



Root Policy Research

6741 E Colfax Ave, Denver, CO 80220

www.rootpolicy.com

970.880.1415

Estes Valley Housing Needs Assessment & Strategic Plan

PREPARED FOR:

Town of Estes Park
Estes Park Housing Authority

CREATED:

January 2023

PREPARED BY:

Root Policy Research
OPS Strategies
Williford, LLC

Table of Contents

Housing Strategic Plan

Introduction.....	1
Housing Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Values	2
Framework for Implementation	3
Priority Actions	4

Housing Needs Assessment

I. Demographic Profile

Key Findings.....	I-2
Population.....	I-2
Households.....	I-6
Income and Poverty	I-8

II. Employment Profile

Key Findings.....	II-1
Jobs	II-1
Employees.....	II-7

III. Housing Profile and Affordability Analysis

Key Findings.....	III-1
Housing Stock.....	III-2
Rental Market	III-9
Ownership Market.....	III-11
Income Restricted and Workforce Housing Inventory	III-13
Affordability	III-14
Housing Need.....	III-19

IV. Community Engagement Findings

Community Engagement Elements.....	IV-1
Key Findings.....	IV-2
Resident and In-Commuter Survey Respondents.....	IV-4
Seasonal Worker Survey Respondents.....	IV-15
Second Homeowner Survey Respondents.....	IV-18
Estes Valley Stakeholder Perspectives.....	IV-21

Appendix A: Update on 2016 Recommendations

HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN

Estes Valley Housing Strategic Plan

Introduction

The recommendations of this Action Plan were informed by the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment update (Sections I-IV of this document), local stakeholder guidance, and emerging best practices from other rural and resort communities in Colorado. Most housing challenged communities select a blend of tools and strategies from across these categories to address their housing needs:

- Incentives;
- Regulations;
- Programs and local initiatives;
- Housing preservation;
- New housing development; and/or
- Funding.

The successful passage of recent lodging tax ballot initiative will bring an estimated \$5million annually to support workforce housing and childcare. This important local funding source provides the resources that will enable new and more extensive housing solutions.

Process. This Housing Action Plan builds upon the work of the Estes Park Housing Authority (EPHA), Town of Estes Park, Lodging Tax Exploration Committee, The *Housing Needs Assessment*, and the consultant team’s research and observations. It provides a starting place from which local decision makers can modify and apply strategies to address housing issues, creating clear roles and responsibilities for implementation.

The Estes Park Housing Authority and Town of Estes Park should jointly solicit feedback from the community on an ongoing basis to refine the action plan as proposed based on real-time circumstances and opportunities, ensure that partner agencies are able and willing to participate in proposed roles, and that the plan is widely understood and generally supported in the community. The Housing Action Plan will likely need to be updated every 3-5 years, as tasks are completed and local conditions evolve.

Relationship to other strategic documents. In the hierarchy of local policy documents, this Housing Action Plan is intended to reside below the Comprehensive Plan, which sets the big picture, long term vision for the community. This document takes guidance from the Comprehensive Plan, and makes it more specific and actionable. This document then in turn can be used to inform budgets and workplans for the Town of Estes Park and EPHA, specific to housing.

Housing Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Values

Vision. Working age households have stable, desirable housing in the Estes Valley, enabling them to support our local economy, provide essential services, and thrive as vital members of our community.

Goals. Create and preserve 550 to 700 dwelling units affordable to the local workforce over the next five to seven years.

Objectives:

- Increase the preservation and creation of workforce housing, so that the Estes Valley begins to improve availability and affordability of housing to the workforce.
- Match housing investments with areas of greatest need in the workforce community.
- Create neighborhoods that are desirable, compatible and affordable for the long term.

Values. The following core values emerged during the strategic planning process.

- **Collaboration.** No single entity can solve the complex problem of our workforce housing shortage. A strong collaborative approach is needed between the two lead agencies and across the broader community. The EPHA and Town of Estes Park will use a collaborative framework to advance workforce housing solutions, engaging partners, residents, funders, and other key stakeholders as appropriate.
- **Equity and Inclusion.** All efforts to develop and preserve housing that is affordable to the local workforce will be inclusive, and take particular care to support the populations most negatively impacted by rising housing costs. Each project and initiative that comes out of this strategic plan should proactively include and recruit members from the most vulnerable populations to ensure that housing is being built and marketed equitably.
- **Accountability and Stewardship.** As stewards of taxpayer funds and the below market housing inventory, Town of Estes Park and EPHA will create transparent processes for allocating resources, prioritizing investments, ensuring fair access to the housing created, and managing the housing resources for the long term. The Estes Valley will bring the talent and resources of the local and regional community together to address the financial gap that is a barrier to housing our workforce. Use State and Federal resources strategically, when their requirements align with the local market and community need. Leverage the expertise of the public and private sectors, to manage risk and use limited resources efficiently.

Framework for Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities. Clear roles and responsibilities, within a collaborative framework, will help to create efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Recommended roles are described within each strategy, and a summary is provided here.

<i>Town of Estes Park</i>	<i>Estes Park Housing Authority</i>
Oversight of local housing funding	Development partnerships
Land Use Policy, Land Use Review Process, Building Permits and Inspections	Property management and Deed Restriction Compliance
Code Enforcement	Land and Property Acquisition; Affordable Development
ADU Incentive Policy	Deed Restriction Purchase Program
Land Use Code Updates and Missing Middle Strategy	Reinvestment in existing affordable housing inventory ADU Incentive Program

Private sector and non-profit partners also bring knowledge, skills, and resources that are vital to the success of this housing strategy. Private sector partners are anticipated to be integral to design and construction of new housing. And non-profit partners are anticipated to be engaged in service provision, funding, and development (e.g., Habitat for Humanity).

Market Indicators. The following market indicators can be helpful tools for understanding long-term trends and their impacts on the local workforce. We recommend that EPHA and the Town of Estes Park periodically check these indicators to understand the evolving challenges and opportunities in the community. Some goals and objectives are easy to quantify, such as number of workforce housing units created. Others may take more time and study, and can be updated less frequently. For example, several measures of success would be that 10 years from now the community has reversed key trend areas that have been losing ground the past two decades.

- Homes Occupied Year-Round—currently 56% (see Section III, page 3).
- Number of Unfilled Jobs—currently 737 (see Section II, page 6).
- People commuting for work—currently 33% (see Section II, page 7).
- The number of households paying more than 30% of their income—currently 58% for renters and 19% for owners (see Section III, page 15).
- Rental Vacancy Rate—functional rental markets are typically 5-10%; current vacancy is approaching zero (see Section III, page 6).
- Rental and Ownership Affordability Gaps—cumulative rental gap currently 241 units; cumulative purchase gap currently 34 percentage points (Section III pages 16 and 18).

Priority Actions

This housing action plan is intended to set out the actions and strategies that will achieve the communities' housing goals. Strategies are organized under **preservation, new supply, funding and policy, community outreach and client support, and capacity building** and can be applied to rental, owner, and seasonal workforce housing. Here is an at-a-glance summary of proposed strategies, leadership, and timing. Detailed descriptions of each strategy and action follow the table. The following chart creates a general outline of how the tasks of this action plan might be sequenced over the next five years. The specific sequencing can be refined through the annual work plan processes for the Town of Estes Park and EPHA.

Strategies Summary and Timeline

Strategy and Action	Lead	Year				
	Agency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Preservation						
1 Property acquisition	EPHA					
2 Asset Plan Housing Authority Portfolio	EPHA					
3 Deed restriction buy down	EPHA					
4 Renovation, Rehab, Weatherization	Energy Resource Ctr.					
New Supply						
5 Current Project Success	TOEP/EPHA					
6 Partnerships	EPHA					
7 Land Acquisition	EPHA					
8 Employer Collaboration	TBD					
9 ADU incentives	TOEP/EPHA					
10 Fee Incentives	TOEP					
Funding and Policy						
11 Program Development for Local Sources	TOEP					
12 Leverage Outside Sources	TOEP/EPHA					
13 Development Code Updates	TOEP					
Community Engagement and Client Support						
14 Home Purchase Assistance	EPHA					
15 Rent Assistance	EPHA					
16 Equity and Inclusion	TOEP/EPHA					
17 Education, outreach, and housing hub	TOEP/EPHA					
Organizational Capacity Building						
18 Increase staff	TOEP/EPHA					
19 Systems development	TOEP/EPHA					

Preservation Strategies. For the overall community housing strategy to be successful, retaining and improving the current inventory of housing that supports the local workforce must go hand in hand with creating new opportunities. Four preservation strategies are recommended for the Estes Valley: property acquisition, deed restriction purchase, recapitalizing current affordable properties, and increasing weatherization and renovation of individual homes and apartments.

1. **Existing Property Acquisition.** Purchase existing structures to house the local workforce. Preserving housing resources that are currently occupied by the local workforce but might be at risk of converting to a different use should be a top priority. Some of these properties may be in need of significant maintenance and capital improvements, which can be addressed immediately or over time, depending on the situation. This strategy can be implemented by committing staff time to understanding what properties are on the market, and approaching owners of properties that may not be listed at this time. It also requires ability to move quickly through due diligence and have access to the necessary funding sources to close on a purchase.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park (funding)
Local Funding Needed	Varies, depending on acquisition opportunities; estimated to be 10-50% of acquisition price.
Staff Time Needed	about .25 FTE
Five Year Goal	100 units preserved and enhanced

2. **Review Housing Authority Portfolio and Recapitalize Existing Property.**

Estes Park Housing Authority currently has 209 rental units under management, most of which are over 20 years old. These are vital workforce and senior housing assets, some of which need to be considered for capital improvements and/or repositioning in the market. Lone Tree Village, which was built 23 years ago through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, is particularly in need of capital improvement.

Positioning the EPHA portfolio for long term sustainability will be a time and resource intensive process, and has the potential to pull EPHA staff away from other central strategies of this plan. For EPHA to serve as a primary implementor of this Housing Action Plan, staffing resources for the current portfolio and these new initiatives will be essential. Also consider adding new housing as part of recapitalization efforts, if sites have underutilized land within or adjacent.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park (funding), CHFA (funding), CDOH (funding), Renovation construction (private sector)
Local Funding Needed	Early estimate for recapitalization of Lone Tree Village estimated \$6.2 million; it is likely a significant portion of this could be raised from sources outside the local community such as debt and tax credits.

Staff Time Needed	about 1 FTE, depending on the level of temporary resident relocation and how much work is done in house versus contracted out
Five Year Goal	Full asset management and capital needs assessments conducted on the EPHA portfolio, and at least 57 units preserved and enhanced

- 3. Deed Restrictions Incentive and/or Buy Down Program.** Create an incentive program to encourage prospective local buyers of homes to place price-capped restrictions and/or workforce restrictions on their homes in exchange for cash. Some communities have also used this tool to preserve inventory that is currently owned or leased by local workforce in place (in other words, only the deed restriction is purchased, the property remains with the current owner). Vail InDeed in Vail, Housing Helps in Summit, and Good Deed in the Gunnison Valley are examples.

