We’re honestly trying to be good neighbors’

Kane Creek developers pursue workforce housing
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By Sophia Fisher

The business partners pursuing a 580-unit development along Kane Creek Boulevard have another, faster project in sight: workforce housing.

This acre of land next to Gravel Pit Lanes, acquired by the partners of Kane Creek Preservation and Development, could eventually hold workforce housing.

Photo by Sophia Fisher
But in the meantime, the men have bought one acre of land just within Moab City limits and are eyeing another three to four. The aim? Building housing restricted to local workers.

“We’re honestly trying to be good neighbors,” Arnold said.

Arnold said when he, Gottlieb and Weston — partners at Kane Creek Preservation and Development, LLC — first looked into purchasing the 180-acre Kane Creek parcel five years ago, Moab’s paucity of workforce housing was already apparent.

“We see an acute need for it,” he said.

So the business partners started looking for in-town property to create housing for those working locally. They eventually purchased an acre of land at the corner of Murphy Lane and Mill Creek Drive that holds the former Sore No More building.

On that acre, Arnold said he could build 32 housing units. If he and his partners bought several adjacent acres from Grand County, though, that number could rise to 116.

They’re envisioning a mix of two-, three- and four-bedroom units restricted to local workforce and off-limits for use as short-term rentals. Arnold said the likely stick-built units, ranging from 650 to 1,200 square feet each, would be a financeable and buildable project that’s “affordable by design.”

Arnold said he, Gottlieb and Weston have also examined the possibility of allowing local workers to stay in RVs at the southernmost end of their property, by the mouth of Pritchett Canyon. The developers would provide free water, sewer and electric for workers who need a three- to six-month “landing pad,” before finding new housing. He said the idea, however, has gained little traction with local government.

“We’re just trying to find a solution,” he said.

While temporary RV sites may not pan out, Arnold, Gottlieb and Weston are still eyeing a project on the property they’ve acquired in town. With one acre already bought, they must now wait to see whether the owner of the adjacent land — Grand County — is willing to sell.
The county has started the process, opening a public hearing on the possible sale of the 16-acre parcel during the June 20 Grand County Commission meeting. That hearing remains open until 5 p.m. July 12.

Grand County Strategic Development Director Chris Baird said should the commission decide to sell all or part of the parcel, the county would likely release a request for proposals before choosing a purchaser.

Currently, the Murphy Lane parcel is used by the Grand County Road Department as a “borrow pit,” providing fill material for the department’s projects, Baird said.

Arnold said he and his partners are ready to begin construction as soon as possible. There remain a handful of constraints on the project — parking, height restrictions and building next to slopes — but Arnold said they know they could fill the units “as soon as we have the doorknobs.”

“We think the need is now,” Arnold said. “We’re not waiting for the demand to catch up.”
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