Housing Works awarded funds

Housing Works has announced the funding of Village Meadows Apartments in Sisters through the Oregon Housing and Community Service (OHCS) Local Innovation and Fast Track (LIFT) Housing Program. Funding is also secured for a project in La Pine.

A total of 90 affordable units are planned between the two projects.

"Both La Pine and Sisters desperately need more affordable housing," said Tom Kemper, executive director of Housing Works. "We are hopeful to have these new affordable developments completed by 2018 for low-income households in those communities."

The plan for Village Meadows Apartments in Sisters includes 48 affordable apartments with a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments. The development site is located on two lots totaling 2.12 acres behind Ray's Food Place, making it conveniently located near much of Sisters' commercial district and schools.

With vacancy rates below 1 percent throughout Central Oregon and the majority of renter households in both communities burdened by housing costs, these new communities could provide up to 90 low-income households (at or below 60 percent of area median income) with an affordable place to live. As affordable properties, the La Pine and Sisters developments would have rents well below market rates.

Oregon Housing and Community Services has allocated over $3.6 million in state funding for the developments under their new LIFT program. The projects will also rely on 4 percent low-income housing tax credits from OHCS for funding the projects. Housing Works hopes to begin construction on both communities by the summer of 2017. Build time is expected to be 12 months.

Preleasing for Village Meadows Apartments will begin approximately three months prior to completion through EPIC Property Management.

Ore. enacts tougher fall protections for builders

EUGENE (AP) — A state regulation that took effect Jan. 1 requires Oregon construction contractors to make sure workers are protected from falls if work is done six or more feet above a surface.

The Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division said the new rule will primarily affect home builders because many commercial contractors already require the protections, reported *The Register-Guard*. The previous state OSHA regulation required the protections for work at 10 or more feet off a general surface but at six or more feet off established floors, mezzanines, balconies and walkways with unprotected sides.

OSHA said Oregon construction firms were cited most frequently last year for violating rules about fall protection.

"We've come a long way in Oregon in reducing injuries and deaths from falls, particularly in construction, but we still have a ways to go," said Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood in a written statement.

Walter Custom Homes owner Tom Walter argued, however, that the new rule is a "regulation looking for a problem." He said his firm has constructed 118 homes since 2003 and no workers have been injured in a fall.

Ed McMahon, executive director of the Home Builders Association of Lane County, said the group's members will need to figure out how to comply with the rule for some tasks, like when workers install roof trusses.

"It would appear that we would need to go around the top of the walls and build a safety barrier, then put the trusses up, and then tear the barrier down," said McMahon. "On commercial buildings, you see contractors build a little hand rail at the roof. And now we may have to do that for single-family homes."

He said the extra time and expense of creating such structures will increase the cost of new homes.

WILDLIFE: Deer should be in their winter range

Continued from page 22

continue to feed them with artificial feeds and tempt them with salt blocks are not being kind to them.

Those deer should be among their kind in the deer winter-range habitat, most of which is east of Central Oregon. That's where old-growth Western junipers come into the picture as big-game animal shelters. It is not uncommon to see thousands of mule deer and even elk sheltering among the old-growth juniper, eating grasses, sagebrush and bitterbrush, without which many animals of the high desert would have a tough time of it in winter.

No one likes to see mule deer die in winter, so in some parts of the West they are being fed hay and other foods. However, in the long run, that doesn't work to help deer survive. In spring, carcasses of thousands of deer have been found with stomachs full of hay and other food they couldn't digest, or they died because of diseases that spread rapidly in feeding yards.

The soils under old-growth sagebrush, juniper and grasslands are ideal for our native Great Basin spadefoot toads to burrow deep down below the frost line, where they can live for years on the fat reserves, breathing air and absorbing water though their skin. The heartbeat of hibernating amphibians and reptiles is almost undetectable.

And foes often become friends in winter, sharing space to hibernate. Rattlesnakes and gopher snakes are normally not compatible in summer, but in winter they frequently share the same hibernaculum, along with other reptile species.

Another interesting partnership for finding food in winter is that of the magpie, raven and eagle. Dead animals are sometimes difficult to spot, so in winter, eagles often perch on a high spot and watch for magpie or raven activity. This often leads to a meal.

Survival of the fittest is the rule for winter; all animals have a do-or-die plan.

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THIS WEEK'S FEATURED PROPERTY

16190 Foothills Loop South, Sisters ~ $949,900
Beautiful custom home in Starr Ranch! 5 bedrooms and 5.5 baths total in main house, guest house, plus bonus room above garage! Main house has: Elegant foyer and spindle staircase; solid oak pegged floors; river-rock fireplace and wet bar in living room; formal dining room plus eat-in kitchen; main-level master suite; private office; large den with private entrance and more! Horses allowed!
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