

# West Yellowstone, Montana

## Local Housing Strategy -

### October, 2024



Produced by the Human Resource Development Council of District IX (HRDC), on behalf of the West Yellowstone Community Foundation. Authors: Rick Simkins and Lila Fleishman Photo credit: Kestrel Aerial Services



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This community engagement and planning process has been led by the Human Resource Development Council of District IX (HRDC)'s community development team in partnership with the West Yellowstone Foundation (WYF). The West Yellowstone Foundation was formed as the first affiliate of the Montana Community Foundation. WYF is now joined by a collective of community affiliates, dedicated board members whose goal is being advocates for our children, elders, cultural heritage, natural environment, our economic vitality and for the great many visitors we welcome from around the world each year. HRDC is a community action agency and community housing development organization that has served southwest Montana since 1975. HRDC's community development team works to preserve, create, and sustain community facilities and homes that are affordable to people living and working in Gallatin, Park, and Meagher Counties through leading and partnering on development, policy, and capacity-building activities. HRDC's work is guided by the needs of the community within the strategic focus areas of Transportation, Food and Nutrition, Early Childhood Education, Housing, Senior Empowerment, Energy, Emerging Adults, and Financial Opportunity. Relevant team members included:

Rick Simkins, HRDC Community Development Project Manager  
 Lila Fleishman, HRDC Community Development Director  
 Carrie Coan, WYF Executive Director

We would like to thank the many local leaders, residents, organizations, businesses, advocates, and partners who participated in both the Housing Needs Assessment and Local Housing Strategy. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the West Yellowstone Foundation for its role as a local convener, elevating the conversation, bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders and perspectives, and supporting this work. Thank you to the West Yellowstone Housing Working Group volunteer members who dedicated their time to developing this document and strengthening the process. The members of the West Yellowstone Housing Working Group:

Ellen Butler, Carrie Coan, Connie Cusick, Dusty Dunbar, Patti Hostetter, Kim Howell, Jeff Mathews, Charlotte Mooney, Katie Thompson, Andie Withner, and Dan Walker

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## INTRODUCTION

The West Yellowstone Local Housing Strategy aims to define clear goals, strategies, policies, priorities, and responsible parties for implementation to create and preserve homes affordable to West Yellowstone residents. Two of the main factors influencing the community's housing challenges are its desirability as a place to live and its bustling tourism economy. As a gateway community to Yellowstone National Park, West Yellowstone has a unique set of challenges and opportunities surrounding housing, and this strategy is intended to provide a flexible framework to accommodate increased demand and sustain a resilient year-round community. As West Yellowstone's housing market continues to change, so must the response to the challenges created by those changing conditions.

Quantitative and qualitative data collected as a part of this process and the process of creating the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) both point towards housing challenges experienced by nearly all segments of West Yellowstone, including homeowners, renters, business owners struggling to find employees, and seasonal workers. The West Yellowstone Growth Policy, adopted in 2017, also recognized a "lack of available rental and affordable owner-occupied housing."

The strategy is built around the idea that there is no silver bullet to solving housing challenges; no one tool, organization, or person can do it themselves. The Town of West Yellowstone has an extraordinary opportunity created by the 80-acre addition, and this strategy was created intentionally to help guide the upcoming land use decisions. Certain tools will be more effective than others, and some tools will take longer time periods in order to be effective. The tools contained in this document all require an investment in time and resources by the community of West Yellowstone to be successful. However, there are also costs associated with inaction, which can take the form of lost community members priced out of the community. Without funding put towards housing efforts, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for West Yellowstone to bring its housing costs down to a level that is affordable for residents who earn their wages at local businesses. A subsidy is almost always required to create truly affordable housing.

The strategy was developed to reflect the values of a wide variety of community stakeholders from West Yellowstone, including residents, nonprofits, governmental, and business partners, in a process facilitated by the Human Resource Development Council of District IX. In addition to expertise in regional housing development and policy, the facilitation team leveraged the existing resources available on [LocalHousingSolutions.org](https://LocalHousingSolutions.org), a digital housing policy platform intended to assist communities in developing, implementing, and monitoring local housing solutions while educating the community and shaping the framework of the Local Housing Strategy. As a part of this process, the HRDC released the [2023 West Yellowstone Housing Needs Assessment \(HNA\)](#), also available in [Spanish](#), in November 2023 as a companion document to provide data and insight into the Local Housing Strategy recommendations.



## KEY TERMS

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING OR “HOMES RESIDENTS CAN AFFORD”** Affordable housing is relative to household income. This assessment uses the standard of the monthly rent or mortgage payment being equal to or less than 30% of gross household income (before taxes) for renters towards contract rent and utilities and 33% of gross income towards the mortgage, insurance, taxes, utilities, and condominium association fees if applicable for owners.

**AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)** The ACS is part of the Decennial Census Program of the US Census. The survey was fully implemented in 2005, replacing the decennial census long-form, and has been administered annually since. Typically, ACS data for localities represent the aggregate results of five years of responses; for example, the 2019 ACS cited in this report reflects data collected between 2015 and 2019. Because it is based on a sample of responses, its use in smaller areas (under 65,000 persons) is best suited for monitoring general changes over time rather than for precise estimates due to margins of error.

**AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI)** The AMI is a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculation of the midpoint of a region's household income distribution. This metric is a common tool for setting household income limits in affordable housing programs.

**COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (CLT)** A CLT is a community-based organization established to serve as the long-term steward of the land and to protect the community's long-term affordability and access to housing.

**COST-BURDENED** When housing costs exceed 30% of a household's gross (pre-tax) income. Housing costs include rent or mortgage and may or may not include utilities, homeowner association fees, transportation, or other necessary costs depending upon its application.

**DEED RESTRICTION** A covenant that imposes requirements for land use that sets restrictions for tenant or owner eligibility standards and/ or ensures long-term affordability.

**HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER** The housing choice voucher program (also referred to as Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers) is the federal government's largest rental assistance program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance through the housing choice voucher program is provided on behalf of a family or individual directly to the owner of a rental unit of their choice, participants can find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments.

**LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT (LIHTC)** The LIHTC is the largest federal subsidy program for the development of affordable rental housing through new construction and substantial rehabilitation. Generally allocated by state housing finance agencies, it subsidizes the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income tenants.

**MARKET RATE** Housing with no restrictions; property owners or sellers are free to set prices.

**RESIDENT-OWNED COOPERATIVE (ROC)** In resident-owned manufactured housing communities, the lot rent goes to the resident cooperative and is managed to meet community needs and maintain affordability. NeighborWorks Montana provides the ROC program in Montana as part of the ROC USA® Network and works with local partners to create and preserve ROCs.

**SHORT-TERM RENTAL (STR)** STRs in Montana are defined as any housing unit with a rental period of fewer than 30 consecutive days.

**SUBSIDIZED HOUSING** A kind of low-income housing where a qualified tenant pays a fixed share of their income towards rent. These subsidies are typically provided by federal programs funded by HUD or USDA Rural Development.

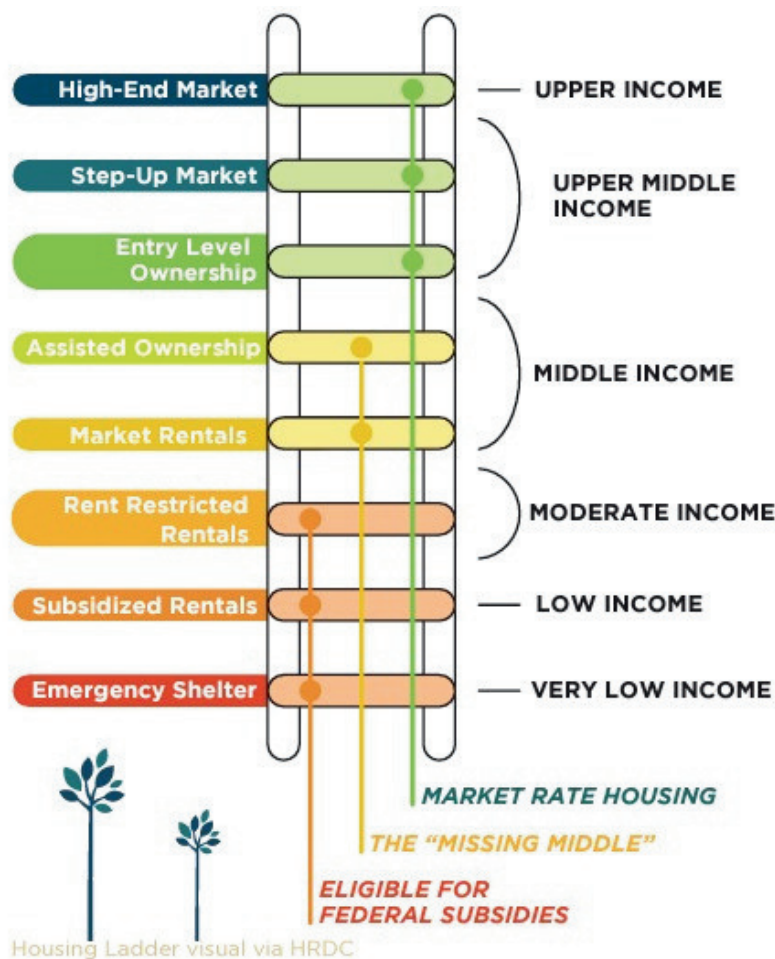
**WORKFORCE HOUSING** A broad term typically used for housing for employees earning local wages and may or may not include housing for rent or sale below market rates.

