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## **Hot Springs Resort to Open This Summer**

The Springs - A Hot Springs Resort in Idaho City, formerly The Warm Springs Resort, has been undergoing extensive renovation and construction over the past six months and will reopen this coming summer.

In the beginning of the year the owners hired Boise architect Tom Trutna and local Idaho City builder Bob Wyllie to create a new master plan for The Springs that fit with the unique history and pioneer style of the region. The team was tasked with designing and building an entirely new resort that would be energy efficient, last for a century, but look like it could have been built a century ago. Using local natural building materials and employing local sub-contractors, the project broke ground in May and has been going full speed since. As the winter freeze sets in construction will slow down but will ramp up quickly again in March, with a grand opening in the summer.

"It's good timing" said Wyatt Sharpley, general manager of The Springs. "We will reopen on Idaho City's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the design of new resort definitely pays tribute to the town's history. The entire resort will make guests feel like they are stepping back in time, to a simpler time. What we offer our guests is simple; come unplug and relax. Cells phones don't work here, so leave them in your car and come for a soak in the hot water and relax while being surrounded by nature. In our buildings you will only see natural materials, no plastic or wires or technology, just rock, glass, metal and wood. It's a subtle effect, but the feeling is that there is nothing from the modern world to remind you of the busy life you'll be leaving behind for a few hours."

### **It Has Taken a While**

The new owners purchased The Warm Springs Resort in 2001 and it has taken a decade to improve the land through noxious weed removal, forest management, hundreds of new tree plantings, new drainage systems, irrigation upgrades and other basic site improvements. Planning for the new resort has taken many years with several changes in size and scope.

"It has taken us a long time to get here, but in the grand scheme of things, it's just a moment" said Owner Jesse Pearson. "The hot springs have been here for millennia; the pristine water that erupts from the ground today is thousands of years old and comes from a source more than two miles deep. Even the business of the hot springs has been around for over 150 years. We're taking the long view and we're constructing a building designed to last for 100 years or more and to be in proper scale and alignment with the natural resources that will be here long after our team is gone."

### **Extensive Groundwork**

Major site upgrades were needed before any building could take place. The past six months has been dominated by over \$400,000 of investments in site upgrades and improvements, starting with the demolition and reclamation of several old buildings and finishing with new utility runs and services, new wells and major hot springs upgrades, including a new water cooling tower.

"The property will have electrical systems, data and communication services, drinking water systems and

hot springs systems that will perform without any needed upgrades or maintenance for many decades” said builder Bob Wyllie. “They’re investing in the future and once they’re open, The Springs should be around for a very long time.”

Other site upgrades include shipping in over 50 truckloads of topsoil to accommodate a large landscaping design surrounding the pool area, carving small private hot tubs out of the rocky hillside, each fed by one of the many smaller hot springs that dot the landscape and shutting down the old groundwater well and drilling a new 600 foot well to supply pristine spring water for the drinking water system.

For guests, these infrastructure upgrades will result in a resort designed for year-round comfort and relaxation. The main pool will be even hotter in the winter and cooler in the summer. The enlarged concrete deck surrounding the pool will be geothermally heated all winter long and larger lawns and gardens will provide summer spaces to relax and soak in the sun.

Capital investments in energy efficient systems will greatly lower operating costs and help ensure a sustainable business model. Boise based Tikker Engineering developed a custom heating and cooling system that not only heats the building entirely with hot springs water and provides snow melt around the building and the pool deck, it then switches to use a seasonal cold creek water flow to cool the building in the summer.

Current code regulations required that the building constantly run ventilation systems that exhaust warm air out of the building all winter long and then replace it with heated outside air. Typically accomplished using a propane air heater, this requirement can cost a commercial business thousands of dollars a year. Tikker Engineering designed a system to use the hot springs water to heat incoming air, completely free of any heating costs.

“The Springs is blessed with natural resources that when used creatively provide immense savings in energy costs and provide a level of warmth and comfort beyond most any traditional electric or propane powered system”, said Bob Tikker of Tikker Engineering. “The owners asked us to be creative about using the onsite resources they had and we met their expectations while designing systems that will be low maintenance and offer a high return on investment.”

### **Services and Pricing**

The Springs will be a significant upgrade from the old Warm Springs Resort. The main Olympic size pool remains, but will be resurfaced and more underwater benches will line the deep end for soaking. Next to the deep end of the main pool there will be a 15 foot round hot pool filled the hottest spring water of about 105F. Along with a fire pit, it will help create a winter outdoor space. There will be a cold soak feature and a new kiddie pool and well as a large rock water fountain that will provide a calming background sound.

The new building is one story, with a flat roof, so no matter where you are in the pool you can see the full night sky and watch the stars as you take an evening soak.

The modest building is only 2,400 sq. ft. and is constructed using Faswall building blocks, a green building material made of recycled wood fiber and concrete. The thick walls and natural plaster interior finish help create a cozy and warm environment. The building has a large glass wall entry that leads to an open reception area with a wood burning stove. Men’s and Women’s changing rooms offer private lockers, hot springs showers, and small amenities like complimentary hot teas and spring water, large towels and luxury shampoo, conditioner and moisturizer.

“There will be a lot of nice, simple touches that make guests feel well taken care of, but nothing fancy or pretentious.” Said Sharpley. “It’s about being warm and hospitable and exceeding guests’ expectations. When a guest comes here they should not have to worry about anything, least of all having to remember to bring a towel or having a safe convenient place to stash their things.”

The Springs will have a small snack bar and a place to grab a drink.

There are plans for an ongoing summer music concert series and well as live music by the pool.

Quarterly celebrations will mark the seasons and create memorable annual events, including a winter festival of lights and a fall harvest festival.

Pricing for The Springs has yet to be finalized.

“The resort would not be reopening, and it certainly would not be as aligned with the history and style of Idaho City, if it had not been for the support of the Idaho City Council, the Boise County Planning & Zoning Department, Terry Day and the Boise County Commissioners, Senator Corder, Idaho City Mayors Obland and Bridwell and the feedback and support from local residents, neighbors and business owners in Idaho City.” Said owner, Jesse Pearson. “We’re just glad the time has come.”

The Springs has a facebook page with the latest updates and there will be invitations to pre-opening events for facebook friends. Join them on facebook at [www.facebook.com/thespringsid](http://www.facebook.com/thespringsid). Their webpage is at [www.thespringsid.com](http://www.thespringsid.com).