

# REVELSTOKE.

## TOURISM TALKS

### HOUSING OUR RESIDENTS

In the lead up to the November municipal election, housing dominated the conversation. In Tourism Revelstoke's recent resident survey, housing was identified as a top priority by many respondents. A shortage of housing that has been on the rise for several years was only exacerbated by the pandemic. The effects of this are readily apparent: well paying jobs remain unfilled because qualified people can't find suitable housing, people leave town to pursue more affordable living, and renters live in the shadow of housing insecurity. In order to preserve community and character, it's essential that we combat housing unaffordability and lack of availability.

Many mountain towns have common problems in this respect: non-resident ownership, skyrocketing housing prices, geographic limitations to new development, and high numbers of seasonal or low wage employees. In order to find solutions for Revelstoke, it's helpful to explore some of the ideas generated in other mountain communities.

**Aspen:** Established in the 1970s, the Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority ("APCHA"), was one of the first of its kind. When a deed restricted property comes up for sale in Aspen, a lottery is held for prospective buyers. The weighted lottery gives priority to residents with a four year work history. For rental housing, APCHA has a mix of properties, some that it manages and some that are privately owned and managed. The basic requirements for accessing these properties are that a renter works full time within the county, that they occupy the unit as their primary residence, and that they own no other residential property within the area.

**Whistler:** The Whistler Housing Authority ("WHA") was created in 1997. It maintains and augments an inventory of employee restricted housing for local income owners and retirees. Like APCHA, the WHA offers models for both rental and home ownership. Whistler's program imposes resale prices that are tied to inflation, so while this creates more affordable purchase rates, it also limits the resale value of the home.

**Vail:** 2016 tax records showed that 66% of Vail homes were unoccupied, and 90% of new homes were purchased by non-residents. In order to combat this, Vail introduced deed restrictions. Vail pays homeowners 15-20% of the home's value in order to include a covenant on title that the home will only be sold to residents employed in local businesses. Vail also introduced a program in which the county can support locals making purchases in exchange for a deed restriction on the home.

**Banff:** Banff is in a somewhat unique position as all town land is leased on a long term basis from Banff National Park, which allows for restrictions to be put in place as a condition of the lease. Banff has created a requirement that people who live in Banff also work locally (with allowances for retirees).

**Crested Butte:** Crested Butte introduced requirements for Resident-Occupied Affordable Housing (ROAH) directly into its municipal code. Any new development (residential or non-residential) must comply with requirements to create ROAH units in compliance with a formula based on square footage and whether the development is commercial or residential. In some cases, a payment in lieu may be made to the Town Council instead of creating a unit; however, the code is written such that the creation of new units is the priority and developers can't simply buy their way out of the obligation.

By borrowing from other communities and learning from their successes and challenges, we can work collectively to address the housing crisis in Revelstoke. While many local organizations, like the Revelstoke Community Housing Society, are making an impact with limited resources, a more cohesive community effort across public and private sectors will lead to real progress in housing our residents.