## BACKGROUND AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

Increasing access to homes affordable to people who live or work in West Yellowstone is a top priority of residents, local governments, businesses, and nonprofit partners, as evidenced by housing affordability and availability being the number one “Key Issue” in the 2017 Growth Plan Update and by the responses to the Community Priorities Survey. Of the 162 West Yellowstone Community Members surveyed, 92% disagreed (9.9%) or strongly disagreed (82.1%) that “people living and working in West Yellowstone had sufficient opportunities to access safe housing at a price people in my community can afford.” The Community Priorities Survey is discussed further in the planning process section.

As shown by the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), the current market conditions do not provide enough opportunities for rent or ownership to meet current or future housing needs. While various factors impact a household’s ability to secure affordable, safe, and stable housing, affordability is relative to a household’s income. The 2023 HNA found that the community’s least expensive market-rate rentals are unaffordable for nearly half of renting households and that even with a \$153,750 (20%) down payment and no additional debt, a household would need to earn over \$180,000 annually, about three and a half times the 2022 median income, to be able to afford the median home sales price of \$768,750 without being cost-burdened. The data contained in the HNA shows that housing needs continue to increase along the housing continuum, causing more downward pressure on households with lower incomes. In a housing market with reduced options, the “rungs of the ladder” shown in the graphic below become further apart.





The 2023 HNA found that the median income of a household renting in West Yellowstone is approximately \$40,000, which translates to a maximum affordable rental payment of \$1,000. This is also the low end of the range for market rentals, which means that for half of households who rent and who earn wages below the median income, households are cost-burdened, overcrowded, or potentially both. West Yellowstone has approximately 65 renter households with annual incomes of less than \$21,350, while only 20 homes have rental subsidies attached to ensure monthly rent is affordable to households in this income range. Households earning above the median income may be able to afford a rental payment but may have trouble finding an available year-round rental. The table below, originally produced for the HNA shows a breakdown of household incomes, the amount of households in each category, and what housing payments are affordable. The table illustrates both the lack of affordable rentals for households below 100% area median income (AMI) as well as the large gap between affordable purchase prices and the median home price of \$768,750.

	Household Income	HUD AMI Range	Renting HHs	Owning HHs	Affordable Rent*	Affordable Purchase Price**	Availability
Households earning >80% AMI can afford market-rate rentals, but not necessarily ownership	\$88,906 or more	> 125%	16	99	\$2,223 or more	\$253,818 or more	market rentals, limited home ownership
	\$71,125 to \$88,906	100-125%	21	15	\$1,778 to \$2,223	\$203,055 to \$253,818	market rentals
	\$56,900 to \$71,125	80-100%	31	15	\$1,423 to \$1,778	\$162,464 to \$203,055	market rentals
Households earning <80% AMI are designated "low income" by HUD	\$35,600 to \$56,900	50-80%	37	44	\$890 to \$1,423	\$101,631 to \$162,464	rent-restricted, entry-level, and market-rate rentals
	\$21,350 to \$35,600	30-50%	26	16	\$533 to \$890	\$60,937 to \$101,631	eligible for housing-choice vouchers
	Less than \$21,350	<30%	65	35	\$533 or less	\$60,937 or less	eligible for housing-choice vouchers
Data from 2021 ACS 5-Year, table B25118 and HUD's 2021 income limits. *No more than 30% of gross monthly income is spent on housing costs, including utilities. **Estimated using Calculator.net's house affordability calculator: <a href="https://www.calculator.net/house-affordability-calculator.html">https://www.calculator.net/house-affordability-calculator.html</a> Estimate assumes a 5% down payment, 7.0% interest rate, 30 year term, and a conventional loan.							

The 2023 HNA also found that, while housing affordability is a challenge in West Yellowstone, housing availability is also a significant barrier. Decennial Census and American Community Survey data illuminate the dearth of affordable or unaffordable housing in West Yellowstone. Vacancy rates in West Yellowstone are near zero percent, which means losing housing can lead to a forced move outside of the town's boundaries. While Gallatin County and Montana were experiencing high population growth from 2010 to 2020, West Yellowstone's year-round population grew by only a single resident. Members of the community hypothesized this lack of growth was related to or directly caused by the lack of available housing. Many property managers reported having properties in their portfolio that were leased long-term during winter months but are unavailable during West Yellowstone's busy summer months.

West Yellowstone has two major challenges when considering its ability to increase housing supply, the first being the lack of available land and the second being moratoriums on new sewer connections, the latest of which has been in effect since 2022. The 80-acre expansion is addressing the land availability challenge, and the moratorium on sewer connections is expected to be lifted in the spring of 2026 upon completion of a new wastewater treatment facility.

Related to the challenge of year-round housing availability is the prevalence of unoccupied homes in West Yellowstone. According to the 2020 Census, 307 (36%) of the town's 849 homes are vacant. These vacancies represent both homes rented on the short-term rental market and homes for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use."

Quantitative data indicates that the West Yellowstone housing stock is well matched to its resident's household sizes. However, interviews with community members conducted for the HNA indicated the quantitative data is likely skewed by the prevalence of smaller housing units owned by employers that do not make the housing available to the general population. This hypothesis is supported by Census data indicating a large degree of overcrowding of homes, with 19% of occupied homes experiencing crowding, which would be unlikely if household sizes were matched to housing unit size. For a more detailed snapshot of West Yellowstone's housing needs as of November 2023, please review the [2023 West Yellowstone Housing Needs Assessment \(HNA\)](#), also available in [Spanish](#).



### Community Priorities Survey

As a part of the process of developing this Local Housing Strategy, the WYF conducted a Community Priorities Survey during the 2023-2024 winter season to get information and perspectives from community members on local housing challenges and opportunities. The survey had several purposes. First and foremost, it gave the facilitators and eventual West Yellowstone Housing Working Group (HWG) members a feeling of how community members understood and were impacted by their housing experience in West Yellowstone. The survey also gave community members their first chance to participate in this process and was used to recruit community members to undergo the full planning process used to create the Local Housing Strategy. The survey was available for all community members online and was publicized at the post office, in person by community members, as well as online utilizing community Facebook groups “West Yellowstone Forum” and “West Yellowstone Public Voice (Forum).” The survey was completed by 162 unique individuals who self-identified as West Yellowstone community members. The results of this survey helped guide the entire planning process.

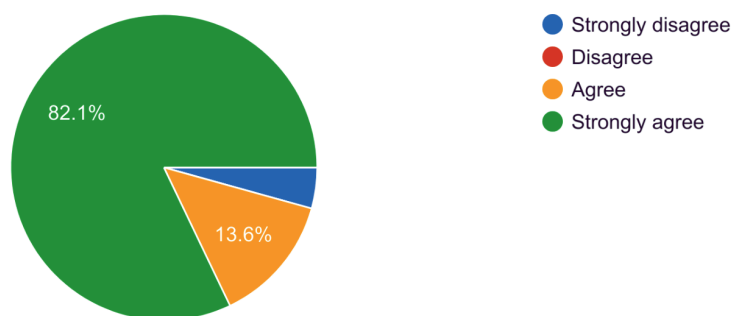
The community priorities survey asked:

- As a yes or no question, if the respondent thought there were sufficient opportunities to access safe housing at an affordable price?
- As a yes or no question, if the respondent thought West Yellowstone needed new and/or expanded solutions to address the availability of housing?
- With multiple-choice options, housing for which income ranges should be prioritized?
- As an open-ended response question, what groups or kinds of housing options should be prioritized?
- As an open-ended response question, when you imagine your community in 10 years, what are you most concerned about housing?
- As an open-ended response question, did the respondent have any helpful information the HWG should know while undergoing the planning process?
- Finally, as a yes or no question, was the respondent interested in serving on the HWG?

