

Media Release



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\$31.5 million RCI privatized housing project provides tornado safe rooms, more space for families

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Fort Leonard Wood officials anticipate a November ribbon cutting for delivery of up to 20 homes to replace those destroyed in the EF-3 tornado that struck the installation New Year's Eve day 2010. This will represent the first phase of a multiphased project which is expected to be completed by May 2013. At the end of the project, a total of 160 new duplex homes are scheduled to be constructed.

Installation leadership and Balfour Beatty Communities officials chose to develop in the Woodlands neighborhood over rebuilding so soon in the Piney Hills location where the tornado occurred.

“The neighborhood that we’re rebuilding in is the Woodlands neighborhood,” Richard Cole, Balfour Beatty Communities project director said. “It had homes in there that were demolished back in 2006 and 2007. And so it was a vacant neighborhood with no homes and became the ideal area to build new homes in because the roads were already there, the infrastructure was already there and it’s already part of the community, so it’s a matter of just redeveloping the existing area.”

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Construction of 70 new duplex units on Frizell Street will be designated for company-grade officers; and 90 duplex units on Epps Street will house junior-enlisted Soldiers, primarily E1 to E4.

One of the significant features of the new homes is that each unit will have a tornado safe room.

“The safe room meets the requirements of the FEMA standards for a safe room which means it will withstand a 250 mile per hour, three-second burst of wind, and withstand an impact of a 15 pound, two-by-four piece of wood moving at 100 miles per hour horizontally,” Cole said. “An EF-3 tornado has winds up to 165 miles per hour and that’s essentially what blew through the Piney Hills neighborhood.”

Several options were considered before the safe room location was selected.

“We looked at putting a hole in the garage floor with a slide over the top so you can jump in the floor of the garage when the storm came, but in terms of trying to get to that in the middle of the night with a car likely parked over the top of it would be extremely difficult, so we ruled that one out,” said Cole. “We considered storage rooms but thought the family would be storing boxes, materials and other home items in the store room which would prevent access in an emergency, so we ruled that out.”

Ultimately, it was the downstairs powder room that was chosen for the safe room location.

“The downstairs powder room—the half bath, became the target location because we believe that room would always remain accessible and easy to get to during nighttime hours. We don’t expect families to store boxes or other home items that would prevent entry during an emergency.” Cole said.

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“Plus, it remains a functional room of the house in that its primary purpose is a powder room and when the sirens go off, it becomes the safe room. We would expect the family to stay in for several minutes at a time until all-clear is given, that’s really about the duration that they should be in there before they can come out again. That’s why the powder room was selected and it turned out to be an ideal location, it’s a functional room of the house and it doesn’t remain vacant, it’s always used.”

The safe room is a completely separate structure within the house with a steel door and steel casing all around the perimeter and top of the unit and j-bolted down to the concrete foundation which is no less than six inches deep.

“Absolutely worst case, if the house were to blow away, the way this room is designed and constructed, it will be the last thing still here because there is nothing attached to the framework of this tornado room,” Cole said. “So, theoretically, by the FEMA standards and from experience, we believe this offers the family a tremendous level of protection in a catastrophic weather event. It should go a long way to ease the family’s fears.”

The new units offer families another big perk—and that’s storage space.

“One of the biggest complaints we had on the older housing was that there just was not enough storage,” Alice Bischoff, Housing Division chief said.

The homes destroyed in the New Year’s Eve day tornado were an average of about 980 to about 1,150 square feet.

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“All of these replacement homes that we’re building come in at an average square footage of about 1,840 square feet,” Cole said. “As a young captain with a wife and two kids, I lived in one of those homes that was 980 square feet and if I were a captain today coming into a 1,840 square foot home—I would be very happy. It’s one of those incentives to stay in the Army because if your family’s happy, then it makes it easier for you to stay on active duty and continue doing the things the Army asks you to do.”

Functionality and space are a theme throughout the homes that are being built in three and four bedroom units and include two and one-half baths and a two-car garage to meet the Army’s Residential Communities Initiative standards. There’s even a spot in the garage designed to store the garbage container.

“One of the added features we did on this garage as we were looking at the floor plans was to put a small cove in the garage to place a garbage container because a lot of times that garbage container just sits out and gets in the way,” Cole said. “We thought let’s just put it off on the side so the family will have a place to store the trash without interfering with parking the vehicles.”