Another variation of this tool is a “buy down,” where a public or non-profit entity purchases homes and resells them at a lower price with a deed restriction in place.

A specific formula for limiting appreciation could create a balance between wealth building, housing stability, and being attainable in the long term for future workforce households. Eligibility could be based on local employment, and income and asset tests of the buyer.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park (funding), private property owners
Local Funding Needed	Estimated to be 15-20% the property value based on other communities' experience.
Staff Time Needed	about .5 FTE
Five Year Goal	20-30 units preserved and enhanced

- 4. Renovation, Rehabilitation, and Weatherization.** The housing inventory in the Estes Valley is old (over half of homes built before 1980). Escalating maintenance and utility costs can erode affordability, and put housing further out of reach for the local workforce. Investing in and enhancing the programs such as weatherization and revolving loans for health and safety improvements that support lower income renters and owners is another important housing preservation tactic. A deed restriction or an income qualification can help to preserve the public investment. Using local funding sources can make state and federal dollars go further, provide a higher level of improvement to the home, and/or serve a more diverse range of workforce households, extending support beyond federal eligibility standards (typically 200% of federal poverty).

Lead Agency	Energy Resource Center, Northern Colorado Office
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park (funding), Colorado Division of Housing (funding), local utility providers
Local Funding Needed	Can range from \$10,000-\$80,000+ per home, depending on level of improvements needed
Staff Time Needed	TBD – depends on level of program enrichment. 1 FTE can typically support improvements to about 8-10 homes per year.
Five Year Goal	Goal for units preserved and enhanced to be determined through program development

Increase Housing Supply. Housing production has not kept up with job growth in the region, with particularly severe impacts to working age households. The Needs Assessment establishes that more housing is needed across a wide range of price points, tenure, size, and type (duplex, triplex, apartments, small houses, etc.). Increasing the variety of housing choices will enable households across different life phases to thrive in the Estes Valley. This includes young singles and couples, mid-career households, households with children, multigenerational households, seasonal employees, and elders who have retired from the local workforce. Housing choices and ability to move within the local market are hallmarks of a healthy housing market, and will support attracting and retaining the diverse range of employees needed in the community. Strategies for creating additional supply include:

- 5. Ensure Success of Current Projects in the Development Pipeline.** Three projects are in the development pipeline: Prospector, Fish Hatchery, and Habitat for Humanity. These projects face strong headwinds in light of high construction costs, labor shortages and rising interest rates. The development teams working on them have invested significant time and funding to get to where they are now, but their success is not yet assured. If successful, these projects will do much to support community housing needs.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority and Town of Estes Park
Partner Agencies	Current project development teams
Funding Needed	One-time gap filling funds and/or support in the form of property tax exemption
Staff Time Needed	Minimal
Five Year Goal	Current projects are constructed and occupied by 2028

- 6. Public Private Partnerships for New Development.** The Town of Estes Park and/or Estes Park Housing Authority can partner with developers from the private or non-profit sector to construct new workforce housing in the Estes Valley. Property owned by local government or institutional employers and local funding could be leveraged for this purpose. Other incentives could include support with extending water, sewer and streets, density bonuses, fee waivers associated with the

development review process, tap fee amortization, property management, and/or other subsidies. A goal of this strategy would be to have a well-planned development pipeline that would support bringing a new development online each year. A typical development takes several years from concept to construction completion.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority and Town of Estes Park
Partner Agencies	Private sector developers, Habitat for Humanity, other non-profit developers
Funding Needed	Varies, depending on development opportunities
Housing created	Varies, depending on development opportunities, and ability to increase production over historic levels. The five-year goal would require 60-80 new units per year.
Staff Time Needed	1 FTE to support up to three projects at a time
Five Year Goal	300-400 units

- 7. Land Acquisition.** Pursue use of existing government and institutionally owned land to support housing goals, and purchase of land where workforce housing could be developed in the future. Site control of developable land is one of the most critical strategies for addressing the housing challenge in the long term. By giving a public entity site control, this strategy can help do set the strategic direction for developable land, prioritize housing as a community use, ensure good community engagement and transparent public process are part of land use decisions, and (when the land is brought to the project at low or now cost) begin to fill the gap between project costs and what local workforce households can afford.

Current sites that are already under consideration for housing include Town owned parcels at Dry Gulch and Stanley Circle, and EPHA owned land at Castle Ridge. Both entities should continue to pursue development feasibility analysis and planning for these sites, in the hopes that some or all of them could be shovel ready in three-five years.

Non-profit and mission driven developers such as Habitat for Humanity need additional developable lots to continue their work in the community. Estes Park Housing Authority is in a good position to act as a buyer. Land could be held by EPHA or a subsidiary of EPHA such as an LLC or Community Land Trust.

Additional strategies related to land acquisition include creating an inventory of institutional and government owned land, considering land swaps between entities, and coordinating closely between government agencies with regard to where and when various streets and utilities have the opportunity to be extended.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park
Funding Needed	TBD, depending on land costs and ability to leverage outside funding sources
Staff Time Needed	.25-.5 FTE
Five Year Goal	Proceed with development feasibility on three current parcels, and acquire at least three additional parcels for future housing needs.

8. Employer Housing Forum and Collaborative Effort Employers are already, of necessity, engaging in housing solutions in the community, purchasing properties and supporting employees as they search for housing. We recommend that the community increase and formalize employer engagement on housing solutions. This could take the form of an employer forum and implementation plan hosted and coordinated through the Town in close partnership the Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce. Employers have resources that can make housing feasible: staff expertise, land, and access to funding. They also have acute needs for housing, and can benefit from dedicated housing resources for their employees. The employer forum could be an opportunity for employers to collaborate on specific sites and initiatives, and share best practices for master leasing and owning employee units. Two of the primary barriers to employers entering the employee housing arena are (1) cost and (2) reluctance to become overly involved in their employees' lives as landlords. The Town could assist in mitigating costs, by making employers eligible for local funding or purchase of deed restricted units. The Housing Authority could mitigate landlord concerns by providing property management to employer owned or master leased homes and apartments.

Lead agency	Town of Estes Park
Partner Agencies	Estes Park Economic Development Corporation, Chamber of Commerce, EPHA, School District, County, local employers
Funding Needed	Approximately \$20,000 for coordination role annually; employers could bring additional funding to secure housing for their employees as part of rental or purchase inventory
Staff Time Needed	Some time to coordinate and facilitate an employer forum and pursue the opportunities that emerge; some tasks may be employer or consultant driven, others could be supported by Town, EPHA or EPEDC. We recommend EPEDC as the convening group, with support from employers and government partners.
Five Year Goal	Establish numeric goal in program development to bring new employee housing units to market and have robust coordination among employers on resources and best practices.

9. Incentives to Construct Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The Town of Estes Park has done good work recently to allow accessory dwelling units in all zone districts. Because the cost of construction is currently prohibitive for many owners to add accessory dwelling units, the recent regulatory updates could be supported with a financial incentive program to help construction of ADUs make financial sense for homeowners. This incentive could be in the form of a direct subsidy, forgivable loan, or must-pay loan that is subordinate to the home mortgage.

Such a program would provide an existing eligible property owner with cash or a low interest loan for the construction or conversion of an existing space to an ADU on the owner's property. In exchange, the owner would lease the ADU to an eligible household. Short-term rentals are already disallowed in ADUs, which is a best practice for workforce housing. Limits could be placed on the amount of rent charged, and/or a local work requirement could be included, depending on how the agreement was structured.

Other approaches that peer communities have explored for incentivizing ADUs include (1) providing pre-approved architectural drawings to limit design costs and make the building permit process more efficient, (2) working with offsite construction companies to create modular ADUs, and (3) working with interested homeowners to “bundle” eligible projects, so that a single contractor could create efficiencies by building several ADUs in the same neighborhood during the same building season.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park and Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Private owners, local contractors, local architect, Colorado modular factories
Funding Needed:	A first step will be to determine the financial gap that is prohibiting creation of ADUs, and what other tactics the community wants to deploy
Staff Time Needed	.25-.5 FTE
Five Year Goal	50 units

10. Fee Incentives for Deed Restricted Housing. Town of Estes Park is in the process of updating fee structures, to help make all development of deed restricted housing more economically feasible by providing an incentive to cover the cost of land use, sewer, water, and building permit fees. The current staff recommendation that all deed restricted housing is eligible for this incentive, and that fees can be amortized over 10 years with support from Town is a strong signal of Town's policy priority for workforce housing. To support the integrity of the fee enterprises, these costs will need to be covered by the Workforce Housing Fund. The strategy recommendation is to move forward with workforce housing fund updates and adoption of the revised recommendations in 2023.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park
Partner Agencies	n/a
Funding Needed	Will vary depending upon developer interest, cost to construct, type of units, and desired affordability for sale or rent. Many communities are experiencing the need to bring over \$100,000/unit to achieve attainable prices for local workers.
Staff Time Needed	Less than .25 FTE for initial program creation and ongoing support; may be co-located with land use related tasks.
Five Year Goal	Unknown – will depend on market activity

Funding and Policy. The Town of Estes Park will typically be the lead agency with regard to policy and funding initiatives. The following three strategies are recommended to commence in 2023.

11. Program Development for Local Dedicated Funding. In recent years, Estes Park has had limited local funding to invest in workforce housing. However, the recent successful ballot measure for 3.5% lodging tax increment means the community will have an estimated \$5 million annually to invest in workforce housing and childcare. This substantial increase in local dedicated funding sets the stage for a new era of investment in some of the community's most pressing issues. This funding is essential to many of the strategies in this document. Setting up predictable and transparent processes now for how the funding will be deployed will help to create effective processes going forward, building confidence for tax payers and implementation partners.

Town staff are in the process of creating an operating plan for the new funding source, and amending the workforce and affordable housing guidelines to scale to these new opportunities. As this work continues, considerations should include:

- How often and how much funding will be available in a competitive format for local housing projects and programs? What are the criteria to be eligible for local housing funds (incomes served, percentage of deed restricted units, etc.)?
- Who will make decisions regarding funding priorities and amounts? An approach that includes decision-makers from the Town and Housing Authority with input from local stakeholders and community members may be helpful.
- What funding is set aside for EPHA on an annual basis, and what agreements are needed to ensure funds are used as intended while still giving EPHA enough autonomy to move quickly and adapt to changing market conditions? Can a block of funds be provided that allows EPHA to act quickly, without returning to Town Board for specific approval, provided the use of funds aligns with Town policy? Town's current procurement threshold is \$100,000, which is quite limited in the realm of real estate transactions, partnerships, and land acquisitions. The

consultant team recommends setting higher limits, with clear guidelines and accountability.

- How does the funding process and program oversight integrate into existing financial systems and protocols at the Town, such as annual budget process, audit, and day to day bookkeeping?

