

# Durango Develops a Housing Plan

*by: Mark Williams, City of Durango*



The City of Durango adopted its housing plan this year, after a three-year development. Documents as far back as the 1970s identify Durango's affordability issues, and the city council recently identified affordable housing as its highest priority. Above-average land, labor and material costs paired with incomes that lag behind the state average create a long-term challenge.

The core of the Housing Plan is the proposition that all residents deserve access to quality housing, and that there are two ways to create more housing opportunities. First, to promote market rate housing through a combination of regulatory changes and development incentives, and second, to establish a housing trust fund and land banking program to subsidize the development of affordable housing.

The City plans for 1,000 units with long-term affordability by 2040. A minimum wage worker in Durango must work 96 hours each week to afford the average rent, so there is no shortage of demand for affordable housing. The service sector and tourism industry are projected to have the largest number of new jobs over the next 20 years. The average wage for these sectors is \$42,000 and \$28,000, respectively, meaning demand for affordable housing, especially rental housing, is likely to continue to exceed supply.

While many residents need subsidized housing, a large part of Durango's housing problem is simply a general lack of supply. The aim of the housing program is to encourage market rate housing for the city's workforce through a mixture of regulatory changes and incentives. In the next year, Durango will evaluate its parking standards, which are among the highest in the region, and will reexamine density and height standards in the city's mixed-use areas. The City is also making it easier to build ADUs, a popular option that requires no investment from the City.

**Photo:** *Durango's newest subsidized housing project - the 50-unit Lumien Apartments.*



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