

News Release

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North Blaine County Fire District

Contacts: Rich Bauer, Fire Chief, (208) 622-8234 rbauer@sunvalleyidaho.gov

Jed Gray, Chairman, (208) 720-0575 jed@svassociates.com

Housing Campaign for Emergency Responders Gets Underway

A Few Minutes Can Save a Life

The North Blaine County Fire District (“District”), in partnership with the City of Sun Valley (“City”) and Spur Community Foundation (“Spur”), have joined together to launch a fundraising campaign for eight units of single-family, fire responder housing at the Greenhorn Fire Station. These new units will provide much needed housing for firefighters and paramedics and ensure that emergency responders can live close to where they save lives and protect property.

The District serves a large geographic area that extends through the unincorporated area north of Ohio Gulch Road to Galena Lodge. The District also serves Sun Valley and responds as mutual aid to other neighboring districts, including the cities of Ketchum and Hailey.

“We need to have our emergency responders live in our area. Without that, the public will be at risk,” said Jed Gray, Chair of the North Blaine County Fire District. “The lack of affordable workforce housing has made recruiting emergency responders very difficult. Now, due to population growth, increases in emergency calls and a number of retirements on the horizon, addressing the housing needs of firefighters and paramedics is an urgent matter,” Gray continued.

The housing will be strategically located at the Greenhorn Fire Station, on Highway 75 just south of the East Fork light. This site already has 6 housing units, and the addition will bring the total to 14. Earlier in 2022, the District and the City secured an agreement with the Idaho Department of Transportation to lease 2.3 acres adjacent to the station for 99 years at \$1 per year. The plan calls for installing eight prefabricated homes and an eight-bay detached garage. An order has been placed for six two-bedroom, two bath units, and two one-bedroom, one bath units. The first four units are expected to be delivered and ready for occupancy before the end of the year, with the remaining four units ready by summer 2023.

The total cost of the project is \$3.2 million. The Fire District and the City decided to pursue a combination of public and private dollars to fund it. Each has committed \$300,000 for a total of \$600,000 towards housing. The City has also tapped into \$1.5 million of its borrowing capacity to ensure the project moves forward without delay. “We are seeking private donations,” Gray

stated, “because this is the best way we can keep housing rental fees to the firefighters and paramedics affordable.”

Inspired by the community’s recent generosity to Warm Springs Preserve, the District approached Spur about the possibility of attracting donations to this project. Spur agreed to assist them with a \$2.75 million fundraising campaign. If successful, the campaign will leverage the \$600,000 already committed by the District and the City, pay back the \$1.5 million loan, cover the balance of the project budget and create a small reserve for ongoing maintenance.

“Members of our community are acutely aware of the local housing crisis and concerned about its consequences to essential services,” said Sally Gillespie, Executive Director of Spur. “People want to be a part of solutions. This a fantastic opportunity in terms of community benefit, cost efficiency and the quick turnaround to see results.”

Donations can be made through Spur by credit card via www.spurfoundation.org, by check payable to “Spur Community Foundation,” with Greenhorn Housing noted in the memo field, and mailed to: PO Box 6184, Ketchum, ID 83340, or by ACH, wire or public securities by calling Spur at 208-450-2600.

For more information about the housing project contact Jed Gray, Chairman of the North Blaine Count Fire District (208) 720-0575, jed@svassociates.com or Rich Bauer, Fire Chief (208) 622-8234, rbauer@sunvalleyidaho.gov.

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