

# **WHITEFISH STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE AGENDA**



**Thursday, May 12, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.  
City Hall - Whitefish City Council Conference Room**

1. Call to Order
2. Communications from the Public
3. Approval of Minutes from April 14, 2022
4. Continue review and discussion of memo by Wendy Sullivan of WSW Consulting that prioritizes remaining strategies in the 2017 Whitefish Strategic Housing Plan.
5. Update on Affordable Housing Strategies in Progress
  - a. City of Whitefish – Potential Committee Restructuring and 2022 Assessment/Plan Update (dates for kick-off meeting)
  - b. Whitefish Housing Authority
  - c. Chamber of Commerce
6. Next Committee Meeting
  - a. June 9, 2022
7. Adjourn

## **Committee Documents:**

Click [here](#) to access the Workforce Housing Needs Assessment

Click [here](#) to access the 2017 Whitefish Strategic Housing Plan

# WHITEFISH STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

**1. Call to order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Ben Davis

Present: Lori Collins, Wendy Compton-Ring, Ben Davis, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Kevin Gartland, Bob Horne, John Muhlfeld, Rebecca Norton, John Muhlfeld, Dana Smith

Absent: none

Staff: Riss Getts, via MS Teams

Others: Three (3) people from the public were in attendance (Giuseppe Caltabiano, City Council; Dave Means, WF School District; Addie Brown-Testa, WHA)

**2. Communications from the Public:**

Giuseppe – went to the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce Housing event and was pleased to see the support for affordable housing. He would like to reconsider the bring back the reallocation of the sales tax and it is in the scope of this group. He wondered if we do not have to do the rebate portion of the sale tax.

**3. Approval of Minutes from the March 10, 2022 meetings:**

Collins/Muhlfeld moved to approve the March 10, 2022, meeting minutes, as amended, along with Kevin Gartland and Lori Collins's updates. Passed unanimously.

**4. Introductions.** Dana introduced Riss Getts, via Teams, hired as the new Housing Coordinator/Long-Range Planner. Riss introduced herself and provided the Committee a bit of her background.

Rebecca – asked about her thesis and she said it is about Whitefish

Lori – asked about the Snow Lot design project associated with one of her classes

Ben – excited to have her onboard

**5. Review and discuss memo by Wendy Sullivan, WSW Consulting, prioritizing remaining strategies in the 2017 Strategic Housing Strategies**

Rhonda – concerned that the affordable housing problem isn't a NIMBY problem; seems like developer use the affordable housing to 'take advantage' of the community; shouldn't frame our priorities around this term

Lori – of the projects that have come forward, she have observed the public is not pleased with anything and then we get nothing

**Sketch Plan Regulations.**

Bob – would like to see another process to reduce the 'risk' involved in the developed plan; can this be presented as a preliminary design?

Dana – concerned the public and Council wouldn't be pleased to see preliminary designs

John – Wondered where this is successfully being used

Bob – Colorado Springs when he was there and believes Missoula uses some form of it; it would qualify one to get some sort of entitlement – type, height and design

John – noted the quasi-judicial concerns with this type of process

Ben – wanted to know if Bob's written this down

Rhonda – thinks this is a good way to start meeting with the community before the developer spends a lot of money and the public thinks the project is a done deal

Bob – thinks it would be part of the PUD process

John – only use for PUD with density bonus

Ben – might be an interesting item under 'Zoning for Affordability'

**FROM WSW Consulting MEMO:**

**1. Core Components**

*Staff:* obtaining housing dedicated staff is 'in process' to help an increase in capacity

*Partnership Framework* – identify people that can bring something to the table in a newly reformed Housing Committee that would be an evolution of the current Strategic Housing Plan Committee

*Public awareness/education* – Brian Schott, PR with the CVB; can we use the CVB to do this?

