

## Community Needs Must Come First

It's not an easy thing deciding who gets subsidized housing. Who do we as a community deem worthy of a rent stabilized apartment or a price-reduced mortgage? Who should be housed locally?

If you have twin 8-year-olds, a second grade teacher might be important. Then again, if your house is on fire or you've just been in a car wreck, a fireman or ambulance driver would be crucial. Emergency workers need to be close by, not in Driggs or Alpine. The point is, not all will agree on who should get Housing Department homes.

And voters have already said they don't want to pay for them. That's been proven again and again as our electeds put various affordable housing initiatives on the ballot. They failed. Can you blame the community?

Who wants to pay for someone else's mortgage when they're struggling to pay their own?

Affordable housing is an unnecessary business subsidy, a handout to those that don't need it. Large employers already make generous profits; they're expanding. They keep wages down by hiring J1 and other foreign visa labor.

But they've convinced our electeds that housing their workers is the government's job. So taxpayers are handed a bill for supporting big businesses but they don't get a share of the profits. It's not right. Maybe big hotels should pay a living wage.

New housing rules and regulations, currently just weeks away from being finalized, are set to dole

out vacant units with a lottery based on who's lived here the longest. No preference for first responders or other critical-need workers.

A snow plow driver will have the same chance as a policeman, a real estate agent, or a bartender. Community needs are ignored. What happened to safety first?

There are already 1,600-1,800 affordable housing units in Teton County. That's a lot. Most critical needs workers don't want government housing, but those that do — from EMTs, to firemen, to cops, snow plow drivers, teachers, nurses, etc. — could be easily housed in existing units. But the new system won't do that. It treats hotel and restaurant workers the same as first responders. It's not right.

Subsidizing large chain hotels while ignoring community needs is wrong. It's not fair to the taxpayers that pay for the housing. Critical needs workers need to come first.

The housing department and our electeds are living dangerously. They've caved to big business pressure while ignoring community safety.

We've grown too fast already and we're now paying the price. It shows up as rising crime, traffic jams, inflated prices, and wildlife pushed to the wayside. We need to slow down.

Housing has been a challenge in Teton County for decades. It's a fact of life in desirable mountain ski towns and other in-demand places around the world. Subsidized housing won't solve the problem. But it will make us grow faster. The community doesn't want that.

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business subsidy*

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