As shown by the graphs below, responses to the survey showed that the community overwhelmingly believes the lack of affordable housing is a critical need in West Yellowstone and that new and/or expanded solutions are needed to address the availability of affordable housing.

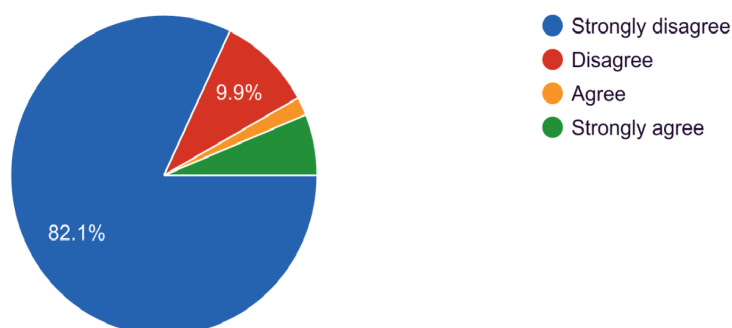
I believe that people living and working in West Yellowstone need new and/or expanded solutions to address the availability of housing that is affordable to local residents.

162 responses



I believe that people living and working in West Yellowstone have sufficient opportunities to access safe housing at a price people in my community can afford.

162 responses



The responses to the open-ended survey questions were diverse. The facilitation team identified several comments that we felt addressed perceived challenges, identified possible solutions, or created a call to action for members of the HWG. The quotes below do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the facilitators, the HWG, or the community as a whole but do represent the feelings of many community members.

"I'm a new transplant here, and my living here for about a year has taught me that the community is nothing but excellent, however we seem to be lacking enough housing foremployees and workers, as well as locals in town. I don't consider it to be "affordable" in our current economy. I hope that changes within the next 10 years. I also feel there needs to be more options for lower-income folks."

"My concern is that our community will keep losing young people, families, hard working and educated people that would like to live in West Yellowstone but cannot afford to."

"[find] ways to keep [housing] affordable, not just for the first generation that buys it."

"PLEASE build up our community. Help the people who live here. Make it easier for good people to live in our community. So many teachers leave the school because they do not have an affordable place to live, or a place to live at all. I am sure this is the case for other year round people as well."

"I think that housing should be addressed for more income [earning] employees, as well as affordable income for families and teachers."

"[I'm] concerned about housing for our professional/essential workforce for a healthy community (emergency responders, health care, government, nonprofit, education)."

"It took a long time to get to this poor position in both our community and our nation, and it's gonna take a long time to dig ourselves out of it."

"Having lived in West Yellowstone for almost 20 years, I can tell you, every month I worry I might lose my housing."

"The data shows that second homeowners maintaining a primary residence elsewhere far outnumber Short-Term-Rentals and nothing is in place to restrict or limit this type of growth. These ARE the people with the means to come buy market rate real-estate, thusly the most likely to do so. I see the value these wealthy people/families bring to town, but a healthy community needs a good portion of the working class to be home-OWNERS and the attractiveness of our area makes us extremely vulnerable to an imbalance if restrictions aren't put in place to limit an increase in the already astounding number of vacant homes"

"This has been a problem in this community since I moved here 20 years ago. Other neighboring communities have surpassed us with addressing this issue, we need to be more proactive."

"I am hoping we can get a plan set into place and get it rolling! I've been in this area for about six years now and there's been a lot of talk about improving the housing situation here but I really haven't seen any changes."



# The West Yellowstone Housing Working Group

This strategy is an outcome of the work of the West Yellowstone HWG. WYF Executive Director Carrie Coan and HRDC staff selected eleven HWG members with varied complementary strengths, perspectives, diverse levels of community engagement, lived experience, community leadership, and perspectives on housing challenges in West Yellowstone. The eleven members included representatives from the Town Council, Town of West Yellowstone staff, local business owners, long-time locals, retired teachers, and a mix of homeowners and renters.

Beginning in February 2024, this group met monthly to identify key focus areas and preferred housing strategies that would best address the community’s unique housing challenges and opportunities. Each of the four sessions was well attended by members of the HWG and lasted two to two and a half hours. The meetings for the housing working group included the following focus and timelines.



HRDC Community Development staff led the housing working group meetings. Through this process, HRDC produced the draft Local Housing Strategy in June 2024. The steps below occurred from June 2024 to October 2024.



## Public Engagement on the Local Housing Strategy

Public engagement with the draft local housing strategy occurred from June 12th to September 16th of 2024. Marketing materials directed West Yellowstone residents to the WYF website, where the draft and related feedback survey were posted. WYF was well positioned to lead the public engagement process due to its local connections and status in the community. Marketing materials for the public engagement process included several posts to popular social media community pages, articles and blurbs in the Best of West local news digest, and a postcard mailed to every address in the Hebgen Basin zip code. A copy of that postcard is shown below. A copy of the draft was also physically posted at the West Yellowstone Public Library. Further, a publicly noticed work session of the West Yellowstone Town Council was held to present the draft LHS and allow the public and the Town Council to give feedback on the draft in person.

Feedback included opinions on which tools respondents most and least wanted to see implemented in West Yellowstone, along with suggestions for additional partnership opportunities. Every response to the feedback survey confirmed that West Yellowstone residents do not believe there are affordable and available housing opportunities in West Yellowstone. However, feedback was varied, with many responses offering no feedback but appreciating the Strategy and hoping for swift implementation. Those responses generally favored the use of CLTs and deed restrictions. On the other hand, some feedback was received that the Strategy did not consider enough perspectives, did not get enough community feedback, or that the housing tools would cost taxpayers dollars, which they opposed. Many of the responses that were more negative in nature, favored market solutions such as zoning reform.



**WEST YELLOWSTONE  
HOUSING STRATEGY PLAN**

***Help influence the future  
of housing in West  
Yellowstone by  
participating in our  
survey!***

The housing strategy plan draft is now available for your review! We are seeking community feedback before bringing this plan to the Town Council for consideration. This draft is the product of several meetings over six months with community members, government leaders and HRDC.

This plan will be presented to the Town Council in September. If adopted, we will then host community learning sessions on the housing tools that are selected as priorities by the council. This will help inform the development of the town's 80-acre parcel, as well as our community as a whole.

Visit our website or use the QR codes below to view the housing strategy plan draft!

[www.westyellowstonefoundation.org/westyellowstonehousingcoalition](http://www.westyellowstonefoundation.org/westyellowstonehousingcoalition)

**1** ***Read the Housing  
Strategy Plan draft***





***Then take our  
quick survey!***

**2**

## The Local Housing Strategy and the Growth Policy

This process is consistent with the 2017 West Yellowstone Growth Policy Update goals. Tools that are prioritized in this strategy may also have been recommended by the 2017 Growth Policy Update but have not been implemented. Specifically, this process and this Local Housing Strategy are consistent with the West Yellowstone Growth Policy 2037 Vision and support the following goals from the adopted 2017 West Yellowstone Growth Policy Update:

“Though housing vacancies remain low, West Yellowstone residents can find high quality housing within their means and the Town’s seasonal workforce is provided suitable living arrangements.” West Yellowstone Growth Policy 2037 Vision - Page 4.

