

# WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GOOD THINGS THAT ARE PART OF REBUILDING TO DATE?

## Community Listening Meeting – Virtual

February 15, 2023, 6:30pm-8:00pm PST

- Higher awareness of making sure to stop it from happening again – when rebuilding incorporating fire suppression, which wasn't always a high priority.
- A heightened, sincere responsibility for the historically marginalized/disadvantaged groups – taking care of neighbors.
- The younger leadership stepping up.
- How many kinds of people joining together – creating cross connections – pulling collective strength.
- Working in general together – all organizations – not just for the rebuilding after the fire, asking “what else is needed?”.
- Met people you never met before.
- Never realized that there were so many mobile home parks located along the greenway – was able to understand who the neighbors were and being more neighborly.
- Super impressed by the amount of building that's already happening compared to the Paradise fire.
- We cleaned up very quickly.
- The help from the state and FEMA (we think) helped a lot in the immediate aftermath.
- This morning, there was a systemic needs meeting of 15 community partners from many organizations... almost half were bilingual/bicultural... there is a spirit of collaboration, no silo-ing.
- Survivors are getting served to the best of our ability.
- Ideally, Tessa wants to be out of a job in disaster recovery... but because we're happening more and more frequently, at the state and county level, it is important to have a plan for recovery. This plan is heading in the right direction.
- There is an attitude towards wildfires that is just an accepted part of summertime, but this close encounter in developed areas, leapt out of the forest and into our neighborhoods, it has brought this to the forefront of our minds.
- The film that talked about building back better is crucial and I think the conversation is changing.
- Controlled burns have been happening for years in the Ashland watershed.
- Ashland seems very educated, aware of strategies needed to lessen risk of wildfire damage.
- Fire-resistant roof conversations are happening in Ashland HOAs.
- The creation of new organizations (ie. Coalición Fortaleza).

# WHAT ARE THE ROGUE VALLEY'S UNMET NEEDS?

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- So many survivors bought whatever they could (building supplies) and now there is aging stock with deferred maintenance issues – health and habitability issues. It is affecting both affordable and market-rate homes – so many people are living with lack of proper maintenance – not fire adapted. There is money to rebuild, but not to fix things (mold, etc.).
- Central case managers for a warm handoff to other agencies.
- Capacity for case managers – assisting ACCESS in getting back to people quickly with assistance.
- Mental health support providers (bilingual)
- Disabled units – living on disability – still so many people that need a place to go and it needs to be accessible.
- Better mental health services – it is difficult to talk to someone due to the trauma.
- There needs to be more of an incentive to get fire hardening rebuilding efforts to become more popular.
- There must be financial incentives for existing property owners to fire-harden their homes.
- It would be great for there to be incentives, grants for pulling out problematic plants/potential fuels... can be beyond the budget of individual homeowners and the ability of many.
- Absentee landlords also are a huge problem when it comes to preventative maintenance.
- There are explicit qualifications and implicit disqualifications for loans like the SBA loan ... it is a loan specifically designed for disaster-relief; it is incredible confusing no matter your background and it doesn't make sense.
- FEMA instructed many seniors to apply for Small Business Association loans... there are issues two years in
- Selling the mobile home is really the only way people must pay off the loans.
- Action Plan that came out in the fall... page 42 or 36 was a graph of how many people had applied for the SBA loan and did not get it... only half of people who applied were accepted.
- Applied in April for the SBA loan through ACCESS, the house arrived late, because the manufacturer wants to be paid before they ship it, and you need to have a contractor on deck so it doesn't sit. But it's always a surprise... timing and the process is an issue.
- FEMA requires people to apply for SBA loans...
- For those who paid out of pocket, they can't repay without selling their home.
- Families had to hire contractors to set up MH before assistance was available.
- Homeownership programs have high barriers to participation. They do not communicate with participants well.
- Lack of Trauma-Informed approach from Immediate Disaster Response, FEMA, and Housing Programs, and ongoing assistance.

# WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR HELPING TO ADAPT TO THE LOCAL FIRE RISK?

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- How does a renter get into the conversation about fire hardening?
- Pollinators and native plants – people are so afraid of fire that they make their environments less receptive to nature. Don't take away the gardens, trees, birds, and insects. There is too much cement and no place to garden (a complaint of the displaced – missing their gardens). Don't plant blackberries, but other plants are fire resistant.
- A Senior Exemption from repayment of disaster loans to adjust for the life expectancy.
- We need a trauma-informed support for those in recovery at every stage... who is responsible for it? Maybe healthcare services, we need to be made whole. State could ensure quality from contractors, could be local...
- Many are just over the line where they can't qualify for assistance (food stamps, etc.) ... we need more programs that help the “missing middle.”

# WHAT IS YOUR #1 PRIORITY?

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- People building back – codes aren't keeping up (codes were rolled back to fast-track approvals).
- Neighborhood Watch for homebound people.
- Housing expenses for ADA care – making home modifications.
- Bringing survivors home.
- People receiving the emotional and spiritual care to heal and go forward.
- Ensuring that people with mixed citizenship status be able to stay here.
- Affordable housing for everyone.
- Bridging the gaps between rent prices and what HUD provides.
- Housing – we need to figure out ways to get people housed who can only pay, let's say, \$500 monthly. The range of income categories that we deal with is very broad and many who are still in danger of being homeless or are already homeless are trying to live off an \$800 Social Security check, or have unstable living conditions, or are undocumented and very vulnerable to loss of wages or loss of a job or seasonal loss of a job. Mobile homes? Manufactured homes? We are even seeing issues for them. How do we house the most vulnerable of all of us? This needs to be our priority when we talk about being prepared for the next time.
- That housing needs to be fire hardened. We can't build the same way again.
- How can we make fire hardened building practices affordable?
- Prevent senior homelessness as much as possible.
- We think education on fire hardening and defensible space is good, but we need MORE education. Volunteer teams to help tear out plants.
- Educate property management companies.
- Educate Park rangers, managers.