Town leadership should conduct program development to move forward with clear intention, structure, and accountability with the new dedicated funding for housing.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park
Partner Agencies	Estes Park Housing Authority
Funding Needed	staff time only
Staff Time Needed	.25 FTE to support administration of the housing fund; additional support from Town leadership for review and decision of funding requests
Five Year Goal	Reliable, transparent, and predictable funding approach in place; strong taxpayer confidence and perception of fairness in how are invested

12. Use Local Funds to Leverage Investments from Outside the Community.

We are in a time of abundance in funding for housing in Colorado. Estes Park has the opportunity to draw in resources from outside sources including the state, federal government, and philanthropy to support the community's housing goals. These funding sources can be used strategically to preserve local funding for where it is most needed. Close coordination between Town of Estes Park and EPHA will ensure that funding opportunities are coordinated, and the most appropriate entity takes the lead.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park and EPHA, depending on the nature of the funding and project specifics
Partner Agencies	Colorado Division of Housing and Dept of Local Affairs, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, banks, Community Development Financial Institutions, foundations
Funding Needed	Local match or leverage amount will vary
Staff Time Needed	This duty could be included within the job description of Town of Estes Park Housing Manager, and one staff member at EPHA (likely a Development Project Manager, Deputy Director, or Executive Director)
Five Year Goal	Estes Park has attracted new LIHTC allocations, and significant investments from state, federal, and philanthropic agencies to support housing goals.

13. Development Code Updates. Town of Estes Park is in the process of adopting a new Comprehensive Plan, *Estes Forward*, that provides an action-oriented road map for the valley for the next 10-20 years, including a framework for the built environment and housing (in addition to other policy areas).¹ To align with the Comp Plan and achieve the goals of this Housing Strategy, the community needs more land that is zoned appropriately.

The Town is embarking on a land use code to create better alignment with the Comp Plan goals. The ways in which code supports or detracts from housing affordability should be considered at each step in this process. For example, more land that is zoned to accommodate “missing middle” forms of housing such as duplexes, triplexes, small cottages, shared living, townhouses, and attached housing with 4-16 residences in a building. Opportunities for using land more efficiently, and doing compact, higher intensity residential development are imperative for meeting the Estes Valley long-term housing needs and preventing rural sprawl. Having these zoning options in place will align with the community vision and make attainable housing more feasible, both for rent and for sale.

A missing middle strategy that honors the community character and historic development patterns could be created, for example allowing duplexes, triplexes and cabin clusters in some areas, and higher intensity multi-family in others. This strategy should look at solutions that are informed by the history and context of the community, so the community can achieve density that is efficient and in scale with nearby uses.

Town of Estes Park should embark on a missing middle code update as soon as possible.

Vacation rentals have been studied extensively in the Town of Estes Park. The consultant team supports continuing to cap vacation rental licenses, disallow them in ADUs and deed restricted housing.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park
Partner Agencies	Community stakeholders TBD
Staff Time Needed	Task of current Community Development staff, with outside consultant
Funding Needed	Approximately \$50,000 for consultant; staff time will be needed too, and may be extensive, depending on outreach strategies
Five Year Goal	Complete a missing middle code update by 2024

¹ <https://estespark.colorado.gov/comprehensiveplan>

Community Engagement and Client Support. Four strategies are recommended to support local workforce in a direct, immediate way, and one strategy is offered as a long-term investment community engagement and understanding of housing efforts. While these investments do not contribute to the long-term inventory of workforce housing, they can provide vital assistance in near term, helping to bridge the gap between the current housing crunch and strategies that take years to implement.

14. Home Purchase Assistance. As interest rates rise, household's purchasing power is being eroded. Downpayment assistance, assistance with closing costs, and access to competitive (or below market) interest rate loans is increasingly important. Existing down payment assistance programs offered through EPHA and Larimer County could be bolstered and better funded.

Interest rate buy-down programs are another option for home purchase assistance and typically provide discounted interest rates for the first year or two of ownership for qualified buyers.

In addition to down payment assistance, a "cash-buyer" program could be created that supports buyers in the local workforce who desire to participate in the real estate market but have difficulty competing with cash buyers who are typically more agile, can offer a higher purchase price, and can close more quickly because there is no financing contingency. This program would allow a public entity to act as a cash buyer on behalf of an eligible household or in its own interest to acquire a property, which would then be resold to the eligible (conventionally financed) household, repaying the cash outlay made by the public entity. In exchange, a deed restriction would be placed on the property to preserve the investment for workforce households in the long term. This strategy is closely linked with a Deed Restriction Buy-down, described in the Preservation section, and the two strategies should be developed and administered in parallel.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park
Staff Time Needed	.5 FTE, or more, depending on scale of the program
Annual Funding Needed	\$400,000 - \$1,200,000
Five Year Goal	Support 5-10 transactions per year

15. Rental Assistance. Create a fund for rental/lease assistance for members of the local workforce who sign a new 12-month lease in the Estes Valley based on predetermined eligibility criteria. Assistance could be provided throughout the term of a lease or at the outset, which would increase the viability of obtaining a local long-term rental by assisting with up-front costs. Another approach to providing rental assistance could be to "buy down" rents (for qualified renters) through direct subsidies to landlords. A deed- or income-restriction may be appropriate for program participation.

Winter Park's Short Term Fix program provides an example of matching employers and employees with willing owners of previously vacant or short term rented homes and incentivizing long term leases.

Lead Agency	Estes Park Housing Authority
Partner Agencies	Town of Estes Park
Staff Time Needed	.25 FTE, or more, depending on scale of the program
Annual Funding Needed	\$100,000-\$200,000
Five Year Goal	Support 10-20 rentals annually

16. Equity and Inclusion. Keep support for Hispanic community and other groups disproportionately impacted by residential displacement and affordability challenges at the forefront of each housing effort. These households are experiencing long-term stress, reduced health outcomes, and negative impacts across all life indicators related to lack of access to stable housing. Correcting these inequities not only supports the households impacted but strengthens the overall community and economy. Key strategies to promoting equity in housing include:

- Make zoning and land use decisions in a way that supports local workforce and minimizes residential displacement of permanent residents.
- Ensure that new housing prioritizes people within the community who may be displaced by redevelopment or rising costs.
- Invite and educate diverse populations on new initiatives, developments, and other engagement events. Listen and incorporate the feedback provided from these groups.
- Ensure that all materials and information is available in English and Spanish, and that inclusive language is being used.
- Seek opportunities to make housing accessible to households where members have documentation challenges. This can include how eligibility is defined for rental housing and advocating for alternative mortgage finance solutions on for-sale housing. Some below market housing has requirements for lawful presence tied to the way it was funded. Be strategic in the using housing inventory and unrestricted funds to create opportunities for households where some members may not be documented. These households are often long-time, vital contributors to the local economy, and have faced some of the greatest housing instability including frequent moves, poor quality, overcrowding, and rapidly rising rents.
- Make housing investments in coordination with transportation, childcare, and other community infrastructure that positively impacts cost of living and households' ability to thrive.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park and EPHA should take joint responsibility
Partner Agencies	Resident advocacy groups, local non-profits, County Human Services
Funding Needed	TBD
Staff Time Needed	Staff time will vary depending on the initiative.
Five Year Goal	Diversity and inclusion has increased within the leadership of housing efforts, community engagement processes, and in the households receiving rental and homeownership support through the initiatives of this plan

17. Community Engagement, Education, and Outreach Hub. A common refrain in high cost, mountain communities is “nobody is doing anything on housing” when in fact, many efforts are underway. We recommend that Estes Park be proactive in sharing success stories, progress, and project updates, and creating touch points for members of the community to stay informed, engaged, and provide feedback. Housing is a complex topic, and growing community engagement and increasing the diversity of people who understand the issues and strategies will strengthen the community's ability to be successful over time.

A basic first step is a “one stop shop” website with housing resources and information for people seeking housing and interested in understanding current programs and opportunities, and an online portal for housing applications. Valley Home Store in Eagle County has a strong example of an online portal for applications.

Other community engagement and outreach efforts include open houses, working groups and advisory boards, design workshops, engagement with school age children, listening tours and presentations to civic groups. These actions don’t have to happen immediately but should be woven into the development and feedback loop for all projects and programs proposed in this action plan.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park and EPHA for their respective projects and initiatives, and in close coordination with each other
Partner Agencies	TBD
Funding Needed	TBD
Staff Time Needed	.25. Tasks such as a one stop shop website would have a single point of contact. Other tasks could be led by staff members responsible for specific programs or initiatives. Some communities, such as Leadville, have a dedicated staff person in this role.
Five Year Goal	Up to date and user friendly “one stop shop” is operational

Organizational Capacity Building. This housing action plan and the new funding provided through the lodging tax increment represent a tremendous opportunity and set ambitious goals for improving Estes Park's community and economy through new housing. For the community to move from status quo to proactively addressing housing needs and gaps, a significant increase in staff capacity and organizational systems will be needed.

18. Increase Staffing at Town and EPHA. Current strengths for Town of Estes Park are its land use and planning team, transparent governance, and strong executive leadership. To implement the housing initiatives of this action plan, a full-time staff person dedicated to workforce and affordable housing is needed. The primary tasks for this position would include managing the program development and allocation of local funding sources, applying for and managing grants and loans from outside funders, acting as a collaborative partner and liaison to the housing authority, and supporting the land use team on incentives for below market housing and missing middle housing strategy.

Similarly, EPHA has strengths in the areas of Board expertise, property management, and a recent internal promotion of a knowledgeable and experienced Executive Director. To implement this housing action plan, EPHA will need to add at least two staff positions. The consultant team recommends funding and hiring a real estate development director position and an asset and eligibility manager position. Some of the programs and responsibilities of this plan could be housed with either position, depending on the qualifications and capacity of the candidates, but an initial recommendation is depicted here. EPHA should ensure that someone on staff has a real estate brokers license, to support managing deed restricted purchase and sale transactions. This could be the Asset and Eligibility Manager position, or other. Over the next five years, as programs, projects, and resources grow, additional staff in supporting roles may also be needed.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park and EPHA for their respective hires
Partner Agencies	TBD
Funding Needed	\$320,000 - \$400,000
Staff Time Needed	Creating job descriptions, requisitions, and conducting the hiring process can be covered by current Town and HA staff. Both agencies should act in an advisory role on the hiring for the other agency's staff, as these staff members will need to work very closely together and have complimentary skills.
Goal	Hire at least three staff members in 2023

19. Systems Development. Taking the time to put good systems in place now will help ease management and increase public confidence going forward. Program development for the dedicated funding is covered above. Other important areas of

systems development are a good database for property management, a comprehensive, centralized system for deed restriction tracking and compliance.