Goal 1: Increase Supply of Affordable and Workforce Housing

Goal 2: Mitigate the Adverse Impacts of Short-Term Commercial Rentals

Goal 3: Ensure Development of the 80 Acres Supports a High Quality of Life for Residents

Goal 4: Prioritize Residential Uses on the 80 Acres

Goal 5: Plan for the Future Needs of the Town of West Yellowstone





## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Housing working group members established a set of principles to guide the values and priorities of the Local Housing Strategy in the winter of 2024. The guiding principles that shaped our discussion and process are as follows:

**Housing should be safe, clean, modern, secure, attainable, and dependable, with diverse housing options for the workforce and long-term residents.**

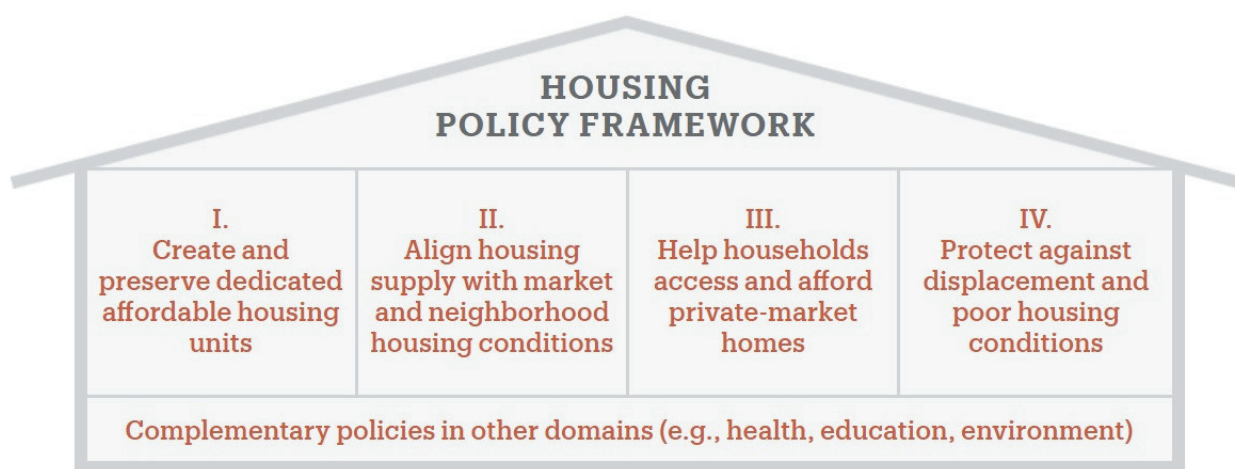
**Affordability in existing housing should be encouraged, and the housing stock for folks who want to live and contribute in West Yellowstone should be expanded.**

**Community engagement, education, and buy-in are critical to changing the current housing momentum in West Yellowstone.**

## FRAMEWORK

This Local Housing Strategy aims to address challenges along the housing continuum with a balanced set of tools and strategies that are informed by community engagement, leverage local resources, and are appropriate to the needs of West Yellowstone and its residents. Facilitators utilized tools from LocalHousingSolutions.org, a digital housing policy platform that assists communities in developing, implementing, and monitoring local housing solutions. We encourage anyone interested in learning more about the tools and framework to visit their [website](#). One of the tools facilitators utilized is the following framework for a balanced local housing strategy.

### Identify policy tools to meet local needs






## Local Housing Solutions

To enhance local affordability. To foster inclusive communities.

This section categorizes each priority tool, including those that are existing and available for future consideration, in the context of the [localhousingsolutions.org](#) balanced framework to show how a multi-pronged approach will address housing from all angles. Tools that are prioritized in this strategy are listed in bold. Tools that are not in bold were not selected for prioritization; each tool is still discussed in this document, though in less detail than the tools that were selected for prioritization.

### GOAL: CREATE AND PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Dedicated Revenue Sources** 
- Tax Increment Financing Districts
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits

- Below Market Rate Financing of Affordable Housing
- **Use of Publicly Owned Property for Affordable Housing** 
- **Community Land Trusts Deed restrictions** 
- Limited Equity Cooperatives
- **Manufactured Housing** 

#### GOAL: ALIGN HOUSING SUPPLY WITH MARKET AND NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING CONDITIONS

- **Land banking** 
- **Increased Residential Zoning** 
- Reducing Accessory Dwelling Unit Development Barriers

#### GOAL: HELP HOUSEHOLDS ACCESS AND AFFORD PRIVATE MARKET HOMES

- Housing Choice Vouchers
- Rental Assistance Programs
- Down Payment Assistance
- Short-Term Rental Policies
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

#### GOAL: PROTECT AGAINST DISPLACEMENT AND POOR HOUSING CONDITIONS

- Weatherization
- Rehabilitation and Safety Modifications

The HWG met four times, with additional time spent on research and review of materials outside of meetings. The first meeting focused on our collaborative process and creating the guiding principles. During the next three sessions, participants had opportunities to learn from housing policy experts about possible tools, best practices in comparable communities, share their priorities, and discuss West Yellowstone's unique challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of a Local Housing Strategy.

Housing tools were prioritized by a voting process of the HWG, with the resulting rankings representing housing working group preferences. While tools from all four goals were not chosen for prioritization, many of the unprioritized tools are already active in West Yellowstone, even if they could be expanded or utilized by more residents. For instance, this Local Housing Strategy does not prioritize increased Short-Term Rental policies. However, these policies already exist in much of West Yellowstone and are intended to be placed on housing development in the 80-acre expansion. Further, existing programs such as Weatherization are already available to qualifying residents.

## PRIORITY TOOLS

This section will look at each of the seven tools recommended for prioritization by the HWG:

1. Community Land Trust
2. Deed Restrictions
3. Using Publicly-Owned Land for Affordable Housing
4. Manufactured Housing and Mobile Homes
5. Land Banking
6. Dedicated Funding Sources for Affordable Housing
7. Increased Residential Zoning

In this section, you will find a brief description of the tool, why it was prioritized, and some examples of other communities that have utilized the tool. Each tool aims to increase access or availability for West Yellowstone residents to homes that they can afford. The proposed housing tools take into account the current priorities, community needs, and existing resources available to meet the housing needs of residents in West Yellowstone. Some of the tools are new strategies for the community, some of the tools are strategies that have been recommended in the past but have not yet been implemented, and others provide recommendations for altering or expanding existing programs or policies. The unique opportunity to influence the 80-acre expansion shaped the priority tools. It is recommended that West Yellowstone community leaders consider all available tools, though with a focus on the prioritized tools.

## Community Land Trust (CLT)

**What is this tool?** As an organization, CLTs preserve affordable homeownership through the use of a long-term ground lease. As a nonprofit steward of the land, the CLT will maintain ownership of the land beneath the home and sell the home for a reduced price to income-qualified homeowners. An annual appreciation cap, primary residence and owner occupancy requirements are typically part of the ground lease terms to maintain affordability for future buyers of CLT homes. CLTs provide an opportunity for residents to purchase below-market-rate homes and benefit from stable, affordable housing and equity building while preserving these opportunities in perpetuity.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** The current for-sale market does not meet the needs of middle-income households who wish to own a home. CLTs can help provide a housing option between market-rate rentals and market-rate homes for sale. Utilizing CLTs creates permanently affordable ownership housing rather than creating a windfall for whoever is lucky enough to be the first owner. This tool aligns with the 2017 Growth Policy, which also recommended utilizing CLTs in Action 4.1.1.

### Recommendations:

1. Set aside land in the 80-acre expansion dedicated to future CLT homes.
2. Educate community leaders and residents on the benefits and tradeoffs of owning a home in a CLT.
3. Seek out funding from public and private sources to help make homes affordable through CLTs.
4. Assist in the creation of CLT homes through a partnership with existing CLT stewards, such as Trust Montana or HRDC, or
5. Create a new CLT organization in West Yellowstone to help create and then steward CLT homes with technical assistance from Grounded Solutions, Trust Montana, and/or HRDC.

### Examples:

- HRDC developed the 52-home [MeadowView Community](#) in partnership with the Big Sky Community Housing Trust, which now stewards the land trust homes. Construction was completed in 2021, with funding provided by the Big Sky Resort Tax Board and construction financing provided by First Security Bank.
- Trust Montana partnered with the Helena Area Habitat for Humanity and the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation to build permanently affordable homes utilizing the USDA Mutual Self-Help program in which future homeowners build their own homes with professional assistance.
- In partnership with the City of Livingston and utilizing various federal funding sources, HRDC developed CLT homes in Livingston. The 12 townhomes, completed in 1995, are permanently affordable to households earning at or below 80% AMI.
- “Since 2012, the [Northwest Montana Community Land Trust, Inc.](#) has helped 76 low-and moderate-income families purchase quality homes through a ground lease mechanism that provides strong homeowner support and preserves the community’s investment for future buyers.”



**Expected Impact:** Create and preserve homes for homeownership that are affordable to residents in perpetuity.

**Impacted Players:** Year-round households with middle incomes that prefer homeownership to renting and employers of moderate-income households that wish to retain higher-level employees in the community.