The hall closet in the homes will be finished all the way to the back of the staircase to use available space underneath the stairs and not waste space. That’s in addition to the pantry, walk-in closets, linen closets, storage room off the garage and outside storage for the mower or grill.

According to Cole, 40 homes are under roof now and of those 40, about 36 have some level of rough-in, plumbing, HVAC, mechanicals or trim work going on.

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The construction project totaling \$31.5 million is being paid for through a combination of Army equity, contributing equity of Balfour Beatty Communities and insurance proceeds from the destroyed homes.

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Features:

- Every unit will have a tornado safe room incorporated in the downstairs half bath built according to Federal Emergency Management Agency standards. The tornado room is put in first ahead of everything else.
- The first 40 units, duplexes, are replacement units from tornado destruction. After that it's continued expansion with the other 120 units being built.
- All of these homes offer at minimum of three bedrooms and some four bedrooms, two and one-half bath, two-car garage homes that meets the Army Residential Community Initiatives standards.
- Units include an exterior storage room.
- There is a separate area for washer-dryer, utility sink/mud-room sink.
- The average size of all replacement homes come in at about 1,840 square feet.
- Kitchens have an "island", pantry, sink, dishwasher, refrigerator, stove, natural gas.
- Replacing carpet with vinyl wood plank to increase durability and reduce cost over time in terms of the maintenance.
- Finished hall closet all the way back with a shelf to put the sweeper, the brooms, the dust pans dust mops or other cleaning supplies and a place to hang your coats. And that's in addition to the pantry.
- Entry way with hall closet.
- Nice sized bedrooms with walk-in closet.
- Every bedroom will have cable TV and a telephone outlet.
- In the family bath all the bathrooms will have a double sink vanity.
- Each bath has a linen closet.
- Master bedroom offers master bath, with double sink vanity and closed-in commode room.
- "His" and "hers" closets in master bedroom.
- Well insulated from the outside heat to help with the efficiency of the unit--an Army requirement that the homes are built to a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard.
- Water, natural gas, and electric per Army requirements.
- A select number of units will be built according to Americans with Disabilities Act standards for accessible design.
- The plan is to put down sod instead of seed and straw and put in an irrigation system to help water it due to the heat.

Photo cutlines (Army photos/Marti Yoshida):

1DCO4896: Fort Leonard Wood officials anticipate a November ribbon cutting for delivery of up to 20 homes to replace those destroyed in the EF-3 tornado that struck the installation New Year's Eve day 2010. This will represent the first phase of a multiphased project which is expected to be completed by May 2013. At the end of the project, a total of 160 new duplex homes are scheduled to be constructed.

2DCO4891: Richard Cole, Balfour Beatty Communities project director leads a tour near the entryway of a new privatized housing unit currently under construction in the Woodlands neighborhood. The new homes will average about 1,840 square feet, offering much needed space for Soldiers and their Families.

3DCO4892: Kitchens in the new units will have an 'island,' pantry, sink, dishwasher, refrigerator, stove and stove. Additionally, the units are well insulated from the outside heat to help with the efficiency of the unit. It is an Army requirement that the homes are built according to a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard.

4DCO4897: Richard Cole, Balfour Beatty Communities project director looks at hardy steel plank being used to construct tornado safe rooms at the new Residential Community Initiatives privatized housing currently under development in the Woodlands neighborhood, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Each of the 160 new duplex homes scheduled for construction will include a tornado safe room. The safe rooms are designed according to Federal Emergency Management Agency standards to withstand an EF-3 category gust of wind.

5DCO4890: The first 40 duplex units being built are replacement units from the 2010 tornado destruction. At the end of the project, a total of 160 new duplex homes are scheduled to be constructed. Construction of 70 new duplex units on Frizell Street will be designated for company-grade officers; and 90 duplex units on Epps Street will house junior-enlisted Soldiers, primarily E1 to E4.

6DCO4915: Every unit will have a tornado safe room incorporated in the downstairs half bath. The safe room is put in first ahead of everything else. The safe room is a completely separate structure in the house with a steel door and steel casing all around the perimeter and top of the unit and j-bolted down to the six-inch depth concrete foundation.

7DCO4918: Today Goethals Drive in the Piney Hills neighborhood shows few reminders that an EF-3 tornado struck the installation New Year's Eve day 2010 destroying 40 homes.

8DCO4916: An outdoor park and picnic shelter on Goethals Drive allows those who still reside in the Piney Hills neighborhood a place to gather.