

The other side of the story...

Fixing Housing, Real Medicine

Local government keeps 'solving' the housing problem, but it isn't getting solved. It's getting worse. It's much worse today than when they first started 'solving' it over two decades ago.

Maybe they've taken the wrong approach. It's tough to solve an economic problem while ignoring economics.

Truth is, local government's real objective is growth – more, always more. Our tight housing market is the result of their big-growth agenda.

Of course, politicians don't run on a 'big-growth' platform; if they did, they wouldn't get elected. Instead, they focus on solving the housing problem.

Business owners want prosperity. Too often they see that as just more customers. So they want non-stop visitation and commercial growth which causes our tight housing market.

Just as overeating causes obesity and health problems, too much commercial growth causes overcrowding and housing problems. Rather than living within our historic building and zoning rules, local government expanded those to encourage evermore commercial growth.

Today they focus on the housing 'symptom' instead of the growth 'cause.' Our tight housing market is just an indicator of unending commercial growth, which is the true driver of the entire problem. Our politicians avoid this truth, but why?

Habit, they've always wanted more. It's an outdated habit that's making our small town unlivable. They should be worrying about overcrowding.

Our leaders tend to speak with one voice. The Chamber, Town Council, County Commissioners, and local media rarely question one another.

They cooperate. They are a united front.

They are never going to admit growth is a problem; they want more of it.

That's why the housing problem never gets solved. It's simple: business growth = employee growth = housing problems. It's basic economics, simple cause-and-effect.

Historically, business owners have been the winners in the affordable housing game. It's helped them keep wages low. So, naturally, business owners want the public to keep paying for worker housing.

*Housing is a symptom,
growth is the sickness.*

Workers want inexpensive housing and owners want them to get it. If workers can't find inexpensive, subsidized housing then business owners will have to pay higher wages.

That's the economics behind the affordable housing crisis. Solution? Our 'one-voice' leaders want the public to keep footing the bill. But voters said no at the last two elections.

The 'one-voice' will now try extra hard to convince voters it's a social issue, and voters have a moral obligation to fix it. That way the public will keep paying the bill. That way unbridled commercial growth can continue.

Politicians can't deal with the real cause of the problem—too much commercial expansion—because they're the ones approving the growth.

Politicians are hardwired for 'more' and can't admit it. But 'more' is killing us. It's bringing stifling congestion and ruining our quality of life.

Once voters adopt a 'quality of life' agenda and demand a 'livable Jackson Hole' then new candidates will emerge.

Until that happens, the 'one-voice' oligarchy will continue to be in charge.