*Political support* – YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard); Considering a lobbyist to support Whitefish

Bob – wonders about the success of a lobbyist just for our small town

Rhonda – the lobbyist-model for the tourism groups let the members know when something important is happening, then they let their group members know and everyone calls the legislators which seems to be the most effective vs just lobbyist communication

## 2. Employer-Assisted Housing & Near-Term Housing Options

*STR Conversion.* We are working on this and will report to the group next month

*Co-op Model.* The Chamber is meeting and can report to the group next month;

Bob – concerned with kicking out one group of employees to house someone else's employees

Kevin – good point and we'll discuss this topic further

*Employer Assisted Housing.*

*Deed Restriction Program.* This is the Vail Indeed program and is very expensive. Need a funding source.

## 3. Financing

Ben – Need a permanent funding source. Appreciated the math Kevin did at the Chamber Housing breakfast as it puts it into perspective

*Resort Tax*

Rhonda – thinks the voters would support reallocation

John – does the original allocation stay in place if a vote of the public fails? Dana – Yes, the original allocation would remain

Dana – Bozeman did not pass a recently proposed levy for housing; if we chose to go to the voters we will have to make sure to provide good education/public relations and a plan for where this money will go. It needs to be very logical

John – would hope a reallocation vote wouldn't be very controversial

Ben – asked Dana to remind the group why reallocation would not happen until Feb 2025?

*We need to pay off the Haskill Basin Conservation Basin*

Rebecca – thinks the public wants to see Resort Tax used for housing so it seems like a good thing to look at

Kevin – the iron's hot we should be looking at this now

Ben – what can we do now?

### **MOTION:**

Rhonda – touch base with the Resort Tax Committee on reallocation

Kevin – 2<sup>nd</sup>

### **DISCUSSION:**

Dana – would be a good idea to involve the Resort Tax Committee possibly at the May meeting

Ben Davis, Kevin Gartland and Dana agreed to attend the May meeting

**VOTE:**

Unanimous vote

*Unused Mill Levy*

Dana – we have some mills available that do not require a vote of the people; last year there was some agreement from the Council to consider using this money for housing and it could be part of the ADU fee reimbursement program on a 1<sup>st</sup> come 1<sup>st</sup> serve basis. Dana can bring more information back to the Committee.

Ben – important to start to accumulate money in a fund and the Council needs to determine how the money is used. This should be an annual process. How do we move this forward?

Dana – It will be part of the City Manager budget

Dana will send out information to the Committee.

*Foundations.* The Mtn Gateway was a catalyst to get donors involved in housing.

Bob – noted there are national foundations too

**NEXT STEPS:**

Bob & Riss will bring something back to the next meeting – May

Dana will bring the requested financial information to the group

The group will finish up items 4-6 in the WSW Consulting memo at the May meeting

**6. Update on Affordable Housing Strategies in Progress:**

**a. Whitefish Housing Authority – updates**

Lori provided an update of the SNOW lot to the group. Lori met with Bruce Boody to look at Alpenglow, Phase II; it will need to be a public-private partnership for funding, and they will need at least 15 units to make it work.

Whitefish Housing continues to move forward. They recently signed an MOU with the Whitefish CVB for the money to hire a grant writer, they signed a memo of engagement with the Community Foundation and have assigned smaller groups to tackle different issues including putting together the job description of the Executive Director.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Nothing from the Committee

**b. Chamber of Commerce – update**

Asked if the Committee had thoughts on the Summit. Everyone thought it went well and helped to develop unity around the affordable housing. Everyone agrees we need money and professional expertise and he's encouraged by the WF Housing nonprofit

We need a Strategic Housing Plan with projects yesterday in order to start the fund raising – Chamber and WF Community Foundation  
Rhonda – thanks; good information for the group

**NEXT STEPS:**

The group wondered if this can this happen every year to give the public an update?

**c. City of Whitefish**

Dana – briefly went over the new scope of work for the Needs Assessment/Strategic Housing Plan update

Short-term Rental Conversion Program – will be meeting next week

**7. Next Committee Meeting:** May 12, 2022

Bob – appreciates the meeting and the group has accomplished something

Rhonda – suggests a development passing lane if the project is providing affordable housing

**8. Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.



1124 Navahoe Dr.  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150  
www.wswconsult.com

Date: March 10, 2022

To: Dana Smith, City Manager  
Wendy Compton-Ring, AICP, Senior Planner  
Strategic Housing Plan Steering Committee

From: Wendy Sullivan, President, WSW Consulting, Inc.

