



INNOVIA  
FOUNDATION

# Pine Creek Community Report

United Way of  
Whitman County





# REIMAGINING MALDEN



Approaching two years since a wildfire devastated Malden, Washington, Mayor Dan Harwood has high hopes in reimagining the beloved town, based on current economic realities. Along with nearby Pine City, also in the path of the tragic wildfire, these rural areas in Whitman County are collectively known as the Pine Creek community.

With the median home price in Spokane County topping \$400,000, Malden could be on the verge of drawing future residents who can't afford a home in Spokane County which is just a minutes-drive north. A soon-to-be installed fiber-optic system that will allow for residents to have access to high-speed internet could have far-reaching effects for the area.

"It will give our citizens the ability to telework," Dan says.

With the help of private donors, including the Pine Creek Community Restoration Long-Term Recovery Organization (LTRO), and federal and state grant awards, the Pine Creek community has reasons to be excited about the future.

Malden recently secured a grant award from the Washington State Department of Commerce to expand the water system by drilling another well. Additionally, Washington State Parks recently approved funds for the continued development of the Palouse to Cascade trail for tourists and recreational enthusiasts.

A mere 43-minute drive from Spokane, and 30 minutes from five freshwater lakes, Dan says Malden is ideally situated as a soon-to-be destination locale for those seeking more affordable housing.

## THE FIRE

On September 7, 2020, wildfires raced through Whitman County and engulfed Malden and Pine City, forcing nearly 200 residents to evacuate. Separated by just 3.5 miles, more than 80% of all buildings including homes were destroyed in both communities.

Close to two-thirds of those affected lacked fire insurance, while those who did struggled to meet their basic living needs. Thankfully, before the month ended, Innovia Foundation and United Way of Whitman County established funds to provide the ravaged communities with emergency relief.



**"These are incredibly resilient people. Their commitment to rebuild community is just amazing."**

**-Paul Kimmell, representative for donor Avista Foundation**



**September 7, 2020**  
The Babb Road Fire sweeps through Malden and Pine City

**September 2020**  
Innovia establishes the Wildfire Emergency Response Fund - Eastern Washington to provide local communities emergency relief and long-term wildfire recovery support

**December 2020**  
Innovia establishes the Pine Creek Fund and launches a campaign to raise \$300,000 for new homes. The community stepped up to support every family through the Christmas holiday through the Pine Creek Christmas Fund.

**February 2021**  
FEMA denies the community individual and household funding assistance

## A CALL TO ACTION

Before the end of 2020, Innovia launched a campaign to raise an initial \$300,000 to rebuild homes, and the region's response was swift. An outpouring of support led to donations from compassionate individuals, corporations, and nonprofits across the Inland Northwest, and in a short period, the goal was met.

By February 2021, the Federal Emergency Management Agency provided funding for the Pine Creek community to rebuild public buildings but excluded funding to rebuild homes.

Absent federal funds, volunteers completed the construction of two new homes by spring 2021. The Pine Creek Community Restoration Long-Term Recovery Organization leads the community recovery effort by surveying the area, casting a vision for the future, and securing resources and partners.

Meanwhile, the Unmet Needs Roundtable brought together donors and agencies to financially assist those impacted by the disaster and facilitate collaboration and communication between funders.

Every fire survivor has had access to a team of disaster relief trained Disaster Case Managers (DCMs) to help chart their recovery path, and to access financial assistance from charities and other agencies.

## THE PHOENIX RISES

A year after the devastating fires, Mayor Harwood spoke to a gathering of roughly 75 people who rallied for a commemorative picnic where the town's fire station once stood.

**"It's a new start and a new beginning."**

**-Alissa Hale, community member**

Before the end of 2021, representatives from the LTRO, United Way of Whitman County, Catholic Charities Eastern Washington and Innovia applied for and were awarded a \$750,000 grant from American Red Cross to build more homes for families identified as being in the greatest need of assistance.

Today, thanks to your generosity, eight homes have been built. Additionally, community partners helped secure money for a new community center to house a food bank, library, and additional community gathering spaces.

The town of Malden secured \$900,000 from the state to build the fire station, \$400,000 in donations have been made in support of the library, food pantry, and gathering space; and approximately \$300,000 is available in insurance to rebuild the town offices and post office space.

A revised construction estimate of \$2.4 million has the town seeking funds for the remaining \$800,000 needed to bring the project to fruition.



### Spring 2021

Volunteers complete construction on 2 new homes

### December 2021

The LTRO receives a \$750,000 grant from American Red Cross for home rebuilding efforts

### Winter 2022

Volunteers complete construction on 6 new homes

### Summer 2022

The new Community Center is slated to break ground



## A SHARED VISION FOR TOMORROW

Gerry Bozarth of Spokane County Emergency Management has helped the Pine Creek community with the process of establishing fire mitigation and disaster recovery. He says he is optimistic about the future – and building of infrastructure – for the area.

“If I wasn’t optimistic, then I wouldn’t be a part of Malden’s leadership,” Gerry said.

Gerry shares Mayor Harwood’s assessment that rising home prices in Spokane County may strongly benefit the Pine Creek community.

“It could be an opportunity for someone trying to get their career started in the Spokane area,” Gerry said.  
“The capacity to work from home will certainly be there.



## A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING

### **LTRO Board Members**

Christine Oakley, President; Rachel Blakeley, Vice President; John Lenz, Treasurer & Malden Council liaison; Scott Carlon, Board member; Janell Turner, Board member.

### **LTRO Agencies represented**

Avista Corp, Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, Innovia Foundation, Northwest Region American Red Cross, Pacific Northwest United Methodist Church, Palouse Habitat for Humanity, Spokane County Emergency Management, Town of Malden, United Policyholders, United Way of Whitman County, Washington Masonic Charities, Washington State Department of Commerce, Washington State Health Care Authority, Whitman Community Action Center, Whitman County Emergency Management.

### **Unmet Needs RoundTable Funding**

Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, Farmington Adventist Church, Innovia Foundation, Northwest Region American Red Cross, Onecho Bible Church, Salvation Army, St. John Rural Relief, United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Way of Whitman County.

### **Pine Creek Community Fund Major Funding Partners (\$1,000+)**

American Red Cross -  
National Headquarters  
Andrew Fontaine  
Anonymous (3)  
Avista Foundation  
Brian Windsor  
Carrie Druffel  
Charlie & Kathy Watson  
Family Fund at Innovia

Cindy Smith  
Fidelity Charitable  
Ford Motor Company Fund  
His Song Ministries  
Houston and Alene Scrudder  
James and Mary Dunn  
Jo Ann Gooley  
Joene Wilson  
Keith Lasseigne

Ken Gibson  
Lee and Doris Pennell  
Northern Trust Charitable  
Giving Program at the  
Chicago Community Foundation  
Randy and Linda Crowe  
Rick and Kim Minudri  
Seattle Foundation  
Steffens Foundation

Stephen and Patti Aspinwall  
Susan Morris  
TLC Flying Inc.  
United Steelworkers  
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[innovia.org](http://innovia.org) • [info@innovia.org](mailto:info@innovia.org) • 509-624-2606

421 W Riverside Ave  
Suite 606  
Spokane, WA 99201