

## **Housing needs assessment**

As per NWCCOG, "Pitkin County's main economic driver is tourism, with 39% of all jobs related to this sector: accommodation and food services (26%) and arts, entertainment, recreation (13%)."

The 2023 Housing Needs Assessment report published by NWCCOG. Aspen/Pitkin has 3,200 deed restricted housing units. Even with this number of housing units, a 2019 study sites the gap for housing units in the upper valley in the thousands. The county has 34.9% of its housing units vacant for seasonal/recreational use. The luxury rental market is one factor in crowding out rentals (for workforce housing) from the housing stock. (NWCCOG, September 2023 update)

Pitkin County is rural resort community. The land use code supports the people and place and economic prosperity that have evolved in a half century of land use pattern development.

## **Density**

Our municipalities are made up of many, let's say, 6000 SF lots, 60 x 100'. Some 90 by 100' lots have been subdivided a few times, to 60 x 100' and 30 x 100'. On the 60 x 100' lots there is often a front and back unit, the same on the 30 x 100' lots. So a lot becomes a two family lot.

The issues for municipalities are just because there is a unit over a garage, it does not mean it is deed restricted workforce housing.

The same question arises in the rural areas of Pitkin County, with a risk of more rentals, without serving the needs of workforce housing. Deed restricted, resident occupied (employee housing) is not currently a part of the mid-valley master plan (Down Valley Comprehensive Plan), but recent developments in Redstone (with existing municipal water and waste, not greenfield development) and along Capitol Creek show a willingness to house workforce staff onsite. Local housing solutions reduce vehicle miles travelled for employees and reduce valley wide congestion.

## **The current numbers**

Aspen has 70% of deed restricted units according to NWCCOG. 5872 units, 2,303 deed restricted). Basalt is 16%. Snowmass Village is 12% deed restricted. Basalt and Aspen have development code that encourages ADUs (but not as use by right). At the Pitkin County level 34.9% of housing units are vacant for seasonal use and/or recreational use. So 1 in 3 homes are unoccupied most of the year. And only 17% of the housing stock in Pitkin County is rental.

## **Case study in Rural Pitkin County**

In rural Pitkin County a recent multi-family development on three-acres supports three housing units. Why on 3 acres (130,680 SF) only 3 dwelling units? A dwelling unit requires an aquifer, fire rated walls, water storage tanks (for consumption, potable water, for fire protection, as we sprinkler at 3000 SF, in accordance with NFPA 13R), an

onsite waste treatment system (OWTS) and a driveway meeting fire safety standards and local land use provisions.

Providing multi-family housing in rural Colorado- outside of municipal boundaries- requires water rights (state issuance) and costly site improvements for storage of water and treatment of waste (civil).

### **Water**

As we move to a hotter and drier climate more water is needed to irrigate the same acreage, resulting in less groundwater discharge and reduction in total stream flows. Drought conditions. In the autumn, we witness low water tables and soil requiring infiltration, leaving less runoff from snowmelt for the rivers. We must maintain minimum in stream flows for wildlife, year round. Growth in Colorado, whether the Western Slope or the Front Range, has implications for reduced stream flows, lower groundwater tables and increased losses due to trans basin diversions. Our community resources are limited. Our water systems are stressed.

### **Waste**

We have a risk to our rural resort economy when our sanitation services are flowing into our rivers and our aging infrastructure does not meet CDPHE guidelines. Similarly, many rural water treatment facilities are past their end of life.

### **Electrification requirements**

Single Family Residential homes receive electrical service via a 200 AMP main distribution panel. In order to meet electrification needs (hot water, heat pump, car(s) upgrades to the main service panel to a 400 AMP or greater are necessary (for single and/or multi-family). Electrification will likely require costly trenching from the residence to the transformer and upgrades to the main service panel. How does the growth in housing align with the State and County goals in decarbonizing the built environment?

### **Density and the WUI risk**

Increased density will result in a lower structure separation distance (SSD), which may result in a change in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) type classification, adding additional fuel to a typical parcel and/or typical housing density. (So a low structure density, could be updated to a medium-density construction as SSD decreases). Further, land use codes today are parcel centric, so increasing density may put neighboring lots at increased risk (for exposure to a neighboring ignition point- fire and/or embers, given the increase in fuels per parcel and parcel centric site planning).

### **Impact for Pitkin County**

Rural sprawl, throughout the greater Roaring Fork Valley has already negatively impact the health, safety or welfare of our residents. The answer for Pitkin is to keep the density concentrated in the urban growth boundary. Do not extend water or sanitation services. Concentrate growth where we have existing social services. If we are going to grow at the edges of the UGB, then identify lots that would qualify as transportation oriented, largely in municipal boundaries- which by their nature are well served by regional transportation, social, water and waste services.

**Roaring Fork Valley municipalities, Aspen, Basalt and the Town of Snowmass Village, should encourage-**

1. Density and deed restrictions; restrictions to provide workforce housing
  2. Mix local workforce, owner occupied and vacant/rental homeowners,
  3. Continue the research and assessments found in the workforce housing tools matrix.
- The workforce housing needs assessment from 2023 by the NWCCOG identifies the housing gap in units as: Aspen 956, Basalt 1409, and Snowmass Village as 1400.

**Near term housing opportunities**

People over parking lots- look at (County) parcel inventory and opportunities.

Essential worker housing, essential employee housing outside of UGB (as per the DVCP or have a larger community conversation about nearby “brown” field parcels. ) including Station 46, Aspen Village, El Jebel, Woody creek, etc.

Update the seasonal farm worker housing provisions in the code (LUC) in order to spur local ranching and farming and provide the year round community benefit of local agriculture and animal husbandry.

Acquire free market for conversion to workforce housing, deed restricted rental units. (as reported).

**Conclusion**

Pitkin County is rural resort community. The land use code needs to support the people and place and economic prosperity that have evolved in a half century of land use pattern development.

Creating workforce housing density in our established municipal boundaries, reignites our urban core and protects our wilderness and rural landscape, and maintains our green fields (free from development). Keep development to where there are municipal services, don't extend these services. If we are truly at capacity, then provide a site and parcel analysis to the community and let's have an open public discussion about the UBG and municipal services.

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