Subject: Strategic Housing Plan Priority Recommendations – for discussion

---

### **Purpose**

WSW Consulting, Inc., was contracted by the city of Whitefish to review and recommend an updated priority of the remaining strategies identified in the 2017 Whitefish Strategic Housing Plan, as well as recommend new strategies that may help address affordable housing in Whitefish.

Great progress has been made and congratulations are due to all who have been working hard to advance housing opportunities for residents and the workforce. As with all housing programs, however, the work is never done. As a result, this document:

- Briefly outlines progress that has been made on the strategies from the 2017 Plan.
- Presents expressed and observed issues and concerns affecting affordable housing progress in Whitefish.
- Provides recommendations for next step strategies for discussion and refinement with the Housing Steering Committee (“Committee”).

## What has been done

The memo presented by city staff to the Committee for the September 9, 2021, session outlines progress made on strategies outline in the 2017 Plan. The below table was presented in the September 9 report and has been modified to illustrate current status. The green shaded items are recommended for continued and/or new pursuit as part of Housing Plan actions, which are discussed in more detail below.

| Current Priority                                     | Strategy   | Proposed Priority                                       |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Tier 1 Strategies:</b>                            |  |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                  | Snow Lot Partnership – WHA   | In Process  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                  | Inclusionary Zoning – now a volunteer program  | DONE  |
| 3.   | Annexation Policy  |   |
| 4.   | Homebuyer Assistance – WHA   | ? if funding received – might need to wait              |
| 5.   | Voluntary Assessment – Chamber   | In Process  |
| 6.   | Resort Tax (increase/reallocation) – City  | Increased, but not allocated to housing (revisit 2027?) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                  | LIHTC apartments – WHA/City  | DONE  |
| 8.   | Zoning for Affordability   | -   |
| <b>Tier 2 Strategies:</b>                            |  |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                  | Accessory Dwelling Units   | In Process  |
| 2.   | Land Bank – City   |   |
| 3.   | Short Term Rental (conversion program)   | Working on regs/enforcement; not working on conversion  |
| 4.   | Employer Assisted Housing – Chamber  |   |
| 5.   | Community Land Trust – WHA   |   |
| 6.   | Open Space Reduction in PUDs – City (20% open space when providing affordable housing) | Part of “zoning for affordability”                      |
| 7.   | Commercial Linkage   | -   |
| 8.   | Residential Linkage  | -   |
| <b>Tier 3 Strategies (not in any priority order)</b> |  |   |
|  | Opportunities for Tiny Homes   | Part of “zoning for affordability”                      |
|  | No-net Loss Policy   | Part of “zoning for affordability”                      |
|  | Raising Funds Through Special Events – WHA   |   |
|  | Acquisition for Market Units – WHA   | ? funding dependent; can work with down payment program |
|  | Self-Help Build - Chamber  |   |

| <b>Current Priority</b> | <b>Strategy</b>   | <b>Proposed Priority</b>           |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
|                         | Fee Reimbursement – City: this could be part of the overall finance program | Incentive                          |
|                         | Property Management – WHA/City  |                                    |
|                         | Habitat for Humanity – WHA/Chamber  |                                    |
|                         | Co-op or Co-Housing – Chamber/WHA/City                                      | Part of “zoning for affordability” |
|                         | Public Sector Development – WHA   | In process?                        |
|                         | Senior Housing – WHA  |                                    |
|                         | Section 8 Rent Subsidies – WHA  |                                    |
|                         | Taxes – City  |                                    |
|                         | Debt Financing with Favorable Terms – WHA/Chamber                           |                                    |
|                         | Private Donations/Grants – WHA/Chamber                                      |                                    |
|                         | Relocatable Housing – City/WHA/Chamber                                      |                                    |
|                         | Impact Fees – state law doesn’t permit impact fees for private housing      | MONITOR                            |