Pictured: The permanently affordable Meadowview Community in Big Sky Montana

## Deed Restrictions

**What is this tool?** Deed restrictions place conditions on the deed to a property, defining certain limits or acceptable uses. These conditions are also known as covenants and “run with the land,” which means that they bind current and future homeowners. Deed restrictions have been used by developers and condominium associations for years, typically limiting home size or aesthetic choices. Local governments and nonprofits have also adopted the tool as a method of preserving affordable homeownership or rentals. This requires action by the landowner, who places a deed restriction on their property that limits the property's uses in ways that support local housing goals. These limits may include requirements for the owner's occupation of a home, a prohibition on short-term rentals, occupation of the property by the local workers, and/or income restrictions for owners or renters. It is important to note the inherent tradeoff between the level of affordability and/or availability of a housing unit created by a deed restriction and the cost of obtaining or placing the deed restriction on the home. As the benefit of the restriction to the community is increased, the cost of the deed restriction is increased as well.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** The current for-sale market does not meet the needs of moderate-income and middle-income households. Deed restrictions can help provide a housing option not currently available between rent-restricted rentals and market homes for sale. Deed restrictions can make rental and ownership homes permanently available at prices below market levels. A deed restriction program recommended by this strategy aims to preserve existing inventory for locals serving the community.

### Recommendations:

1. Develop a deed restriction program in West Yellowstone. This process will require stakeholders to thoughtfully tailor what restrictions are placed on properties within municipal boundaries. This strategy recommends multiple types of restrictions, focusing on an occupancy requirement of somebody who earns their wages at either a business located within the municipal boundaries of West Yellowstone, or public entity that provides services to West Yellowstone residents.
2. Make deed restrictions available before land is sold in the 80-acre expansion to allow residents or developers to utilize cash or purchase price reductions as a “downpayment.”
3. Seek out funding from public and private sources to help make homes affordable through the use of deed restrictions.
4. To ensure deed restriction compliance, partner with a non-profit organization or assign stewardship duties to a Town of West Yellowstone employee.
5. Engage with existing deed restriction programs to better understand best practices and potential pitfalls associated with this housing tool, particularly the tradeoffs between the lower amount of subsidy required for a deed restriction compared to CLTs and the difference in home affordability. An excellent educational resource to guide this process can be found in Appendix C of the [McCall \(Idaho\) Area Local Housing Action Plan](#).

**Examples:**

- The “[GoodDeeds Program](#)” by the Big Sky Community Housing Trust
- The [Vail InDeed](#) program in Vail, Colorado
- The [Whitefish Legacy Homes Program](#) in Whitefish, Montana
- The [Trailview Homes Development](#) in Whitefish, Montana

**Expected Impact:** Create and preserve homes for ownership and rent that are affordable to residents in perpetuity via a secondary ownership and rental market.

**Impacted Players:** Households with middle incomes seeking homeownership and households with moderate incomes seeking rentals at rates attainable to the local workforce.



## Using Publicly-Owned Land for Affordable Housing

**What is this tool?** High land costs can make it difficult to create new affordable housing for low- or moderate-income households, particularly in high-value, amenity-rich locations like West Yellowstone. Local jurisdictions can help to overcome this obstacle by identifying public property that can be repurposed for residential use and making it available to developers who commit to creating and maintaining ongoing affordability. Development opportunities may be found on surplus or underutilized publicly-owned land through the redevelopment of vacant municipal buildings, on the same lot, or even within public buildings that are still actively used for other purposes. The property may be offered at fair market value, at a discount, or even at no cost.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** By making publicly-owned land and buildings available for the development of affordable housing, public land-owning entities can help ensure an adequate supply of lower-cost homes in the area to offset high land costs and limited development opportunities.

### Recommendations:

1. Capitalize on the opportunity provided by the 80-acre expansion by intentionally planning how the land can be leveraged for affordable housing.
2. Look for opportunities to utilize land owned by public entities for affordable housing; any development on publicly owned lands should strongly consider the utilization of additional affordable housing tools to ensure a public benefit of the land in the long term.
3. Prioritize infill development of Town of West Yellowstone-owned land located outside the 80-acre expansion, which can be utilized more quickly and cost-effectively.
4. Work with entities such as the school district and the United States Forest Service (USFS) to understand any development opportunities on public lands.

### Examples:

- Dillion, CO, is developing affordable housing on land leased long-term from USFS
- Gallatin County is donating land for affordable housing in Bozeman, Montana
- Big Sky School District has built and is building additional teacher housing on its land.

**Local Example:** West Yellowstone School District developing a triplex on land purchased by the school district.

**Expected Impact:** Removing or reducing the impact of land prices on development will more easily achieve housing affordability.

**Impacted Players:** Builders, Developers, Public Entities, Potential Homeowners and Renters. The additional housing would have a community-wide impact, particularly if that housing were affordable.

## Manufactured Housing and Mobile Homes

**What is this tool?** Manufactured and mobile homes refer to a large trailer or transportable prefabricated structure that is situated in one particular place and used as a permanent living accommodation. In 1976, the HUD Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards were released, upgrading the standards and setting the foundation for the modern manufactured homes built today. This new set of design and construction standards greatly surpassed those that had been previously set for mobile homes. Changes included stricter frame requirements, insulation protection, plumbing and electrical, fire safety, and energy efficiency. Homes built to these standards are referred to as manufactured housing, while mobile homes refer to structures that are not built to these standards and may be known as trailer homes. This tool aims to create new manufactured homes in the 80-acre expansion and preserve existing mobile home communities.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** This tool was prioritized for its ability to provide affordable housing in a relatively short amount of time. While owners of manufactured or mobile homes on rented lots may have affordable payments, they do not have the protections associated with owning their lot. Without protections such as the ROC program, deed restriction, or CLT, residents of manufactured home parks are vulnerable to price increases or displacement of the entire community for redevelopment. Manufactured housing is one of the last naturally occurring affordable housing, which meets a critical need for West Yellowstone residents. Many manufactured homes, either rented or owned, provide residents with homes they can afford. In West Yellowstone, manufactured or mobile homes account for 16.5% of the total housing stock. With a limited supply of homes available to residents with low incomes, preserving and stabilizing both mobile and manufactured homes can ensure residents are able to stay in their homes.

### Recommendations:

1. Set aside land in the 80-acre expansion for a manufactured housing community, utilizing a ROC, deed restriction, or CLT model to ensure the homes are protected and affordable in the long term.
2. Educate residents on the difference between mobile homes and manufactured homes, which are built to high-quality HUD standards.
3. While it is understood West Yellowstone is currently under going a zoning review, the proposed zoning should consider allowing manufactured homes in all zoning designations that allow for single-family residences with no more onerous conditions than those placed on traditional detached single-family residences and ensure zoning definitions outline the differences between mobile homes and manufactured homes.
4. Work with Neighbor Works Montana to understand the opportunity to create a Resident-Owned Community in West Yellowstone. This may be completed on existing mobile homes, or in a new manufactured home community in the 80-acre expansion.
5. The Town of West Yellowstone should consider adopting HB889, bipartisan legislation that was vetoed by the Governor. This legislation granted mobile/manufactured home residents additional rights and protections, such as guaranteeing them the option of signing one-year leases rather than month-to-month leases.



Examples:

- [Golden Age Village](#) in Emigrant, Montana
- [Stan's Garden](#) in Belgrade, Montana
- [View Vista](#) in Livingston, Montana
- [Sleeping Giant](#) in Livingston, Montana
- [Belgrade Trailer Court](#) in Bozeman, Montana

Expected Impact: Prevent displacement of low- to moderate-income households and provide a lower cost of home ownership opportunity.

Impacted Players: Low- to moderate-income households and employers of low- to moderate-wage workers.



## Land Banking

**What is this tool?** Acquiring land, generally when land is inexpensive, or holding land for unspecified future community housing needs. Land can be donated, traded, or purchased.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** Although today's needs are pressing, the community of West Yellowstone is expected to continue growing. HWG members expressed a desire to plan for future growth intentionally while recognizing that there is no way to predict the exact needs of the community in the future. This tool builds on the 2017 Growth Policy, which, in action 5.1.2, recommended setting aside land for future development and unforeseen needs such as a future school complex.