Lead Agency	Town of Estes Park and EPHA for their respective system areas
Partner Agencies	TBD
Funding Needed	TBD
Staff Time Needed	Will vary over time, assign within duties of recommended new hires and current leadership
Five Year Goal	Tracking and compliance systems are in place, creating confidence in the stewardship of local funding and fair access to the housing resources created. Systems are robust and able to withstand changes in staffing and political leadership.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SECTION I. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

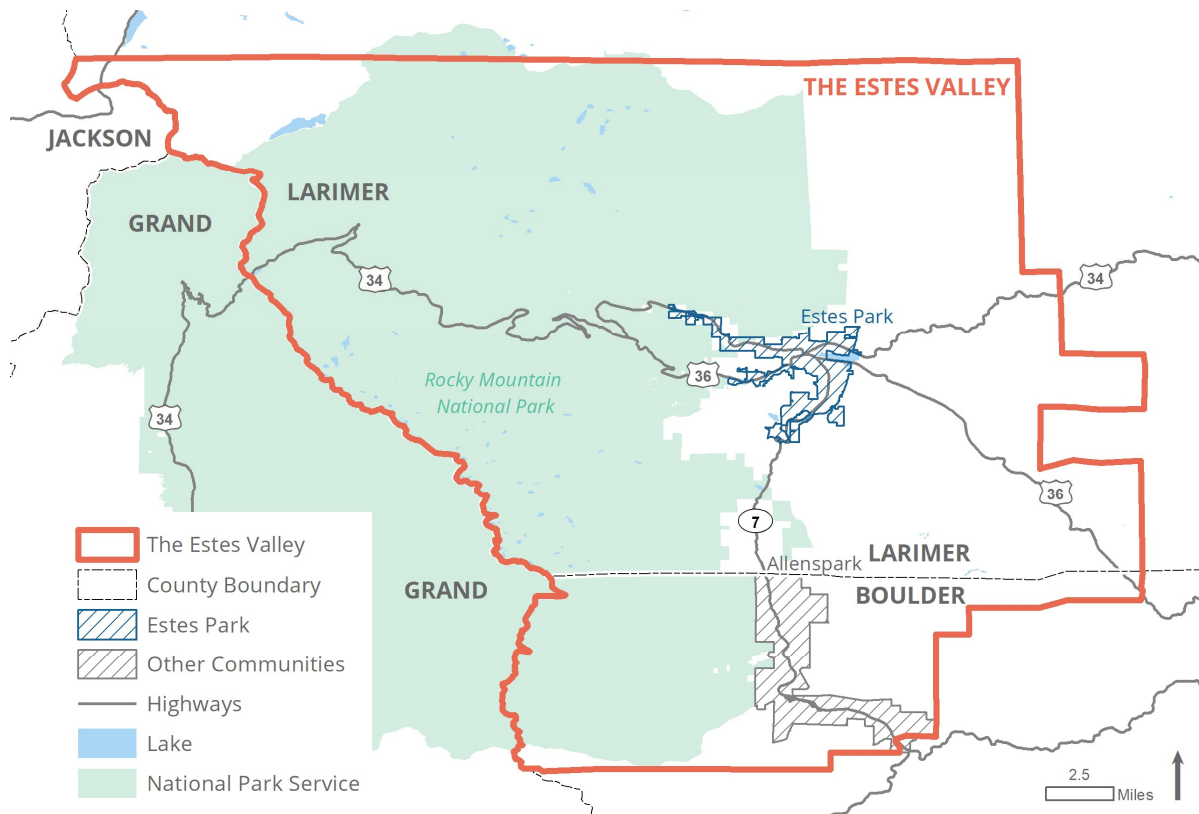
SECTION I.

Demographic Profile

This section provides an overview of the Estes Valley demographic environment to set the context for the housing needs assessment and strategic plan. The section includes discussion of population, households, and income trends.

This report focuses on the Estes Valley and Town of Estes Park. Wherever possible, data for the Estes Park School District is used to represent the Estes Valley. For context, some Estes Valley trends are compared to those from the surrounding Poudre (Ft. Collins), St. Vrain Valley (Longmont), and Thompson (Loveland) school districts where the bulk of the commuters into the Estes Valley live. The Estes Park School District is also the geographic area that has been used in past housing needs assessments.

Figure I-1.
Geographic Area of Analysis



Source: Root Policy Research.

Key findings

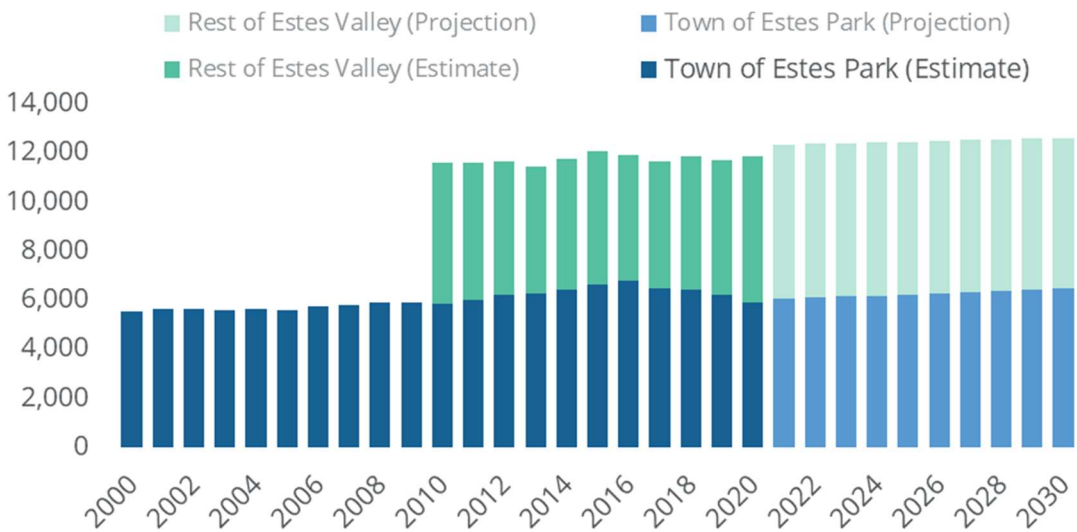
- The population of the Estes Valley was about the same in 2020 as it was in 2010, but the Valley was not without change. According to the population estimates from the Colorado State Demography Office, the population in the Town of Estes Park grew from 5,865 in 2010 to 6,777 in 2016; but then fell back to 5,886 in 2020. The pandemic years since the 2020 Census have been dynamic and the long-term impact has yet to settle out. However, the most recent available data, such as school district enrollment, supports the trends identified by the Census and indicates that the Census still provides a strong foundation for understanding the needs of the community.
- While the overall population did not change much from 2010 to 2020, there was a significant shift toward an older demographic. The portion of the population age 65 or older grew from 25% in 2010 to 31% in 2020. At the same time, the portion of the population age 17 or younger shrunk from 15% to 11%.
- Only about 13% of Estes Valley households have children under the age of 18—substantially lower than the broader region and other communities in Larimer County. Meanwhile 45% of Estes Valley households are married couples without children living in the household and another 32% are single person households.
- Households with children tend to be lower income (\$35,000-\$50,000) or higher income (\$100,000 or more) with few households in the very low- or middle-income ranges.

Population

The Estes population was about the same in 2020 as it was in 2010. However, estimated population has not been flat. The community experienced relatively rapid growth from 2010 to 2016 followed by a mirrored decline from 2016 to 2020.

At the peak of the mid-decade growth, the Town of Estes Park had grown 16% in 6 years from 5,865 in 2010 to 6,777 in 2016. By 2020, the population had returned to 5,886 – essentially where it was in 2010.

Figure I-2.
Population, Estes Valley, 2000-2030



Source: Colorado DOLA State Demography Office, ACS 5-year estimates, and OPS Strategies.

The Town of Estes accounts for about half of the Estes Valley population. Long-term growth trends project that the Estes Valley will have a population of about 12,600 in 2030, up from about 11,900 in 2020. For context, while the Estes Valley grew 2% from 2010 to 2020, the Estes Valley’s neighbors all grew at a rate of about 2% per year over the past decade.

Figure I-3.
Population and Population Change by Jurisdiction, 2010-2020

Note:
Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

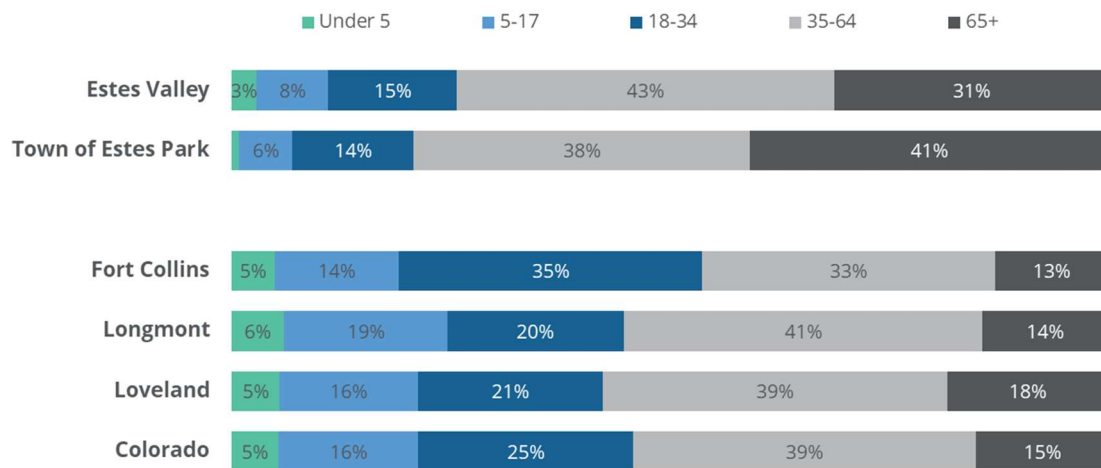
Source:
2010 and 2020 Census.

Jurisdiction	2010	2020	% Change
Estes Valley	11,493	11,761	2.3%
Town of Estes Park	5,858	5,904	0.8%
Share of Valley	51%	50%	-0.8%
Fort Collins	184,648	221,002	20%
Longmont	151,981	191,402	26%
Loveland	104,236	127,220	22%
Larimer County	299,630	359,066	20%

Age. The Estes Valley has one of the oldest populations in the state. Over 30% of the residents of the Estes Valley and over 40% of the residents of the Town of Estes Park are age 65 or older. At the same time, less than 3% of the Estes Valley population is under the age of 5 and only 8% of the population is school aged. The share of the population aged 18-34 years is also well below state and regional proportions.

That the Estes Valley School District as a whole has more children and fewer residents age 65 and older indicates that families are more likely to live in the unincorporated areas of the Estes Valley than in Town.

Figure I-4.
Age Distribution by Jurisdiction, 2020.



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts

Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates.

Not only is the 65 and older cohort especially large, it is also growing especially fast. Meanwhile the number of children is shrinking. The 15% decrease in the estimated population age 5 to 17 years is corroborated by the 12% decrease in school district enrollment seen over the past 10 years. Figure I-5 indicates that while the overall population is about the same as it was in 2010 there has been a significant shift within the population toward an older demographic.

Figure I-5.
Age Trends, Estes Valley, 2010 and 2020.

