, Steamboat Springs and Spring Valley at Glenwood Springs campuses in addition to the Vail Valley campus for a total of 144 units.

“We know this is only the beginning of what’s needed by our students, our faculty and staff, and we certainly remain committed to being part of the housing solution in our communities,” Hauser said.



People gather Tuesday for the official dedication of the new Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley apartments in Edwards. Two buildings have been built, one funded by the school and the other by Eagle County.
Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

“This is not going to solve the crisis, right? It will contribute and it will help alleviate some of the pressure. Our students who will have opportunities to live here will ease up the housing for other individuals who are looking for housing in this community. So we really hope that these buildings will provide a safe launching point for CMC students and for employees as well,” she added.

One of the building’s first renters and residents is Gil Amaya, who is currently taking classes at CMC to become an EMT and further his education as a first responder.

On Tuesday, Amaya said he was born and raised in the Vail Valley by a single mother. He said his mom raised him to set an example for his four younger siblings, something he did by becoming the first of his family to graduate high school and get into college.

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But as he left home for college, Amaya said his life took an unexpected turn.

“I dropped out of school and I found myself doing the exact opposite. I was not proud of the person I let myself become. I was lost, ashamed, and in a dark place. I couldn’t help my community or make a difference in anybody’s life. I couldn’t even help myself,” he said.



Colorado Mountain College Vail Valley student Gil Amaya speaks Tuesday at the ribbon cutting for the new CMC campus apartments in Edwards. Each building has 36 units, and two buildings have been built so far.
Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

But, Amaya ultimately decided to move back home to the Vail Valley, “with a big mess to clean up,” he said.

“My mom let me move back home and she said, ‘An eagle that doesn’t leave the nest is eventually known as a turkey,’” Amaya said.

Amaya soon enrolled at CMC to work toward his goal of serving and helping others in times of need.

“I started looking at CMC for a second chance. CMC provided options for me as a non-traditional student to work on a career that I could be proud of and use my passion for health and wellness,” Amaya said.

“CMC made it possible for me to serve my community, help others in their time of need, and impact people’s lives, but more importantly, be an example that my brothers and sisters can look up to and be proud of.”

Now, in moving into the new apartment building next to campus, the school has given him something else as well.

“CMC has given me a home and a career to leave the nest as a Colorado Mountain College Eagle and not a turkey,” Amaya said.