### Recommendations:

1. Set land aside in the 80-acre expansion for future community housing needs.
2. Identify land owned by public entities such as the Town of West Yellowstone or the West Yellowstone School District, institutional owners, or private donors that can be deed-restricted for future use as community housing.
3. Increase local capacity on land banking by leveraging technical assistance resources from organizations such as the Center for Community Progress
4. Begin the work to understand what would be needed for West Yellowstone to annex additional land in the future.

### Examples:

- The [Northside Neighborhood Initiative & Land Bank](#) in Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- The [Missoula Redevelopment Agency](#), in concert with the City of Missoula, Montana

**Expected Impact:** Create future opportunities by having available land to respond to future circumstances and needs.

**Impacted Players:** Future generations of West Yellowstone residents.



## Dedicated Funding Sources for Affordable Housing

**What is this tool?** A dedicated revenue source for affordable housing provides an ongoing committed stream of funds. While the amount of funding raised by a dedicated revenue source can fluctuate from year to year, a dedicated source can help increase the total funding available for affordable housing and reduce the risk associated with housing development. Dedicated revenue sources can be bonded off, which gives the flexibility to access front-loaded funds that could be used to kick-start the development of the 80-acre expansion.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** Affordable housing generally requires some form of subsidy. That subsidy can take the form of a grant, forgivable loan, or lower interest-rate financing. While the Town of West Yellowstone's funds are already committed to important uses, housing has become a critical need. The majority of the Town's funds come from resort taxes collected on non-luxury goods, which makes resort tax revenue the most likely source of dedicated funding for affordable housing. The funding for affordable housing could also come in the form of lost revenue to the Town resulting from land sold at reduced prices for affordable housing, particularly in the 80-acre expansion.

### Recommendations:

1. The resort tax allocation process should consider additional funding for housing. This funding could take the form of investing in infrastructure that allows housing to be built at a lower cost.
2. Consider the price at which land for housing is sold in the 80-acre expansion, and reduce those prices for projects that provide permanently affordable housing to West Yellowstone's workforce.
3. Explore using bonding capacity to kick-start affordable housing development in the 80-acre expansion.
4. While the HWG chose not to endorse any new taxes or increases in current taxes at this time, continuing to research and understand the tax structure and any associated opportunities to dedicate a revenue stream should be considered.

### Examples:

- Whitefish MT dedicates 10% of its resort tax revenue to affordable housing development, which is projected to raise 27 million over the next 20 years
- [Big Sky unofficially dedicates ~15% of its resort tax revenue to housing-related programs](#)
- Bozeman voters declined a 7 mill levy for affordable housing, but the [City typically contributes 8 mills annually](#) to a community housing fund, though the funds are not automatically dedicated.

**Expected Impact:** A dedicated revenue source lowers the risk of developing affordable housing in West Yellowstone by providing a stable, predictable source of funds to close the affordability gap in housing developments.

**Impacted Players:** Potential funds could be used to address a range of housing needs along the housing continuum. A dedicated source of funds would also reduce the risk to developers looking to add housing supply in West Yellowstone.



## Increased Residential Zoning

**What is this tool?** Zoning codes and ordinances specify the usage permissible in each zoning district and provisions for building form, including size, scale, and location on a lot. In residential zones, these provisions generally limit residential density—that is, how many homes may be built in a given land area. Governments seeking to increase the overall housing supply may wish to revisit their zoning code to facilitate growth by identifying opportunities in existing areas to increase residential density and opening up areas where residential development has not previously been allowed.

**Why was this tool prioritized?** Land in West Yellowstone is extremely limited, and the opportunities for future expansions are uncertain. Utilizing the existing land in the most efficient manner possible is critical to increasing the housing supply, especially including affordable housing. This tool aligns with the 2017 Growth Policy, which encouraged high residential densities in action 4.1.4.

### Recommendations:

1. Zone the 80-acre addition intentionally with higher-density residential zoning designations.
2. Ensure zoning updates align with the Growth Policy by significantly reducing minimum lot sizes, increasing maximum lot area coverages, allowing for apartment buildings in residential zones, allowing manufactured housing in residential zones, and limiting the amount of land dedicated to detached single-family dwellings.
3. Regularly update residential zoning codes to align with market demands for housing.

### Examples:

- The “[Home In Tacoma Project](#)”
- [SB323](#), which allows duplexes in all residential zones in Cities with 5,000 or more people
- The City of Livingston, which is currently undergoing zoning reform

**Expected Impact:** Increase the supply of homes and the diversity of housing type options.

**Impacted Players:** Builders, Developers, Homeowners and Renters. A community-wide impact would be expected from increasing the supply of homes.



photo from the 05/06/2024 80 acres planning update



## ADDITIONAL TOOLS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

The following section outlines tools that have not been prioritized at this time but were discussed during the planning process with the HWG. These tools may be appropriate for another time or require a larger degree of capacity in the housing space than exists currently in West Yellowstone. Based on the democratic voting process of the HWG members, these tools have not been selected for prioritization at this time. The HWG members may have deprioritized these tools for many reasons, including but not limited to a lack of precedence in peer communities, barriers to implementation, limited perceived impact, or tools deemed less likely to be accepted by residents and/or Town leadership. The seven prioritized tools above prioritized utilization and thoughtful development of the 80-acre expansion. The HWG acknowledges there are strong tools that might fit West Yellowstone that are worth considering but have not been selected at this time. Housing working group members also expressed a strong interest in focusing on increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing.

### Tool: Limited Equity Cooperatives (LEC)

**Definition:** LEC is a homeownership model in which residents or businesses purchase a share in a development (rather than an individual unit) and commit to resell their share at a price determined by formula—an arrangement that maintains affordability at purchase and over the long term. Cooperative members do not need to fund the projects themselves, and projects can still be financed in the traditional sense using this model.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The HWG felt LEC was not the best fit for West Yellowstone and believed CLTs and deed restrictions could achieve similar results without forcing businesses or individuals to cooperate on housing decisions.

**Implementation:** Creating a Resident-Owned Community in the 80-acre expansion. Potential partners for this tool include HRDC, NeighborWorks Montana, and Montana Cooperative Development Center.

**Impacted Players:** Businesses participating in a LEC for their employees and moderate-income potential homeowners.

## Tool: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

**Definition:** ADUs are accessory apartments or secondary units that serve as additional living quarters on single-family lots independent of the primary dwelling unit. Due to their smaller size and location, ADUs have the potential to provide affordable homes to lower- and middle-income households while providing additional stability to existing homeowners.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The HWG prioritized other tools they felt would provide affordable housing in larger numbers and focused recommendations on the 80-acre expansion. There were concerns related to additional water and sewer constraints if ADUs were placed in existing neighborhoods.

**Implementation:** West Yellowstone could enact zoning updates found in SB528 to reduce barriers to the creation of ADUs.

**Impacted Players:** Homeowners, renters of a range of income levels, and visitors.

## Tool: Housing Choice Vouchers

**Definition:** Housing Choice Vouchers, also known as Section 8 vouchers, are the federal government's largest program to assist low-income households in affording housing provided by the private market.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The program was not prioritized due to the long waitlist for vouchers, because vouchers do not provide additional housing, and due to the fact the program already exists.

**Implementation:** HRDC administers the Housing Choice Voucher program in Gallatin County. Education surrounding the program and its benefits could stabilize housing for eligible West Yellowstone residents.

**Impacted Players:** Low-income long-term renters

## Tool: Rental Assistance Programs

**Definition:** Rental assistance programs tend to provide short-term assistance to individuals and families struggling to pay market rental rates.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** Concerns related to the capacity to administer a rental assistance program and the short-term "Band-Aid" nature of these programs led to its not being prioritized in this strategy.

**Implementation:** The Big Sky Community Housing Trust operates a rental assistance program called Rent Local. Whitefish recently started a rental assistance program. If a rental assistance program is seriously contemplated in West Yellowstone, those jurisdictions should be contacted for educational purposes.

**Impacted Players:** Lower-income renters and employers of low-income employees.

## Tool: Short-Term Rental Policies

**Definition:** Local policies, tracking, and enforcement of agreed-upon standards and use for STRs. The state of Montana defines short-term rentals as lasting fewer than 30 consecutive days.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The HWG understood the zoning in the 80-acre expansion would include restrictions on STRs and felt the enforcement of existing policies are effectively policed.

**Implementation:** It may be worth conducting an audit in the future to ensure compliance with existing restrictions and that all STRs are paying resort tax.

