

The Whetstone Community Housing Project

Story by **CHLOE ELLIOT**

Article courtesy of LIV Sotheby's International Realty

Envision attainable housing, a strong sense of belonging, and an entirely electric, environmentally friendly community, and you've got the Whetstone Community Housing project. Located just south of Crested Butte, this 13-acre neighborhood development is led by Gunnison County with the vision of providing workforce housing and creating a "lights on" community where locals can live where they work and play. To learn more about this critical community project, LIV Sotheby's International Realty connected with Assistant County Manager of Sustainability and Operations, John Cattles, and Assistant County Manager of Community and Economic Development, Cathie Pagano.



Cathie Pagano // Assistant County Manager of Community and Economic Development



John Cattles // Assistant County Manager of Sustainability and Operations

Creating a
"LIGHTS ON"
COMMUNITY

THE Backstory

What started as a land banking opportunity in 2019 evolved into an affordable housing effort as the housing crisis in Gunnison County and specifically the north valley became more severe. "We're seeing the impact of the housing crisis across all economic sectors in our community, from the low income most vulnerable populations to the higher income like doctors and nurses," said Cathie. From teachers to local government employees, the lack of housing has forced many locals to move out of the mountain community and for some, even the county.

We're seeing the impact of the housing crisis across all economic sectors in our community.

-Cathie Pagano



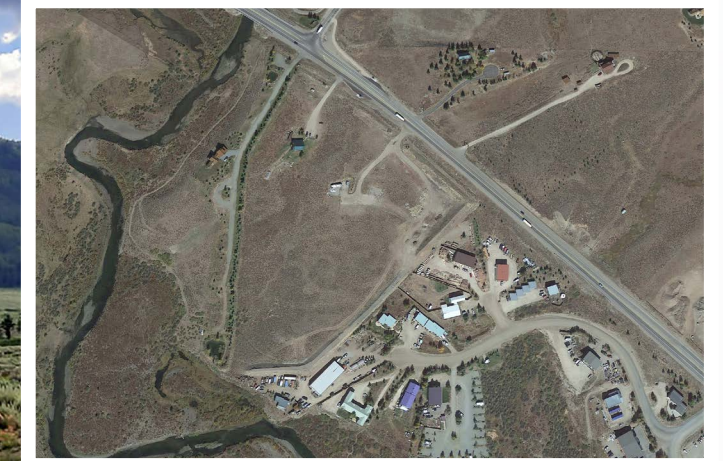
Every resort community has always had more demand for housing than there is housing...

-John Cattles

"Every resort community has always had more demand for housing than there is housing, but it's gotten to a point in our community where it is threatening our economy," said John. Due to the geographic nature of Gunnison Valley and the smaller population of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, the effects are much greater than in other areas, particularly on schools, restaurants, and other critical resources that support full-time and part-time residents. This is why Gunnison County officials are working hard to engage stakeholders in the Whetstone Community Housing project to ensure that everyone's voices are heard and represented. "Whetstone is a real opportunity to create secure housing for residents experiencing insecure housing; whether they're living in an undesirable situation or far away from their work, this project can provide stability for our community constituents," said Cathie.



Current DAY



The 200+ unit project will likely encompass multiple buildings with a mixture of housing types, from one-bedroom apartments to three-bedroom town homes, providing deed-restricted housing to those living and working in Gunnison County. Having garnered a lot of positive feedback from the community, Cathie shared that “no housing project is going to solve all of the issues in our community like school capacities or long lines at the post office, but with Whetstone, we can start to address some of the challenges we’re seeing around housing security.” In addition to the residential units, the community will feature ample outdoor space, including a community garden, a multi-modal path, and likely a co-working space. Every aspect of the community is designed with stakeholder input in mind, and once Gunnison County establishes a developer, these elements will come to life in a way that serves the community best.

Thanks to the convenient location of the project and the Gunnison Valley Climate Action Plan goals, Whetstone is set to be entirely electric and connect seamlessly with the RTA-free bus system to cut down on emissions and encourage the use of public transportation within the valley. All good things take time and while the housing project is still a few years out from completion,



...with Whetstone, we can start to address some of the challenges we're seeing around housing security.

-Cathie Pagano

now is the time to get involved. Targeting a break ground timeline of 2024, this critical community project is in the important stage of garnering feedback and input from constituents and stakeholders. John and Cathie’s project team hopes to have a sketch plan completed by June of this year, and then move into the engineering and developer partnership in 2023.

A true Colorado ski town, the community surrounding Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte is unlike any other in the state. The place and power of disconnecting and recharging in nature are what attracts thousands of visitors and part-time residents, but what keeps the appeal of this remarkable place alive is its people. The experience of visiting this special

area in the middle of winter or in the height of summer and conquering its steep skiing and biking trails wouldn't be what it is without the hard-working locals that make up this unique place. It is with these people in mind that the Whetstone Housing Project forges ahead, putting the needs and desires of community members at the forefront of this important effort and, ultimately, bolstering a community that houses not just its visitors but its locals-keeping heads in beds and lights on, year-round.

For updates and to learn more about the Whetstone Community Housing project visit: www.whetstonehousing.weebly.com

Photos courtesy of Google Earth and whetstonehousing.weebly.com