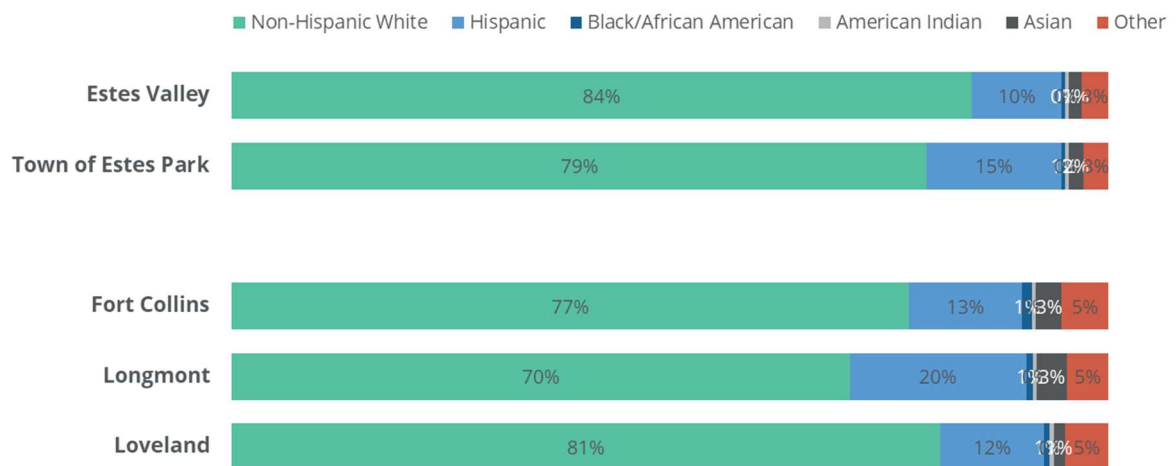
Age Cohort	2010		2020		% Change 2010-2020
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Under 5 years	462	4%	385	3%	-17%
5 to 17 years	1,311	11%	1,116	8%	-15%
18 to 34 years	1,637	14%	1,990	15%	22%
35 to 64 years	5,226	45%	5,854	43%	12%
65 years and older	2,857	25%	4,255	31%	49%

Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts

Source: 2010 Census, 2020 ACS 5-year estimate, OPS Strategies.

Race and Ethnicity. The Estes Valley population is 84% non-Hispanic white. Another 10% of the population is Hispanic. The Town of Estes Park has a greater proportion of Hispanic population (15%) than the unincorporated areas of the Estes Valley (5%).

Figure I-6.
Distribution of Race/Ethnicity by Jurisdiction, 2020.

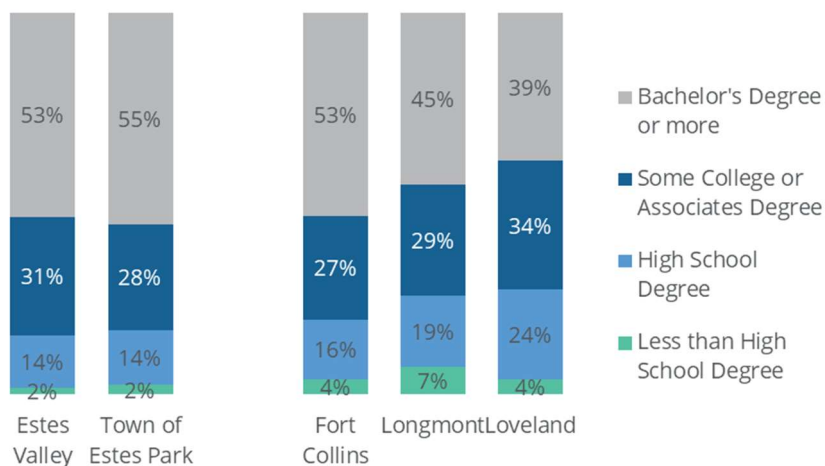


Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts
Source: Census.

While the Town of Estes Park has racial/ethnic diversity consistent with the region, the unincorporated areas of the Estes Valley are disproportionately non-Hispanic white compared to the region as a whole.

Education Attainment. Over half of the residents of the Estes Valley have at least a bachelor's degree. This level of education attainment is similar to that of the college town of Fort Collins and significantly greater than the other neighboring communities.

Figure I-7.
Distribution of Educational Attainment by Jurisdiction, 2020.



Note: For population 25 years and older. Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts
Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates.

Households

In 2020 there were 5,359 households in the Estes Valley, of which 2,791 lived in the Town of Estes Park.

Household Composition. The most common household type in the Estes Valley is a married couple without children, which accounts for 45% of households. The next most common household type is a person living alone, which accounts for another 32% of households. Households with children account for 13% of households.

Figure I-8.
Household Type, Estes Valley, 2010 and 2020.

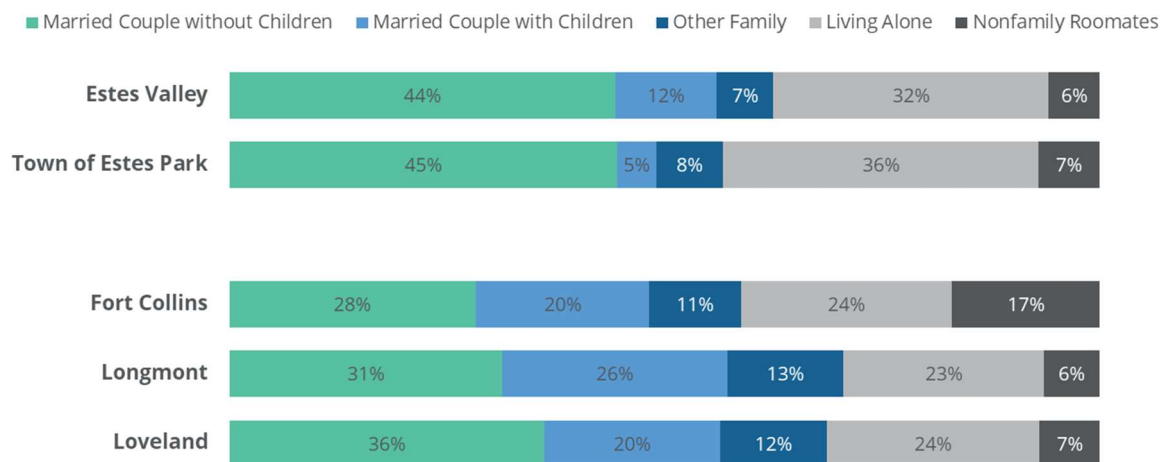
	2010		2020	
	Number	% Total Households	Number	% Total Households
Total households	5,365		5,359	
Married Couples	3,031	56%	2,999	56%
With children under 18	708	13%	579	11%
Without children under 18	2,323	43%	2,420	45%
Male householder, no spouse	127	2%	163	3%
With children under 18	72	1%	31	1%
Without children under 18	55	1%	132	2%
Female householder, no spouse	245	5%	187	3%
With children under 18	136	3%	99	2%
Without children under 18	109	2%	89	2%
Non-family households	1,962	37%	2,009	37%
Householder living alone less than 65	992	18%	911	17%
Householder living alone 65 and over	693	13%	782	15%
Other non-family households	277	5%	316	6%

Note: 2020 household numbers are a function of ACS percentages applied to Census household count

Source: 2010 and 2020 Census, 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies.

Consistent with the demographic trends, the significant shifts in household type from 2010 to 2020 are a decrease in the share of households with children and an increase in the share of households that are single person age 65 or older living alone. However, these shifts are slight and the overall household type distribution has not changed significantly in the past ten years.

Figure I-9.
Household Composition, by Jurisdiction, 2020.



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts

Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates.

Compared to the region, the small proportion of married couples with children and large proportion of single person households in the Estes Valley jump off the page. Especially within the Town of Estes Park there is a very small percentage of units occupied by families. While 32% of Estes Valley households are a person living alone (36% in the Town of Estes Park), the regional average is only 24%.

Household Size. The household composition of the Estes Valley results in a small household size—2.0 people per household on average. The average household size in the Town of Estes Park is slightly smaller than it is in unincorporated Estes Valley, and Estes Valley households are smaller than the region as a whole because of the greater number of one and two person households in the Estes Valley.

Figure I-10.
Household Size, by Jurisdiction and Tenure, 2020

Note:

Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source:

2020 ACS 5-year estimates.

Jurisdiction	Overall	Tenure	
		Owner Households	Renter Households
Estes Valley	2.0	2.1	1.9
Town of Estes Park	1.9	2.0	1.7
Fort Collins	2.6	2.7	2.4
Longmont	2.8	2.8	2.6
Loveland	2.6	2.7	2.4

Owner households are slightly larger than renter households in the Estes Valley and the region. The average household size in the Estes Valley has changed very little since 2010.

Income and Poverty

This section examines household and family income in the Estes Valley, as well as the prevalence of poverty among area residents.

Household income. As shown in Figure I-11, the median household income in the Estes Valley grew 27%, or about \$15,600 from 2010 to 2020. This growth was more rapid in the last half of the decade than the first. However, income grew more for owners than renters and more for residents of unincorporated Estes Valley than the Town of Estes Park.

**Figure I-11.
Median
Household
Income, by
Jurisdiction
and Tenure,
2010-2020.**

Note:

Nominal dollars. Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source:

2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies.

Jurisdiction	2010	2020	Growth	
			Number	Percent
Overall				
Estes Valley	\$58,522	\$74,119	\$15,597	27%
Town of Estes Park	\$52,778	\$54,925	\$2,147	4%
Fort Collins	\$52,791	\$73,881	\$21,090	40%
Longmont	\$67,271	\$90,307	\$23,036	34%
Loveland	\$61,212	\$80,688	\$19,476	32%
Owners				
Estes Valley	\$68,750	\$92,050	\$23,300	34%
Town of Estes Park	\$69,866	\$82,222	\$12,356	18%
Fort Collins	\$75,032	\$97,972	\$22,940	31%
Longmont	\$82,071	\$105,651	\$23,580	29%
Loveland	\$73,473	\$91,217	\$17,744	24%
Renters				
Estes Valley	\$32,476	\$33,140	\$664	2%
Town of Estes Park	\$27,350	\$30,766	\$3,416	12%
Fort Collins	\$28,731	\$44,386	\$15,655	54%
Longmont	\$37,065	\$55,428	\$18,363	50%
Loveland	\$35,157	\$50,957	\$15,800	45%

The median income of Estes Valley owners grew \$23,300 from 2010 to 2020 compared to an increase of just \$664 for Estes Valley renters. Median income for renters in the Town of Estes Park grew more than for the renters in unincorporated Estes Valley, but overall Town of Estes Park incomes grew only \$2,150 compared to \$15,600 for the Estes Valley as a whole.

The difference in median income between the Town of Estes Park and the rest of the Estes Valley appears to have occurred in the past five years. While median incomes in the Estes

Valley and region were growing rapidly from 2015 to 2020, incomes in the Town of Estes Park remained at the same levels they have been since 2010.

Income distribution. Figure I-12 shows the income thresholds typically used to evaluate income qualifications for various housing programs, based on the Larimer County area median income (AMI). AMI is defined annually by HUD market studies. The figure provides AMI ranges for a 4-person household and the housing types that typically serve the households in the AMI range.