**Impacted Players:** Tourism industries, renters, owners.

## Tool: Weatherization and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

**Definition:** Weatherization programs provide low-income families with home modifications that increase energy efficiency, reduce energy costs, and ensure their homes remain habitable throughout the year. LIHEAP assists eligible low-income households with their heating and cooling energy costs

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** Weatherization programs were viewed very positively but ultimately not prioritized over other tools that could supply West Yellowstone with a new supply of housing. Education surrounding the eligibility and availability of these programs should be considered, particularly going into the winter months.

**Implementation:** HRDC administers the Weatherization and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program in Gallatin County. Education surrounding the programs and their benefits could stabilize housing for eligible West Yellowstone residents.

**Impacted Players:** Low-income homeowners and renters

## Tool: Home Rehabilitation Programs

**Definition:** Grants typically from the state or federal level to improve existing housing in need of repair serving low-income households. LIHTC rehabilitation loans can be used to update multifamily rental housing, while Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs focus on life and safety updates to both renter- and owner-occupied homes of low-income households.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The HWG felt these programs were too short-term of a solution and that there was likely no capacity in West Yellowstone to administer this type of program.

**Implementation:** This tool should be reconsidered when West Yellowstone has additional capacity for housing programs.

**Impacted Players:** Low-income renters and homeowners living in homes in need of upkeep and repairs.

## Tool: Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

**Definition:** LIHTC is the largest federal subsidy program for the development of affordable rental housing through new construction and substantial rehabilitation. Generally allocated by state housing finance agencies, it subsidizes the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income tenants.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The HWG did not prioritize this tool due to the overall complexity of utilizing tax credits and because any access to the housing created by it would be limited to households of a certain income.

**Implementation:** A second look at this tool should be considered. This is an important housing tool that comes with its own source of funding. Implementing LIHTC would likely require the Town to put out a Request for Proposal to find an experienced LIHTC developer, which would reduce the issues caused by the program's complexity. The Madison Apartments were developed with LIHTC, though the affordability period ends in 2025.

**Impacted Players:** Low-income renters and employers of low-wage workers.

## Tool: Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

**Definition:** TIF is a public financing method that diverts future property tax revenue increases from a defined area towards an economic development or public improvement project.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** The HWG had concerns about utilizing a TIF district due to administration questions and concerns about lost revenue to the Town of West Yellowstone during the TIF's lifecycle.

**Implementation:** This tool is best implemented before developing an area, such as the 80-acre expansion, and should be considered in the future before major development occurs.

**Impacted Players:** Funding from a TIF district could be programmatically targeted at a wide range of housing developments or at the infrastructure that supports all housing.



## Tool: Down Payment Assistance (DPA)

**Definition:** Down payments or second mortgages are used to purchase homes. They may be used for market-rate or homes priced below-market. Programs are typically income-limited relative to the AMI. Federal and state funds are typically limited to households earning less than 80% AMI; private financing does not have to have the same restrictions.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** Due to federal and state program requirements limiting assistance to households under 80% AMI, the HWG felt there would not be many opportunities for households at those incomes to purchase housing. The HWG did not feel public funds were best utilized in a DPA program. If housing becomes more affordable in the future, these programs should be reconsidered.

**Implementation:** Education and outreach surrounding existing DPA programs should be considered. NeighborWorks Montana, MoFi, HRDC, and Montana Housing operate current DPA programs, each with different requirements and limits.

**Impacted Players:** Middle-income first-time home buyers and employers of middle-income households.

## Tool: Below-Market Rate Financing of Affordable Housing

**Definition:** Below-market financing reduces the cost and risk of development. The reduced costs and risk allow the development to lower rents or for-sale prices while remaining economically viable. Funds can often be used again as the financing is repaid from prior loans.

**Why it wasn't prioritized:** This tool just missed the cutoff for prioritization. The HWG felt that education surrounding the tool would be critical to its success.

**Implementation:** This tool should be given another look as opportunities arise or funds become available. A revolving loan fund would help fill gaps in affordable housing project financing while still earning interest for the fund. Existing sources of below-market financing include the Montana Coal Severance Tax Trust Fund, HUD Financing programs such as 221(d)(4) loans, and the Gallatin Impact Fund.

**Impacted Players:** Funds financing affordable housing at below-market rates could be programmatically targeted at whatever housing need the issuers felt was the most deserving.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Town of West Yellowstone does not have a dedicated housing department, and there are no organizations headquartered in West Yellowstone dedicated solely to housing programs or affordable housing development. While the strategy was designed with this constraint in mind, developing capacity and partnerships is critical to any successful housing solution. In addition to building local capacity, West Yellowstone should look to make new and further develop existing partnerships. Although these potential partnerships are listed in each priority tool section, the importance of strong partnerships is critical. The following is an alphabetized list of suggested organizations with relevant capacity, experience, and resources that may be able to support West Yellowstone in advancing the priority tools of this Local Housing Strategy.

The [Big Sky Community Housing Trust](#) was created under the umbrella of HRDC in response to a Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Action Plan created in a process very similar to the process that has led to this Local Housing Strategy. The BSCHT stewards a CLT, has partnered on the development of LIHTC units, operates a Rent Local program, and purchases deed restrictions from private individuals to create community housing. A partnership with BSCHT could include technical assistance on lessons learned from creating and operating the above programs, and other lessons learned operating housing programs in a resort environment similar to West Yellowstone.

[Family Promise of Gallatin Valley](#) is a non-profit organization working with the community to develop comprehensive and holistic solutions for families facing and/or experiencing homelessness. A partnership with Family Promise could include technical assistance in setting up a transitional housing program for families in West Yellowstone, or the utilization of their existing transitional and emergency shelter programs located in Bozeman.

The [Gallatin Association of Realtors](#) is a professional trade association whose members work in the real estate industry. The Gallatin Association of Realtors serves Beaverhead, Gallatin, Madison, Park, Sweetgrass, and Wheatland counties. They produce an annual Gallatin Valley Housing Report, which contains information on housing trends, prices, and potential housing inputs. A partnership with them could include greater utilization of their annual housing report, increased local knowledge of real estate trends and best practices, or partnership on their advocacy efforts.

[Gallatin County](#), through its elected officials, is the next smallest form of government responsible for West Yellowstone citizens after the Town government. A partnership with the County could look like an increased presence at local government meetings, financial support in the form of grants or low interest loans, or assistance with administrative matters.

[Greater Gallatin United Way](#) works to respond to the community's most pressing needs. They empower donors, volunteers, businesses, governments, non-profits, and other community

groups to invest in neighbors to improve the quality of life for everyone in Gallatin, Madison, Meagher, and Park counties. A partnership with Greater Gallatin United Way could include financial assistance to meet residents of West Yellowstone's basic needs, including housing needs.

[Habitat for Humanity of Gallatin Valley](#) has partnered with many organizations, including the Big Sky School District and HRDC, to help build affordable housing. A partnership with Habitat for Humanity could include assistance in building housing, rehabilitating existing housing with their Home Preservation program and increased knowledge of Habitat homeownership programs.

[Headwaters Community Housing Trust](#) is a community-based, not-for-profit organization committed to expanding the supply of permanent, below-market homes that working households are able to afford. In addition to Headwaters [Bridger View](#) development, Headwaters is addressing Bozeman's unmet need by: providing businesses opportunities to invest in housing their employees can afford, supplying a pool of prequalified buyers so developers know high-quality, below-market homes will promptly sell and by creating permanently affordable homes worthy of city investment.

[Housing Whitefish](#) and the [Whitefish Housing Authority](#) work together to create and preserve affordable housing, keep locals in the community, and provide general housing resources and information to the public. The Whitefish Housing Authority operates the area's Housing Choice Voucher program, and Housing Whitefish operates a newly created rental assistance program called the Whitefish Workforce Assistance Program. Partnerships with these entities could include educational materials on building local housing capacity and technical assistance on a variety of housing programs.

[HRDC](#) is a community action agency and community housing development organization that offers a wide range of services to residents of Gallatin, Park, and Meagher Counties. In addition to HRDC's CLT, HRDC partners on LIHTC development projects, provides property management services, administers the Housing Choice Voucher, Weatherization, and LIHEAP federal programs, and works to build local housing capacity. West Yellowstone has already partnered with HRDC on this Local Housing Strategy; future partnerships could include technical assistance on all aspects of affordable housing, increased education and utilization of existing federal programs, and partnerships on future affordable housing development.

