

JULIA BETH EVERITT

This woman helped create 1,000 affordable apartments

By Jim Memmott
Contributor

Julia Beth Everitt got things done. And because of her, thousands of families in the Rochester area have decent homes.

"She fought and sacrificed for many people who would never know her," said Monica McCollough, the CEO of MM Development Advisors Inc., a real estate development and affordable housing consulting company. "She battled the zoning boards; she battled the state; she battled for housing. She was a true hero of the community."

Everitt, who died on Jan. 2 at age 84, left a legacy of more than 1,000 affordable apartments, as well as many single-family homes.

To her, every empty city lot was the possible site for a new house, every neighborhood the location for an apartment or two.

She helped bring affordable housing to the Marketview Heights area in the city. She was an advocate for Wilson Commencement Park in Rochester, championing the organization that offers housing and support to single-parent families emerging from poverty.

And she reached beyond the city, helping bring affordable housing to Henrietta, Scottsville, Greece, and Gates in Monroe County and Geneseo and Livonia in Livingston County.

"She worked on a family housing project in Livonia where the opposition was absolutely nasty," said Leonard Skrill, a New York state assistant commissioner in housing and community renewal who knew Everitt for 40 years.

"Her house was egged. She was forced off the road," he added. "Julie was like 90 pounds soaking wet, and she wasn't going to put up with that. She could take on the giants and not bat a wink."

The paperwork alone for getting permission and funding for a housing project can prove overwhelming. However, Everitt was like a skilled chess master, Skrill said.

"Julie could think 10 to 20 steps ahead," he said. "She had foresight and an intensity of focus. And she was so well-respected by everyone, that when she asked you to do something, your response was yes."

All the while, Everitt was comfortable behind the scenes, never seeking the spotlight.

"Julie wasn't ego-driven; she wasn't publicity driven," McCollough said. "She really was interested in families and people and what they



Housing advocate Julia Beth Everitt left a legacy of more than 1,000 affordable apartments, as well as many single-family homes, in Greater Rochester. She died Jan. 2, 2025.

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Everitt grew up on Lake Road in Webster. She went on to graduate Phi Beta Kappa from Denison University in Ohio and receive a masters' degree in political science from Syracuse University.

Her career was varied. She worked as a housing specialist for the city of Rochester and as community development manager for Monroe County. And she was a co-founder of Housing Opportunities Inc., a non-profit company that built homes and converted vacant buildings into apartments.

In a typical project in the 1990s, Housing Opportunities renovated a neglected 10-unit building on Union Street in the city. Not far away, two new houses were built to be rented to low-income families. "To stabilize these neighborhoods, somebody had to come in and do the rental," Everitt said at the time.

After Housing Opportunities merged with PathStone, Everitt continued to work on affordable housing initiatives there until her retirement. Along the way, she inspired subsequent generations of housing advocates.

"She was an amazing mentor, to me," Skrill said. "But there were others as well. She helped them grow into really good developers who stayed true to their principles."

Everitt also served on a wide variety of boards, including that of Highland Park Conservancy, leading its effort to raise funds for the restoration of the Children's Pavilion that was designed by the park's architect, Frederic Law Olmsted.

"She really knew how to write a grant proposal," said JoAnn Beck, the retired city landscape architect, and a member of the Highland board. "And she knew everybody. She was just a joy to work with, just a joy. She was always worried about what was happening in the world and always working on making it better."

Everitt had lots of strengths including energy, wisdom, and perseverance, Beck suggested, but she had no patience for patience.

"She did not think patience was a virtue," Beck said.

"And I loved this about her. She wanted an answer now, not tomorrow. When she came on the board there was a noticeable change. She was a real leader in a very gentle and charming way."