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For immediate release: June 6, 2023
Contact: Barbara Miller 406-565-9405

HABITAT MARKS 30 YEARS WITH GROUND BREAKING FOR IRON STREET PROJECT

BUTTE, MONTANA—Habitat for Humanity of Southwest Montana is officially launching construction of its Roxanne Iron Way Condominium project at noon on June 21, commemorating the milestone with a groundbreaking ceremony at the building site. The Christian ministry, based in Butte, will also mark its 30th anniversary serving Butte and Southwest Montana, planning 30 events during the year to celebrate.

According to Barbara Miller, the organization’s director, “A 30 to 50 percent increase in the cost of housing has made affordable living out of reach for working families and created hardship for families and disabled adults.” The new higher-density development, Miller says, “will build homes in partnership with working families earning less than 80 percent the median income at an affordable price.” The project continues Habitat’s long-term housing development partnership with National Affordable Housing Network (NAHN), a nonprofit in Butte for 29 years.

The \$3 million project includes 12 units—three duplexes and six single-family homes—in the 200-300 block of West Iron Street, with seven units facing Iron Street. “The first seven homes on Iron Street,” Miller says, “will look beautifully different,” maintaining the character of the neighborhood.

The 1.7-acre property will have capacity for approximately 55 people. The new homes will be owner-occupied, not rentals, and will meet American Lung Association standards for indoor air quality. Also, Miller says, “All houses are net-zero ready as our ongoing goal is to create super high-efficiency housing.”

Infrastructure work for the complex has included water and sewer lines, storm drainage, grading, new curbs and gutters, and a retention pond. In Butte, Habitat has driven investment in neighborhoods where self-help housing is the best avenue to make homeownership possible for working families. “We work with families who are extremely hard working and the most in need in our community. Affordable housing is such a dire need,” Miller says.

The new development is funded through the USDA’s Mutual Self Help Housing program, HUD’s Self Help Opportunity Program and Neighborhood Stabilization Program, Glacier Bank, the Superfund Advisory & Redevelopment Trust Authority, the Gianforte Family Foundation, the Urban Revitalization Agency, the Rural Community Development Corporation’s housing counseling program, and individual donors.

Habitat families must have need, willingness to partner, and ability to pay for the new homes. The homeowners help build their own homes alongside volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage. Through these partnerships, Habitat and NAHN have brought more than \$16 million in housing investment to Butte for owner-occupied self-help housing. Individual construction loans to families make these projects possible; the loans convert to

affordable housing mortgages once the project is completed. Combined with local leadership of scores of board members and tens of thousands in volunteer hours over the years, and the efforts of local sponsors, the hard work has paid off in stabilized families and revitalized neighborhoods, along with valuable contributions to the local tax base.

The Iron Street complex is named in memory of the late Roxanne Witt, one of the first participants in Butte in the Mutual Self Help program. Witt left senior housing to build her own Habitat home, before inspiring many more as she helped build 30 more homes. "I learned from Roxanne that with Habitat people can reach new goals, reach so much more," says Miller. "It creates fellowship."

Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization program in Southwest Montana has focused on the Central Butte neighborhood, where more than 40 new infill homes were built on damaged, vacant properties, as well as the Centerville neighborhood, the Upper West Side area, and neighborhoods in Whitehall, Boulder and Dillon.

"Our families work very hard," Miller continues. "They're creating new homes and investing in neighborhoods. We're proud of what the community has accomplished."

For more information, or to make a difference as a volunteer or donor, contact the Habitat for Humanity office at 406-782-8579.

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66 W. Park Suite 211
P.O. Box 632
Butte, MT 59703
(406)782-8579
FAX (406)782-5168
www.habitatswmt.org