[MoFi](#) provides financing and consulting services on affordable housing solutions, including Down Payment Assistance, Home Loan Repairs, and loans to help create Resident-Owned Communities. A partnership with MoFi could include MoFi as a financing partner for larger affordable housing projects or as a down payment assistance to individual West Yellowstone residents looking to purchase a home.

The [Montana Cooperative Development Center](#) assists in the formation of new cooperatives, often at little or no cost to start-up cooperatives, in the areas of planning, implementation, fund development, and cooperative board development. They also offer additional services and consultations to help established cooperatives operate.

[Montana Housing at the Montana Department of Commerce](#) is the department tasked with administering federal affordable housing programs in Montana. In their own words: “Our professional and courteous staff work to create a variety of housing opportunities for Montanans by partnering with local organizations across the state and leveraging federal housing funds available to Montana. Montana Housing staff can assist with buying a home, down payment assistance, mortgage servicing, reverse annuity mortgages, rental housing assistance, and multifamily rental development.” A partnership with Montana Housing could include utilization and technical assistance with any of the above programs, including developing affordable housing using LIHTCs.

[NeighborWorks Montana](#) is a non-profit organization that provides homeownership education and counseling services, lends for affordable housing financing gaps, and provides technical assistance to Resident-Owned Cooperatives. As a Community Development Financial Institution, NeighborWorks Montana offers financing to help housing developers complete their financing packages. A Partnership with NeighborWorks Montana could include utilizing the financing framework created by the Gallatin Impact fund for West Yellowstone to help finance affordable housing without having to administer the loans, technical assistance in the creation of a Resident-Owned Community in West Yellowstone, or greater utilization of their homeowner education programs.

The [Northern Rocky Mountain Economic Development District \(NRMEDD\)](#) is a private non-profit corporation created to support economic development in the counties of Park and Gallatin. NRMEDD offers economic and community development services, grant writing services and aims to support governments and citizens achieve their economic goals. A partnership with NRMEDD could include utilization of their services, including economic development, technical assistance for small businesses, and grant writing services.

The [Northwest Montana Community Land Trust Inc.](#) utilizes the CLT model in Flathead Valley. A partnership with it would include technical assistance but not necessarily stewardship of West Yellowstone housing.

The [One Valley Community Foundation](#) is a community foundation serving Gallatin County. One Valley has convened and supports the Regional Housing Coalition, of which West Yellowstone currently participates through the WYF, which aims to drive transformative change in the Gallatin County housing landscape. A more developed partnership with One Valley could include increased participation in the Regional Housing Coalition, financial support in the form of grants, or the connection to more resources known to One Valley.

[Prospera](#) a nonprofit organization working to advance and inspire diverse economies and resilient communities in southwest Montana. Prospera works with businesses on economic development and lending. A partnership with Prospera could include local West Yellowstone businesses working with Prospera to build or acquire housing for their employees.

[HRDC's Southwest Montana Community Housing Trust](#) utilizes the CLT model to maintain permanently affordable homes in Gallatin and Park Counties. In Gallatin County, HRDC stewards 20 detached single-family homes and 26 townhome-style units, and in Park County, HRDC stewards 12 townhome-style units. All of these homes are community assets that are affordable to current homeowners and will be affordable to future homeowners. A partnership with HRDC's Southwest Montana Community Housing Trust could include technical assistance or the full stewardship of West Yellowstone land and community housing units.

[Trust Montana](#) is a statewide CLT working to build permanently affordable agricultural properties, commercial spaces, and quality homes for Montanans. To achieve its goals, Trust Montana partners with developers, municipalities, homeowners, farmers, and Habitat for Humanity. A partnership with Trust Montana could include technical assistance on the CLT model or the full stewardship of West Yellowstone land and community housing units.

[The United States Forest Service](#) owns much of the land surrounding West Yellowstone. A potential partnership with the USFS could include potential future land purchases to expand the West Yellowstone Town boundaries or the [lease of underutilized administrative sites](#) within the current boundaries for housing. It may be too early to explore an additional land purchase or lease since the last purchase has not yet been developed; however, developing relationships could improve the ability to form a partnership in the future.

[Vail Indeed](#) is a deed restriction program that, due to its success, has inspired many similar programs in the Mountain West region, including the BSCHT's Good Deeds program. Recognizing a lack of available land on which to develop and the relative price to create versus preserve community housing, Vail Indeed purchases deed restrictions on existing homes in Vail to protect and preserve the Vail Community. A partnership with Vail Indeed would likely include technical assistance on a deed restriction program.

The [West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce](#) has two roles in the community. In addition to the commerce role of supporting local businesses to grow and thrive, they also function as a destination marketing and management organization. Partnership with the Chamber of Commerce would most likely involve their ability to activate and engage the local business community.

The [West Yellowstone Foundation](#) has a mission to strengthen the sense of community and to enhance the economic vitality of in West Yellowstone and Hebgen Lake Basin communities. The WYF played a critical role in the process that led to the creation of this document, and plays an active role in the Regional Housing Coalition. A partnership with the WYF could include more community building and convening of organizations in the housing space.



The [West Yellowstone Housing Coalition](#), established in 2019, is a group of 14 residents who meet bimonthly to discuss and act upon housing issues. This group is comprised of local and regional government staff/elected officials, nonprofits leaders, entrepreneurs, large employers and healthcare, emergency services and school district representatives. They work in collaboration with One Valley Community Foundation's Regional Housing Coalition and the West Yellowstone Housing Strategy Workgroup.

The [West Yellowstone School District](#) is the local school district of West Yellowstone. The district is already involved in housing solutions and has purchased land and is in the development process to create teacher housing. A further partnership with the school district might include additional development on district property, support for writing grant applications and housing units set aside for teachers.

This strategy has recommended these organizations as potential partners, experts, or housing program providers. Potential partners in solving housing challenges may also include for-profit organizations such as development companies, construction companies, local lenders and other local employers. Additionally, non-profit developers, especially experienced affordable housing and LIHTC developers, can provide important expertise and capacity to West Yellowstone.

## IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION

The first step in implementing this strategy is to submit it for adoption as an amendment to the West Yellowstone Growth Policy by the West Yellowstone Town Council. As the leader in serving residents of West Yellowstone and community needs, the Town of West Yellowstone will play a pivotal role in the success of this plan through implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this Local Housing Strategy. This strategy recognizes and takes into account that West Yellowstone is in the early stages of a community housing program. The need for increased capacity in the housing landscape could be filled in a variety of ways, including:

- Increased staffing or duties within the Town of West Yellowstone to manage and track implementation of local housing work
- An elevated role for community partnerships between existing nonprofit or coalitions working in tandem with the Town
- The creation of an new entity dedicated to housing

To ensure progress on this plan we recommend at a minimum a primary lead or co-leads be identified within the Town to ensure the priority tools related to the 80 acres expansion be carried forward. The strategies prioritized are intended to take advantage of the extraordinary and potentially unique opportunities created by the expansion of West Yellowstone and generally require a lower level of existing capacity to administer housing programs, though stewardship and compliance monitoring will still be necessary for successful implementation.

Progress on this plan could be tracked and communicated in a number of ways including progress reports to the Town Council, a local dashboard, or community status updates created and stewarded by a local nonprofit. Examples of metrics to track the progress of this strategy could include:

- Total number of housing units dedicated to community needs broken out by rental, and working in tandem with the Town
- Amount of land reserved for affordable housing
- Total number of housing units created or preserved using the CLT model
- Total number of housing units created or preserved using deed restrictions
- Number of partnerships formed with housing organizations
- Average rent paid by full-time residents
- Population growth rate and the proportion of residents in various AMI ranges
- Rental vacancy rates
- Amount of resort tax funding used to subsidize housing
- Amount of manufactured or mobile homes added to the West Yellowstone housing stock
- Amount of increased residential zoning recommendations enacted
- Amount of land set aside for future development
- Amount of capacity for housing development and program administration created in West Yellowstone

Keeping the public informed and engaged with the Local Housing Strategy can ensure momentum is built and maintained, achievements are celebrated, and challenges are learned from. It is recommended that West Yellowstone establish a schedule to publicly review the progress of the Local Housing Strategy, as well as the Local Housing Strategy itself, in order to ensure the Local Housing Strategy is up to date with both economic and capacity conditions in West Yellowstone.