

Multi-faceted Housing Study and Inventory of Housing Stock, facilitated by Wendy Lowe

Existing Resources/Efforts

The following existing resources and efforts – which might help inform the housing study/inventory of housing stock - were identified during the three listening post sessions:

- Bob Emerson had been working awhile back exploring strategies for increasing the amount of affordable housing in Driggs and Teton (ID) County – don't know if he is still working on that
- There were studies in the past about the availability of affordable housing in Teton (WY) County
- U.S. Census data, especially the census of housing (done every five years)
- Banks must file reports with HUD on the numbers and amounts of home loans made – that data should be available through HUD
- Taxing districts
- BYU-Idaho's housing department
- Real estate offices and agents
- The organization called "Seniors West of the Tetons"
- Service organizations
- County tax records and registrars records
- The number of lots in distress (lots that are platted for development that have not been developed)
- Habitat for Humanity
- Religious records
- Valley Advocates for Responsible Development has done 20 years worth of analysis of rural subdivisions in Teton County
- Realtors
- Mortgage lenders
- Resort tax revenues
- Teton County (and other counties possibly) Comprehensive Plans
- Foreclosure rates and trends
- Vacancy rates and trends
- A HUD publication called the PD&R – available at www.hudusers.gov

It was noted that housing data that is only a few years old may not accurately reflect the current situation as things have changed fairly radically in the housing sector during the current recession.

It was suggested that all of the data for this study may already be available; it may just need to be pulled together.

Information Gaps

The following information gaps were identified; they may need to be filled in order to conduct the housing study/inventory of housing stock:

- The homeless in this region: who are they and why are they homeless
- Number of citizens currently in substandard homes (but what is the definition of substandard – what does it mean and who makes the determination?)
- The data that is available may be in an inconsistent format across the four counties
- Availability to address housing needs outside of private capital
- Lack of communication and coordination across the four counties
- Recent and focused data on the housing stock

Critical Areas of Focus

The following critical areas should be incorporated into the design of the housing study/inventory of housing stock:

- The study should include a spatial analysis evaluating the availability of affordable housing in rural areas and how close that housing is to the available employment. The distance between housing and employment determines the need for transportation services.
- The inventory should include all types of housing
- The study should consider how to keep people in their housing and prevent downward mobility during times of economic stress
- The study should evaluate various types of regulatory/zoning/economic mechanisms for incentivizing builders and developers to build affordable housing
- The diversity of housing that is available and how well it lines up with needed housing
- Data for a snapshot in time should not be relied upon to heavily; trends are more relevant and seasonal fluctuations must be evaluated
- All of these must be considered at once: residents' incomes, housing costs, population fluctuations, and housing types
- The study should consider how to monitor housing supply and demand over time
- Identify housing needs that are not being met as well as excess supply
- Are the four counties following national trends (like movement from suburbs back into urban settings to gain access to more amenities) or behaving differently

It was suggested that the study should avoid trying to conclude that help is needed when perhaps no help is wanted. At least one listening post participants questioned why this study is needed.

Interested Publics/Underserved Populations and How to Reach Them

Publics that should be invited to participate as this study proceeds include the following, along with suggestions of how to reach out to them:

- Seasonal and migrant workers – during their peak seasons (not when they are not around) – they might be found through their employers (employers should be willing to help as the lack of housing is a problem for them)
- Employers – they should know who is facing housing challenges

- Unemployed and underemployed people
- Housing authorities
- Transient and homeless populations – service providers might be able to help find them, like shelters, religious leaders, and the schools. Also, there is a Point-in-Time count done every year on January 26th.
- Veterans – through the Veterans Administration, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Legion
- Vacation home owners
- County assessors' offices
- The elderly – through senior citizens centers
- Disabled community – Eastern Idaho Community Action Program, Department of Health and Welfare, Department of Health and Human Services
- Landlords, the real estate community, and property managers – look for a landlords association
- The LDS and Catholic churches
- Second home owners – might be able to find them through county tax assessors offices (they may not be able to provide information due to privacy concerns, but they may be willing to help distribute information through schedule annual mailings like the annual tax assessment)
- The universities and their students
- Bankers

It was noted that all outreach materials should be translated into Spanish, particularly those targeting migrant workers.