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## **Meadow Ranch Wins Idaho Smart Growth & Green Building Award**

**Coeur d'Alene, ID** – Meadow Ranch, a 55 & Better Active Adult Community in Coeur d'Alene has won the Idaho Smart Growth & Green Building Award. This neighborhood achieves a unique combination of sustainability and appropriateness for the Northern Idaho town of Coeur d'Alene. The location is tucked behind a Fred Meyer in an urban infill site that used to be zoned industrial. A restored dairy barn from the 1940's sets the tone and character of the neighborhood while visually separating it from the numerous community conveniences that are within walking distance for 55+ seniors.

The density is 19 units/acre or 223 units on 11.75 acres. The homes are modest, ranging from 800 to 1800 sq ft, and are all priced under \$375,000. This project is significant because it is one of only 5 projects in Idaho accepted into the LEED ND pilot project plus homes are registered under the LEED for Homes rating system. In a destination that is known for expensive second homes, this project stands out and has been covered in numerous publications ranging from local newspapers to Where to Retire Magazine.

In addition to having environmentally responsible finishes, the home performs well with energy and water efficient fixtures and equipment such as multi-split, heat pump systems. The lights, appliances, and windows are ENERGY STAR. The water heater is 95% efficient. In a nod towards indoor environmental quality, the home also has a fresh air ventilation system. Neighborhood features include open space, walking paths, apple orchards, a greenhouse and a Community Center targeting LEED NC Gold Certification.

The Meadow Ranch Neighborhood achieves all of the smart growth principles, especially those related to providing a range of transportation choices, mixed land uses, diverse housing opportunities and compact building patterns as well as creating a walkable, cost-effective neighborhood with a strong sense of place that is connected to existing communities in Coeur d'Alene. All of this was achieved through ongoing community collaboration that included neighborhood meetings, input and feedback.

This is an infill project that is within a 1/2 mile of walking trails, bike paths, bus routes and over a dozen community resources. Residents can walk, bike or take public transportation to reach popular destinations such as Fred Meyer, schools, medical facilities, churches, and a large community center—The Kroc Center. This site was zoned industrial, so building in this location did not take the place of a park, farmland, or environmentally critical area such as a floodplain, wetland, or habitat for endangered or threatened species. The building patterns are compact with a high density of 19 units per acre. Almost 30% of the site is preserved for open space.

The 11.75-acre site features an old dairy barn from the 1940's that has been restored and represents a way of life that was simple, relaxed and meaningful. It is the cornerstone of the Meadow Ranch community. The barn also sets the theme for "The Barnyard Market," an open-air farmers/artisans/specialty foods market with a diverse collection of earth-friendly options. The character set by the barn and The Barnyard Market extends to each individual cottage and townhome: every front door is manufactured locally from wood reclaimed from Idaho barns. These distinctive features combined with the new orchard create a sense of place that is truly unique in a destination so close to the downtown core.

The Meadow Ranch neighborhood offers diverse housing opportunities that range from condos to town homes and single-family cottages; rental to owner-occupied. The homes are modest, ranging from 800 to 1800 sq ft, and are all priced under \$375,000. All 223 residences feature (or will feature) non-toxic, local materials and ENERGY STAR windows, insulation, appliances and lighting. Each home is being designed according to LEED for Homes standards, which rates homes according to the following categories: innovative design, sustainable sites, location and linkage, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality and awareness and education. The

first home to be constructed in Meadow Ranch is still awaiting official certification but is scoring at a Platinum level, which is the highest. There are now over 14,600 homes across the U.S. registered for the LEED for Homes. This is up from 9,600 just two months prior.

Beyond the commitment to designing and constructing green buildings, Meadow Ranch was one of only 5 projects to be accepted into the LEED ND Pilot Project. The LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building into the first national system for neighborhood design. LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a development's location and design meet accepted high levels of environmentally responsible, sustainable development. LEED for Neighborhood Development is a collaboration among USGBC, the Congress for the New Urbanism and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Meadow Ranch is a truly unique project that balances the rigorous standards of LEED with a defining sense of place that is best symbolized by the old dairy barn. Smart growth principles were not only applied, they are at the core of nearly every aspect of this development.

The Meadow Ranch project was a leap of faith. It is the first of its kind in Coeur d'Alene. It meant re-writing the standards so smart growth principles could be possible. In 2006, developer Dennis Cunningham applied for a zone change from manufacturing to mixed-use plus a special use permit that would allow an extra three units per acre for cluster housing. City standards were also challenged to allow for narrower private streets and for reduced setbacks for townhomes and residences. In 2007, Dennis sought to set another precedence in Northern Idaho. Meadow Ranch was the only project in the city to join the ranks of 240 other projects across the nation to participate in the LEED for Neighborhood Development Pilot Program. In 2008, construction began on the first homes. In 2009, a Meadow Ranch cottage is poised to become the first LEED certified home in Coeur d'Alene.

Dennis was a pioneer in recognizing the benefits of combining smart growth and green building approaches. In Meadow Ranch, building design and materials are integrated with land use and efficiency. Building design is compact, diverse and cost-effective yet still maintains a distinctive style reflective of a simpler time when our priorities were different. Residents of Meadow Ranch can choose between organic gardening or participating in the

community library book exchange. The buildings are energy and water efficient and feature advanced heating and cooling equipment, compact plumbing design, low-flow plumbing fixtures, drip irrigation and drought-tolerant landscaping. Significant investment was made in the building envelopes to ensure low energy use. The materials are recycled, local and non-toxic. Paints, adhesives and sealants are low-VOC. Countertops are GREENGUARD certified. Wood floors are reclaimed and finished with a low-VOC sealant. Lumber and cement were sourced locally.

There is a synergy between the smart growth principles with regards to land use and the smart design and construction techniques used to ensure healthy, durable, efficient and sustainable buildings. Meadow Ranch is an oasis of sustainable urbanism in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

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