



Durango School District announces plan to purchase Lightner Creek Apartments for staff housing

September 23, 2025, Durango, Colo. – Durango School District (DSD, formerly known as 9-R) announced tonight during its regular Board of Education meeting that it plans to purchase the Lightner Creek Apartment complex in Durango to provide affordable housing for district staff. The district anticipates closing on the property by October 30.

While other school districts in Colorado have made significant housing investments for their staff, this 35-unit purchase is one of the largest by number of units acquired at one time in Colorado by a school district— and among the largest by value. The closing price is \$10 million, with a \$75,000 credit from the seller.

Located within city limits and a 4-minute drive from downtown Durango on U.S. Highway 160 West, Lightner Creek Apartments includes 35 units – 10 studios, 13 one-bedrooms, and 12 two-bedrooms – along with 12 garages and 15 storage units available for rent. The property is located directly across from the Twin Buttes mountain biking trailhead and backs up to tall pines alongside Lightner Creek.

“This strategic investment in workforce housing represents a creative solution that benefits everyone,” said DSD Superintendent Dr. Karen Cheser. “By using bond funds to secure affordable housing units for our employees, we’re not only supporting the financial wellbeing of our teachers and staff, but we’re also strengthening our school district’s stability and our community’s economic foundation.”

In November 2024, Durango voters overwhelmingly passed the [Investing in Our Schools Bond](#), which allocated \$20 million for employee housing. DSD leaders say this purchase is the first major step toward delivering on that commitment. “Voters trusted us with this responsibility, and in less than a year since the bond’s approval, we’re proud to show results,” said Cheser.

More than 200 district staff reported in a 2025 survey that the high cost of housing is one of their greatest stressors and a significant barrier to recruiting and retaining quality employees. With the Lightner Creek Apartments purchase, the district will begin offering affordable rental options to a portion of its workforce, with the goal of having units ready by fall 2026 – or sooner. An advisory group of educators will give feedback on rental rates and selection criteria.

“This investment isn’t just about housing – it’s about ensuring students have consistent, quality instruction from teachers who can focus on education rather than worrying about where they’ll live,” said Cheser. “When educators can afford to live in the community they serve, they’re more engaged, more available for students and families, and more likely to make long-term commitments to our district.”

###



Serving 4,500 K-12 students across Southwest Colorado, Durango School District (DSD) is a regional hub for innovation in education. With strong academic programs, an outdoor learning lab, career pathways, and the Portrait of a Graduate vision, DSD prepares students to thrive in college, career, and life. Visit www.durangoschools.org.



Serving 4,500 K-12 students across Southwest Colorado, Durango School District (DSD) is a regional hub for innovation in education. With strong academic programs, an outdoor learning lab, career pathways, and the Portrait of a Graduate vision, DSD prepares students to thrive in college, career, and life. Visit www.durangoschools.org.