Figure I-12.
Income Thresholds and Target Housing

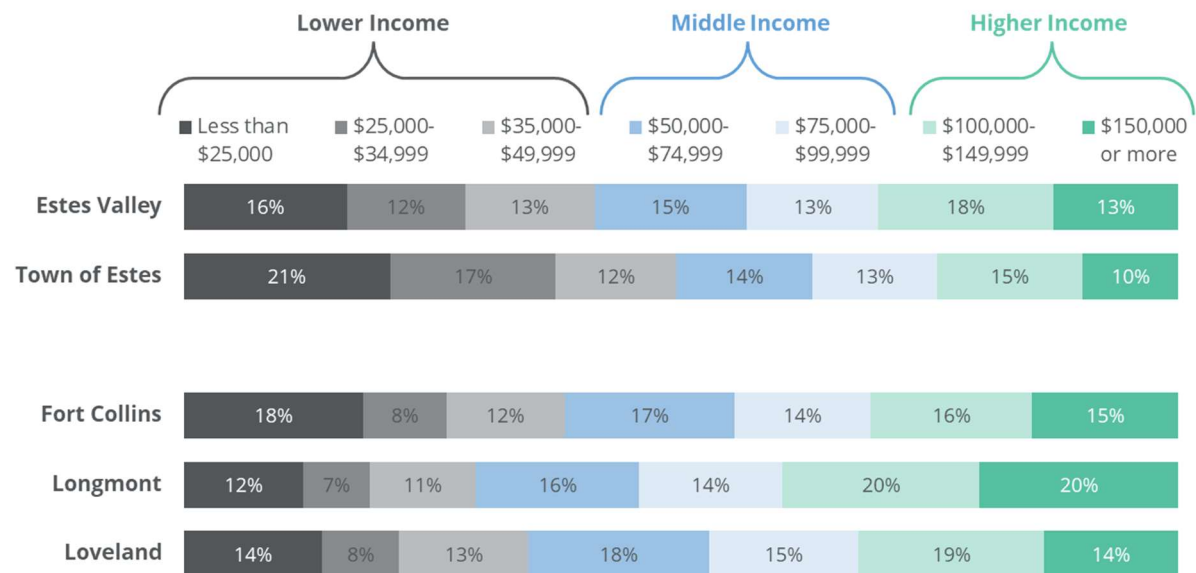


Note: MFI = HUD Median Family Income, 2-person household.

Source: OPS Strategies and HUD income limits.

The income limits for HUD programming are calculated for Larimer County and therefore driven by Fort Collins data. Still, the HUD data remains useful in the Estes Valley because the income distribution of the Estes Valley is quite like that of Fort Collins. Longmont is the outlier in the region with the highest median income in the region, and also the fewest households in the lower income ranges.

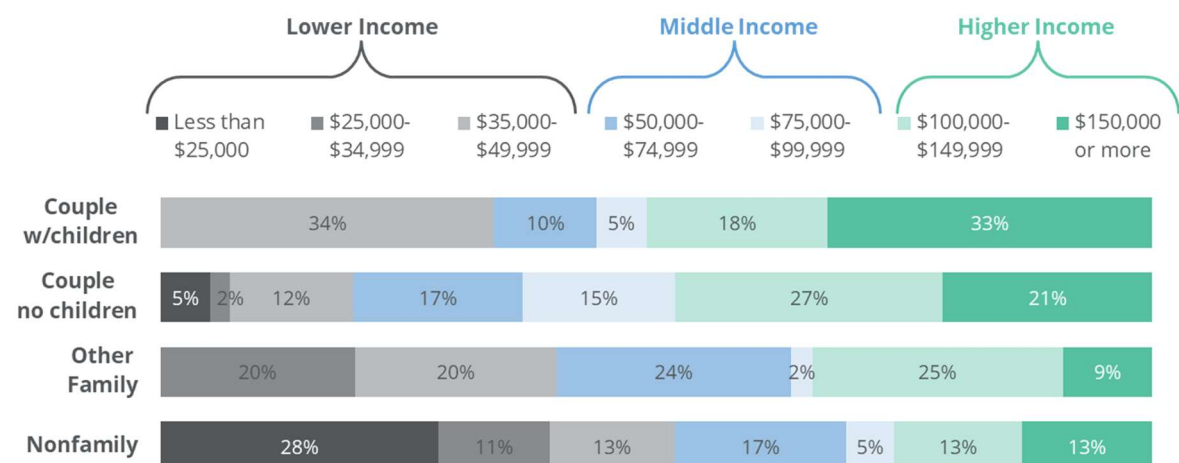
Figure I-13.
Income Distribution by Jurisdiction, 2020.



Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies

While the income limits for HUD programming is calculated based on a family of four, not all households are families of four. As discussed above, 37% of Estes Valley households are not families, and the average size of an Estes Valley household is only 2.0 people. Figure I-13 shows the distribution of income by household type.

Figure I-14.
Income Distribution by Household Composition, Estes Valley, 2020.



Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies

The lowest income households tend to be those without children; there are no families with children in either of the two lowest income ranges representing “extremely low” and

“very low” income. Families with children (which account for less than 20% of Estes Valley households) tend to fall in either the \$35,000-\$50,000 “low income” range or the higher income ranges above 120% AMI.

The majority (56%) of lower income households are nonfamily households. We know that about 85% of nonfamily households are single occupant households, which explains the lower incomes.

Married couples with no children are the household type with the greatest proportion of middle income households and they make up 64% of all middle income households. Married couples with no children also make up 55% of higher income households.

Poverty. According to 2020 ACS data, 7.5% of the Estes Valley population lives below poverty level.¹

¹ Poverty lines vary by size of household. For 2020 the poverty line is \$12,760 for a 1-person household, \$17,240 for a 2-person household, \$21,720 for a 3-person household, and \$26,200 for a 4-person household.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SECTION II. EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

SECTION II.

Employment Profile

This section describes the economic conditions of the Estes Valley, through the lens of jobs and workers. This analysis provides additional context for the housing needs of workers in the Valley.

Key findings

- Unlike population growth, job growth in the Estes Valley has kept up with job growth in the larger region. Jobs grew at 2.1% annually from 2015-2019 are projected to resume a 1.4% annual growth rate post-pandemic.
- The three lowest paying sectors of the economy (accommodation and food service; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and retail sales), which are all tourism driven industries, account for 54% of jobs in the Estes Valley. By contrast, the three highest paying sectors account for just 6% of jobs.
- 51% of annual taxable sales occur in just 4 months—June through September. Sales are growing faster in the off months than the peak months but in the summer only about half of jobs are year-round jobs.

Jobs

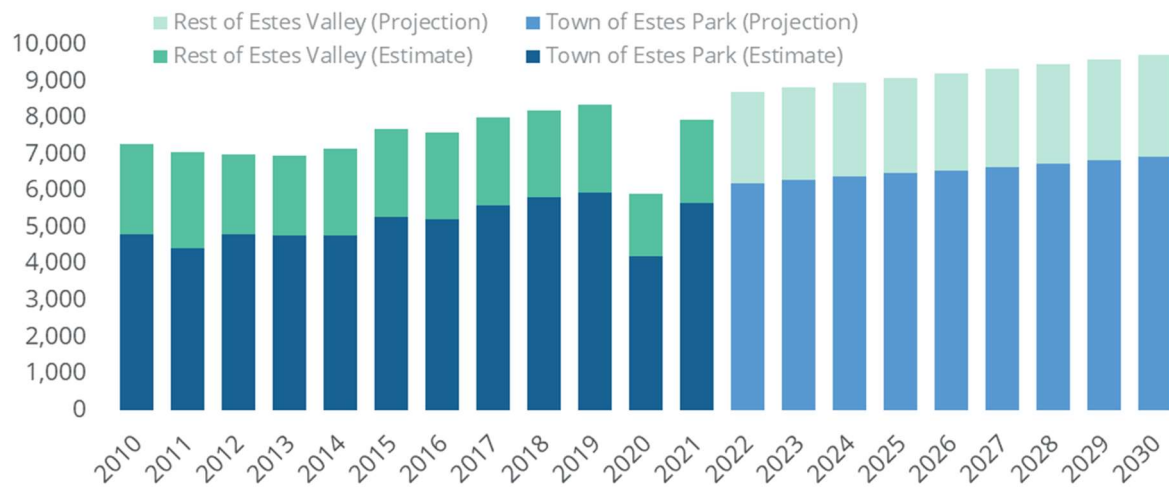
There were about 7,940 jobs in the Estes Valley in 2021,¹ a 370 job increase over the 7,570 job projection calculated for the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment.

From 2015 to 2019, jobs in the Estes Valley grew at about 2.1% annually, which was at the low end of the 1.9%-3.2% job growth rate projected in the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted that growth but jobs rebounded to nearly 2019 levels in 2021.

Figure II-1 shows job trends in Estes Park and the Estes Valley from 2010 to 2021 along with projections through 2030.

¹ Jobs were estimated by looking at a combination of the US Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) ratio of proprietors. The LEHD count of all jobs in the Estes Valley was divided by 0.88 which is a typical LEHD adjustment needed in communities with seasonal service economies and then divided by 0.73 which is the portion of the Larimer County job count attributable to non-proprietors. This estimate approximates the estimate in the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment that was based on zip code level Bureau of Labor Statistics data that was not available. To estimate the 2020 and 2021 job counts, Rocky Mountain National Park visitation trends were applied to the 2019 jobs estimate.

Figure II-1.
Jobs, Estes Valley, 2010-2030



Source: LEHD, QCEW, BEA, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado DOLA State Demography Office, OPS Strategies.

The job growth that occurred from 2010 to 2019 happened primarily in the Town of Estes Park. In the unincorporated Estes Valley job counts were about the same in 2019 as they were in 2010. As a result, about 71% of jobs in the Estes Valley are in the Town of Estes Park.

Figure II-2.
Job Growth, by Jurisdiction, 2015-2019

Jurisdiction	2015	2019	2030	Annual Growth Rate	
				2015-2019	2019-2030
Estes Valley	7,701	8,359	9,723	2.1%	1.4%
Town of Estes Park	5,266	5,962	6,935	3.2%	
Larimer County	189,894	213,271	248,062	2.9%	1.4%

Note: Projected 1.4% growth rate is applied to 2019 job estimate to adjust for pandemic effects.

