

At the April GSAR Government Affairs meeting, members heard from April Long, Executive Director of the Western Mountain Regional Housing Coalition (WMRHC), a regional nonprofit created in 2022 to address housing affordability challenges from Aspen to Parachute. WMRHC is funded by local governments in the region including Pitkin County, Garfield County and part of Eagle County along with numerous cities and towns. Their vision is to take a more regional approach to workforce housing needs. The group has three major initiatives.

Long outlined three major initiatives.

First was Good Deeds, WMRHC's homeownership program that helps keep homes in the local housing supply by purchasing them from the open market and placing deed restrictions on the properties. Qualified buyers must work for a local employer based in Pitkin, Eagle, or Garfield County. The program contributes 30% of the purchase price at no cost in exchange for a deed restriction on the property that only allows for 3% appreciation on the 70% funding provided by the buyer. Current purchase caps reach \$1.5 million in Pitkin County, \$1.2 million in the mid-valley, and up to \$800,000 in Garfield County's I-70 corridor.

In just two years, WMRHC has put \$6 million to work through Good Deeds and helped secure 25 homes from Aspen to Parachute, including 23 in Garfield County. Those homes included purchases in New Castle, Silt, Rifle, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs.

Long also discussed WMRHC's role in helping preserve existing workforce housing. In the past year, the organization assisted two mobile home parks in the Roaring Fork Valley in their efforts to become resident-owned. The effort required about \$20 million, and WMRHC helped raise \$16 million. Both parks are now resident-owned and permanently preserved for workforce housing.

The third initiative was the planned Housing Navigator, a one-stop platform designed to connect residents with workforce housing opportunities, including rentals, deed-restricted homes, subsidized housing, and employer-supported housing. The goal is to make housing options easier to find while also providing better regional data to help communities understand where future housing supply is needed most. Funding for the project is being sought with a goal of having the app available by the end of the year.

In addition to the presentation itself, April took time to address questions from GSAR REALTOR® members and respond to their concerns regarding WMRHC's programs and its efforts to expand attainable housing opportunities across our markets.

The presentation provided a useful look at how regional partners are working to address workforce housing through preservation, access, and better coordination of resources.

The next Government Affairs meeting will be held May 19