**Highlighted concerns/issues**

| <b>Issue</b>  | <b>Concern</b>   |
|---|--|
| <p>Denial of projects. 137 affordable housing units denied since the 2017 assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town council political support?</li> <li>• NIMBY momentum; social media misinformation</li> <li>• Second homeowner/wealthy owner pressures</li> </ul>  | <p>Every project that is denied is a message to developers to not “risk” using incentives, discourages public support, and hurts the ability to raise financing for housing.</p> <p>Continuing to make it easier to provide housing through code changes/incentives or pursuing projects is not helpful if projects will just be denied.</p>                             |
| <p>Immediate need for housing. What can be done in the near term to expand employee housing options?</p>  | <p>Longer term actions will not address immediate needs.</p>   |
| <p>Snow Lot progress – can anything be done to facilitate this project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financing for HW executive director?</li> <li>• RFQ for an owner’s representative to lead the development on behalf of the HA?</li> <li>• RFP for a “fee” developer to undertake the development?</li> </ul> <p>Next project -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monegan Road?</li> <li>• Alpen Glow II?</li> </ul> | <p>Construction costs are only rising; longer delays mean more money to fill the affordability gap.</p> <p>Assessing public/institutional and underutilized/redevelopment lands for housing development needs to be an ongoing process. Ideally a pipeline of sites/projects can be identified – helps support fund raising (i.e., having a specific “housing plan”)</p> |
| <p>Capacity and resources – several “core components” are not in place.</p> <p>In process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City housing coordinator – interviews occurring</li> <li>• Housing Whitefish – finalizing formation; need to staff</li> <li>• Housing Authority – grant writer to be hired (funding from CVB available)</li> </ul>  | <p>Ability to make progress is limited by staff capacity, financing.</p> <p>Education campaign to educate/build community support, political support, counteract NIMBY is missing.</p> <p>Encourage the creation of a citizen-led YIMBY group (e.g., Shelter JH in Jackson, WY, is a good example)</p>   |

### Next step recommendations

The below recommendations are intended to further the purpose of the 2017 Strategic Plan, which are to:

1. Utilize City-owned land and public financing to construct rental housing in the downtown area.
2. Offer incentives to develop workforce housing in the downtown area, commercial zones where it is not currently allowed, and existing residential areas where appropriate.
3. Require workforce housing to be produced as part of new residential developments as the community grows. *(NOTE: not recommended to pursue requirements at this time. Montana legislation adopted since 2017 prohibits mandatory inclusionary zoning; existing legislation does not explicitly allow impact fees for housing.)*
4. Provide voluntary ways by which the broader community can contribute to housing.
5. Engage employers, non-profits, and the private sector as partners in workforce housing solutions.

Although the below list is long, it can be consolidated into the following priorities:

1. Get your core components in place, including city and Housing Whitefish staff, grant writing (Housing Authority), and public awareness/education campaign;
2. Nurture and facilitate employer assisted housing partnerships. Explore near-term solutions to help with housing;
3. Active pursuit of financing – grant writing (state, federal, foundations), local sources (e.g., mil levy; 2027 resort tax for housing);
4. Move the snow lot forward. A successful project can help generate support for more;
5. Identify next tier projects on public/institutional land, redevelopment/underutilized properties. A defined plan for housing can help build support and generate revenue; and
6. Continue with code changes to support more housing opportunities (e.g., zoning for affordability, annexation policy). This must be done in tandem with building political support for projects.

## 1. Core components

Strategic Housing Committee - Consider evolving the housing committee into a “partnership framework” to bring more capacity to address housing to the table. This includes adding partners (e.g., employers, organizations, institutions, and citizens) that bring capacity, staff, and resources to help implement housing initiatives.