Source: LEHD, QCEW, BEA, OPS Strategies

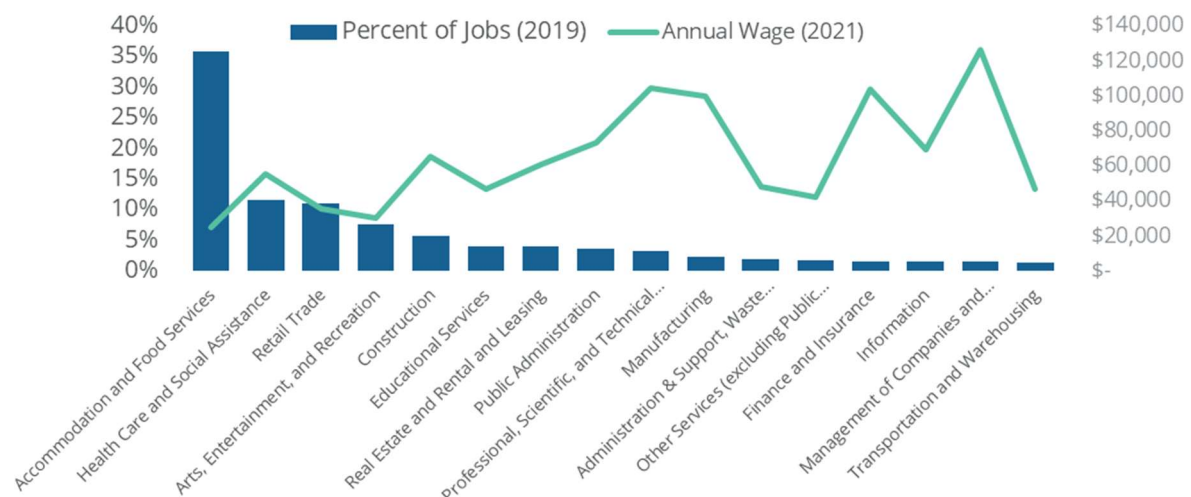
The Colorado State Demography Office projects 1.4% job growth for Larimer County. That level of growth would result in about 9,720 jobs in the Estes Valley in 2030 – an increase of about 1,790 jobs over what is currently estimated to exist.

Unlike population growth, job growth in the Estes Valley has kept up with job growth in the larger region. The Estes Valley's visitor-based economy is accessible to the entire region and therefore its economic growth is somewhat independent from local population and housing growth.

Wages and Jobs by Sector. Over 35% of Estes Valley jobs are in accommodations and food service—the lowest paying sector in Larimer County in 2021. In addition, 8% of jobs are in arts, entertainment, and recreation—the second lowest paying sector; and 11% of jobs are in retail—the third lowest paying sector in Larimer County. Combined, the three lowest paying sectors of the economy, which are all tourism driven industries, account for 54% of jobs in the Estes Valley.

The three highest paying sectors—management of companies, professional services, and finance and insurance—account for just 6% of jobs.

Figure II-3.
Job Distribution and Wages, by Sector, Estes Valley, 2010-2030



Note: Only industries with over a 1% job share in the Estes Valley are shown. Wages by industry are for Larimer County.

Source: LEHD, QCEW, BEA, OPS Strategies.

By comparison, accommodations and food service account for just 10% of jobs in the Fort Collins area, 9% in Longmont, and 11% in Loveland. Similarly, arts, entertainment, and recreation account for 2%, 1%, and 2% of jobs respectively in the neighboring areas. The high concentration of jobs in the lowest paying sectors is a common characteristic of a tourism-based economy like that found in Estes Park.

The Estes Valley economy also has a large gap between the management occupations and other occupations within the sectors. Figure II-4 shows the occupational distribution and median earnings by jurisdiction, based on 2020 ACS estimates.

While the Estes Valley occupational distribution is similar to those in neighboring districts, the Estes Valley management earnings are 176% of the overall median, compared to 136%-148% in Loveland and Fort Collins.

Figure II-4.
Job Distribution and Wages, by Sector, Estes Valley, 2010-2030

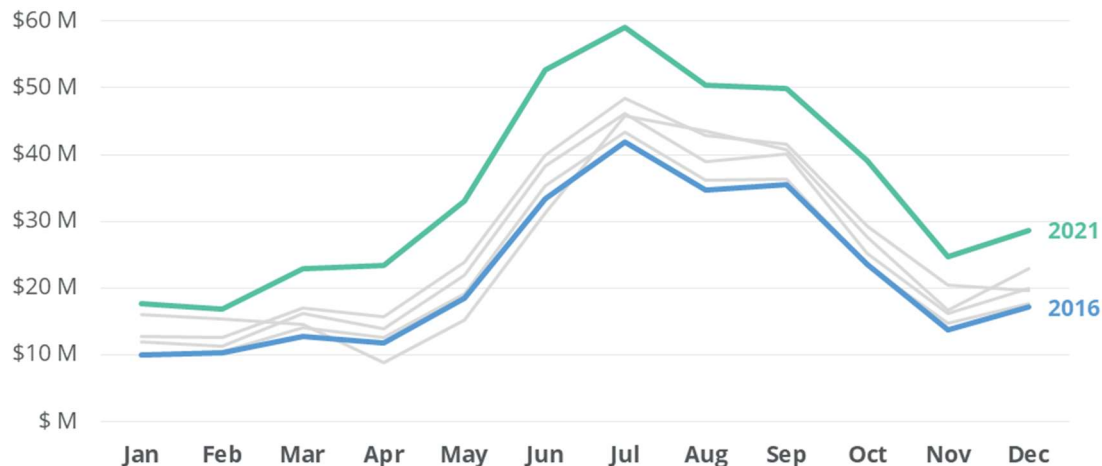
	Estes Valley	Town of Estes Park	Fort Collins	Longmont	Loveland
Occupational Distribution					
Management, business, and financial	45%	37%	48%	45%	41%
Service	17%	24%	18%	15%	15%
Sales and office	22%	25%	19%	20%	22%
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	9%	6%	7%	8%	10%
Production, transportation, and material moving	6%	7%	8%	11%	12%
Median Earnings					
Management, business, and financial	\$41,239	\$33,301	\$36,491	\$46,029	\$42,752
Service	\$21,540	\$17,784	\$17,880	\$22,047	\$21,582
Sales and office	\$32,965	\$25,179	\$28,213	\$36,350	\$34,480
Natural resources, construction and maintenance	\$26,780	\$42,083	\$39,521	\$42,483	\$47,192
Production, transportation, and material moving	\$33,214	\$26,755	\$29,268	\$32,847	\$40,486

Note: Civilian employed population over 16 years with earnings

Source: 2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

Seasonality. Also characteristic of a tourism-based economy is seasonality. About 51% of taxable sales in Estes Park in 2021 occurred in June through December. This concentration of economic activity in the summer months is about the same as it was in 2016.

Figure II-5.
Taxable Sales, Town of Estes Park, 2016 - 2021



Note: Taxable sales excludes food sales not for immediate consumption and other items. Gray lines show years between 2016 and 2021

Source: Town of Estes Park, OPS Strategies.

The 2016 Housing Needs Assessment found that about 52% of jobs in the summer are seasonal. Because of the similarity in the seasonality of the economic activity and because some of the data available in 2016 was not available in 2022, Figure II-6 carries forward that relationship to estimate the year-round and seasonal jobs in the Estes Valley. Only about 60% of jobs in the Estes Valley are year-round.

However, the taxable sales data does indicate movement toward a more year-round economy. Taxable sales grew 7-8% per year for the months of June through September. For the other eight months annual growth was between 11% and 13%. The peak months are still far ahead of the off months, but if recent trends hold a greater percentage of job growth will be in year-round jobs, which will have impacts on the types of housing needed.

**Figure II-6.
Jobs by Seasonality,
Estes Valley, 2015
and 2021**

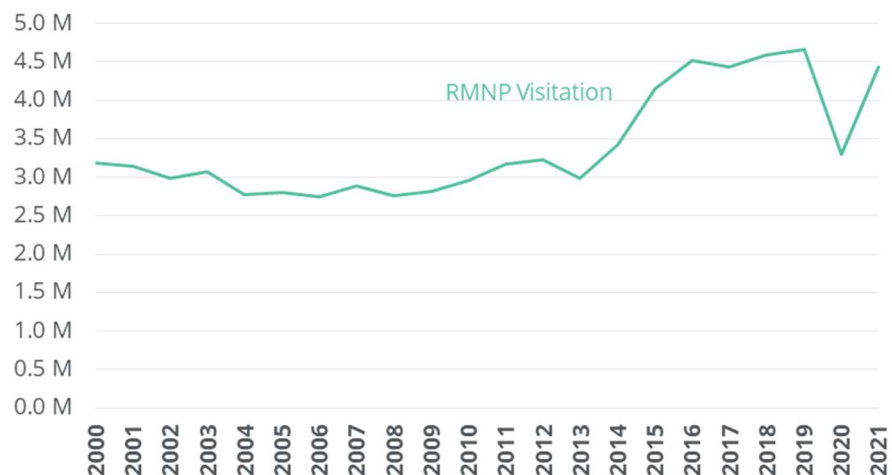
Source:
2016 Housing Needs Assessment,
OPS Strategies.

	2015		2020
	Number	% of Annual Average	
Annual Average	7,570		7,940
Summer	9,640	127%	10,110
Yearround jobs	4,630	61%	4,860
Summer seasonal jobs	5,010	66%	5,250
Winter	5,510	73%	5,780
Yearround jobs	4,630	61%	4,860
Winter seasonal jobs	880	12%	920

Rocky Mountain National Park Visitation and Unfilled Jobs. Rocky Mountain National Park saw extreme growth in visitation from 3.4 million visitors in 2014 to 4.4 million visitors in 2017.

**Figure II-7.
Rocky Mountain
National Park
Visitation, 2000
to 2021**

Source:
Rocky Mountain National
Park, OPS Strategies.



In periods of more stable visitation numbers, the ratio of Rocky Mountain National Park visits to Estes Valley jobs is remarkably consistent. However, in periods of rapid visitation job growth lags as it takes longer for employers and employees to respond to the increased demand. This lag was reported as 480 unfilled jobs in the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment. While visitation growth stabilized after 2017, the COVID-19 pandemic and other national factors have made it harder for jobs to stabilize back to the baseline ratio.

Figure II-8.
RMNP Visitation and Estes Valley Jobs, 2000 to 2021

	2000	2010	2015	2021
Rocky Mountain National Park Visitation	3,185,392	2,955,821	4,155,916	4,434,848
Estes Valley Jobs	6,499	6,042	7,571	7,938
Jobs to Visitation Ratio	0.0020403	0.00204	0.00182	0.00179
Unfilled Jobs Estimate			558	737

Note: 2015 Employer Survey estimated 480 unfilled jobs in 2015.

Source: Rocky Mountain National Park, OPS Strategies.

By comparing the ratio of Rocky Mountain National Park visitation to jobs for a given year to the baseline expected ratio we can estimate the number of unfilled jobs in the economy. The 2015 ratio indicated about 560 unfilled jobs, similar enough to the 480 unfilled jobs identified in the 2015 employer survey that the methodology can be used to understand any changes since 2015. In 2021, the ratio indicates there are 740 unfilled jobs in the Estes Valley, a 30% increase.

The unfilled jobs estimate could also be read at the extent of the post-pandemic shift in jobs per visitor indicative of an overall shift in the service economy. The long-term recovery of the service sector on a national scale remains to be seen, but if it does trend back toward where it was in 2010 it will mean even greater job growth that projected.