- The city, Chamber, and Housing Authority are important implementers, but developing a broader “partnership framework” to share collective skills and resources in the community can increase the effectiveness and variety of programs in Whitefish. This may include the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Whitefish Community Foundation, larger employers such as the hospital or school district who may have land/interest in pursuing housing for their employees, organized community leaders to support housing, among others.
- The list of recommended actions below, as well as the Housing Needs update expected to occur this year, may help identify helpful and interested partners.

Increase capacity –

- City Housing Coordinator – interviews being done
- Housing Authority grant writer – funds secured, begin hiring process
- Housing Whitefish executive director – can the group help facilitate progress? What is needed?

Public awareness, education, and participation – “the story of housing”

- Who is best suited for this – CVB? Chamber? Housing Authority? Multiple? Other?

What is needed to build political support for projects/increase approvals?

- Is there ability to encourage or facilitate the creation of a citizen-led YIMBY group (e.g., Shelter JH in Jackson, WY, is a good example).

## 2. Employer-assisted housing and near-term housing options

Employer assisted housing – education, partnership facilitation – Chamber?

Near term housing options:

- Short-term rental conversion – most communities have implemented this as a temporary incentive program to get units available quickly (and cheaply). 2 to 5-year timeframe.
  - Can employer contributions help fund incentive? (e.g., temporary housing for traveling nurses, etc.)

- Example: Landing Locals (with Truckee incentive participation), Truckee, CA; Big Sky Community Housing Trust Rent Local Program – 48 units housing 99 workers provided in the first few months of operation.
- Deed restriction purchase program (new) – requires funding
  - This can be tied with “homebuyer assistance” program – down payment can be a grant if they apply a deed restriction on their property.
- See “zoning for affordability” below (new options)

### 3. Financing

Ideally financing will be tied with a financial plan for the use of funds. This helps with procuring funds and generating support, plus focuses grant writing and identifies needed funding sources. This will come together more clearly as the other initiatives come into place.

Opportunities:

- Unused mil levy – how can council get on board?
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – potential for infrastructure (e.g., Monegan bridge?)
- Foundations – Whitefish Community Foundation received money toward Monegan Road site. A successful project may generate more opportunity here.
- Traditional state/federal grants/loans (CDBG, HOME, etc.) – grant writer role
- Resort tax – increased, but not allocated for housing; consider 2027 voter ask for housing.
- Voluntary assessment – Chamber is resuming.
  - Opportunity to engage real estate community? (e.g., voluntary contribution to housing fund – see, e.g, <https://www.communityhousingfund.com>)

### 4. Snow Lot

- Anything needed to move this forward faster?
- *Start education (core component) to help generate YIMBY support now*

### 5. Next tier projects – land/redevelopment opportunities – potentially pairs with Land Bank and Housing Trust items

Continue to assess public and institutional land, as well as underutilized lands/redevelopment opportunities, for housing production. Develop a pipeline plan of projects. A clear plan of action can help attract funds. Current identified options:

- Monegan Road
- Alpen Glow II

Council review of land opportunities (where would they consider approving housing?)

Redevelopment opportunities – Housing Authority sites, other properties?

Underutilized lands – e.g., parking lots, underdeveloped/dilapidated, etc.

## **6. Code/Policy Changes/Upgrades**

Annexation policy – recommend pursuing now

Accessory Dwelling Units – currently in process

Impact fee waiver/deferral – recommend pursuing now

Assess areas for increased density (NOTE: utilize density bonus provision here rather than upzoning) – recommend pursuing now (can be in conjunction with council review of where they would approve housing)

Zoning for affordability: (existing Plan) – recommend lower priority

- Open space reduction
- No-net-loss
- Co-housing

Zoning/designing for affordability (new): These items would be good to field with Employer Assisted Housing discussions to see if employers are motivated around any of these options – and where.

- Hotel conversion/SRO
- Temporary housing/seasonal options (e.g. RV lot not used in winter that resort or other could place tiny homes on for seasonal (Aspen Ski Co example), etc.)
- Alternative structures allowance (code)
  - Dorms – where?
  - Tiny homes – allowed?