Employees

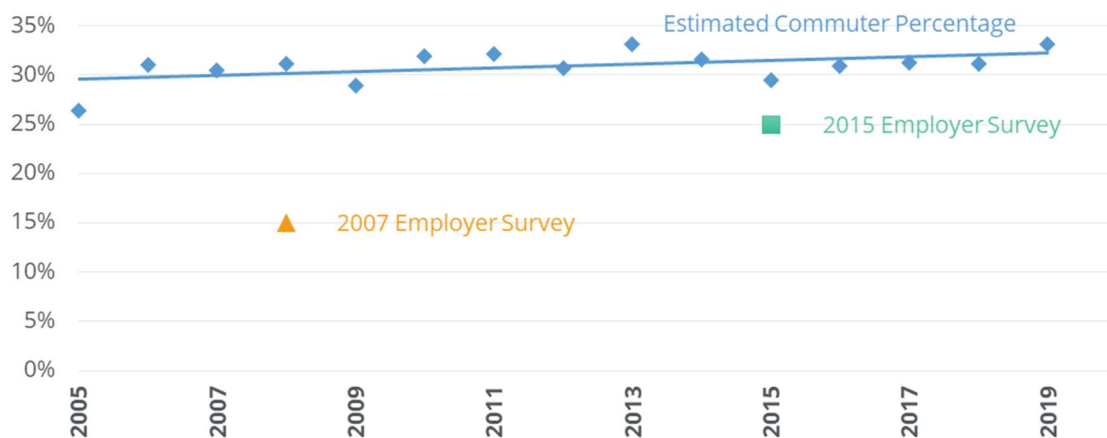
While jobs are the common unit of economic measurement and projection, converting job projections housing need requires understanding who is working those jobs.

Jobs per Employee. Employees in seasonal service economies often hold multiple jobs. Available data on year-round employees in the Estes Valley indicates that jobs per year-round employee have been consistent at 1.13 jobs per employee. Seasonal employees typically have more jobs, such that the overall average jobs per employee is 1.2 (according to Estes Valley survey data).

Employees per Household. In addition to employees working multiple jobs, working households typically have more than one worker. Data from the Census Bureau² indicates that the number of wage earners per household with earnings has remained about the same from 2010 (1.58 workers per household) to 2020 (1.54 workers per household). Median earnings and median household income data from the 2020 ACS 5-year estimates indicate that there are 1.80 earners per household and show the same stability over the recent past.

Commuting. While the population of the Estes Valley is similar to what it was in 2010, jobs have grown 30%. Filling those jobs are commuters from surrounding areas. In 2019, 33% of year-round Estes employees commuted from outside of the area, an all-time high commuter percentage based on Census Bureau data. The 33% commuter percentage in 2019 is part of a long-term trend of slowly increasing commuting.

Figure II-9.
Percent of Workers Commuting, Estes Valley, 2005 to 2019



Source: LEHD, BEA, 2016 Housing Needs Assessment, OPS Strategies.

² 2020 ACS 5-year estimates of the percentage of the population in the labor force and percentage of household with earnings were adjusted by 2020 Census counts of population and households.

The most common homes for commuters are Loveland and Fort Collins, which provide about 5% of the Estes Valley workforce. The Longmont area is home to another 4% of Estes Valley workers. Closer to Estes Park, about 2% of workers live in Drake or Glen Haven.

Figure II-10.
Commuter Origin and Annual Cost to Commute to Estes Park

Note:

Assumes 5 days of commuting per week 50 weeks per year at the 2nd half 2022 milage rate of \$0.625. Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source:

LEHD, OPS Strategies.

	% of Workforce	One-way Miles	Annual Cost of Commute
Estes Valley	67%	n/a	n/a
Loveland	5%	30	\$ 9,380
Fort Collins	5%	41	\$ 12,810
Longmont	4%	32	\$ 10,000
Boulder	2%	38	\$ 11,880
Drake/Glen Haven	2%	7-13	\$ 4,060
Other	15%	n/a	n/a

The \$11,000 annual commuting cost is about 15% of the median household income in the Estes Valley. If housing is affordable in the community where the commuter lives, and only one of multiple earners is commuting, a 15% commute cost can make financial sense. For the 35% of workers in the accommodation and food service industry, \$11,000 equates to almost 45% of the average wage. In the lowest paying industries (also including retail, arts, entertainment, and recreation) that account for half of all jobs, wages do not cover the commute cost. Which means that these industries at the heart of the Estes economy need local employees.

Retiring Employees. The age of the Estes Valley population also appears in its workforce numbers. About 27% of the Estes Valley labor force (1,870 people) is age 60 or older and can be expected to retire (or shift to limited work hours) in the next 5-10 years. This is up from about 1,200 employees age 60 or older in 2015.³

These older Estes Valley employees pose a challenge to the Estes Valley economy as older employees tend to have more housing security in areas of increasing home prices. When an older employee retires the person that replaces them in the workforce will be less likely to be able to afford to live in Estes Park and will have fewer housing choices if the retiring employees decide to age in place in Estes.

³ The 2015 employer survey estimated a similar 1,150 employees likely to retire in the next 5 years.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SECTION III. HOUSING PROFILE AND AFFORDABILITY

SECTION III.

Housing Profile & Affordability Analysis

This section provides an analysis of the Estes Valley's housing market and housing needs. It examines housing supply and availability, development trends, affordability of rental and ownership housing, and housing demand.

The section begins with an inventory of existing housing and its occupancy, followed by an inventory of planned housing in the pipeline. That is followed by a definition of affordability and how affordability is typically measured with a discussion of price trends and affordability in both the rental and ownership markets. The price trends are combined with renter and owner profiles to present a gaps analysis, which evaluates mismatches in supply and demand in the housing market. The section concludes with summation of future housing needs that adds household growth projections to the gaps analysis.

Key Findings

- The pace of housing unit growth in the past decade is the slowest since the 1960s. The number of units built since 2010 is only 42% of the average number of units built per decade in the 70s, 80s, 90s, and 00s.
- The median home sale in the past 12 months in the Town of Estes Park rose from \$392,000 in March 2020 to \$585,000 in September 2022—a 50% increase in two and a half years over the course of the pandemic. Over the same time purchasing power has dropped 23% as rising interest rates decrease the home price affordable to a household.
- Affordability has also declined in the rental market as rent hikes outpaced income growth and levels of cost burden for renters rose to 63% in Estes Park and 58% in the Estes Valley as a whole.
- 2,720 units will be needed by 2030 to address the current shortage of workforce housing and forecasted employment demand. Two thirds of these units are needed at price-points affordable to households earning less than 120% AMI; 21% are needed for households earning less than 30% AMI.

Housing Stock

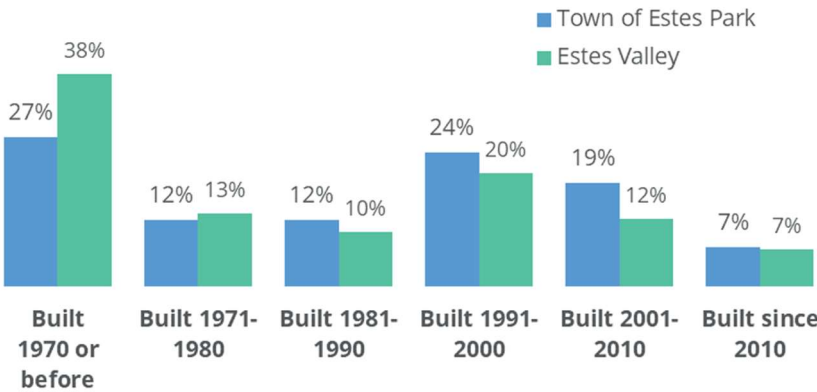
There are about 9,510 housing units in the Estes Valley, of which 4,380 are located in the Town of Estes Park.

Age of Units. Based on Larimer County Assessor data, about a quarter of the units in the Town of Estes Park were built in 1970 or before, meaning they are at least 50 years old. Another quarter of the units in the Town of Estes Park were built in a single decade between 1991 and 2000.

Figure III-1.
Age of Units by
Jurisdiction

Note:
Estes Valley ratios are derived from Assessor data for the Town of Estes Park and ACS data for the school district.

Source:
Larimer County Assessor (2022),
2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

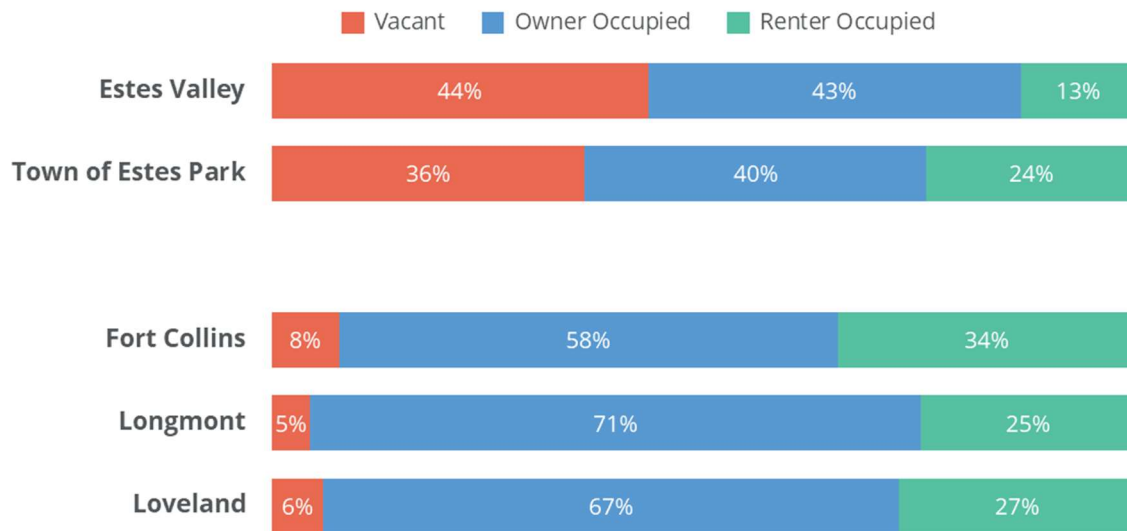


Only 7% of the units in the Town of Estes Park have been built since 2010. The pace of housing unit growth in the past decade, is the slowest since the 1960s. The number of units built since 2010 is only 42% of the average number of units build per decade in the 70s, 80s, 90s, and 00s.

In the unincorporated areas of the Estes Valley, the units are even older due to a less pronounced housing boom from 1990-2010 and an earlier stop to new unit construction. The number of units built since 2010 was about 56% of the number of units built each decade from 1970-2010. However, it matched the number of units built from 2001-2010 indicating that new unit construction slowed in the unincorporated areas before it slowed in the Town of Estes Park.

Occupancy. About 44% of units in the Estes Valley are vacant (primarily for seasonal/recreational use, including second homes and short-term rentals), 43% are owner occupied and 13% are renter occupied. (This translates to a homeownership rate among occupied households of 77% owners and 23% renters).

Figure III-2.
Occupancy of Housing Units, 2020



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

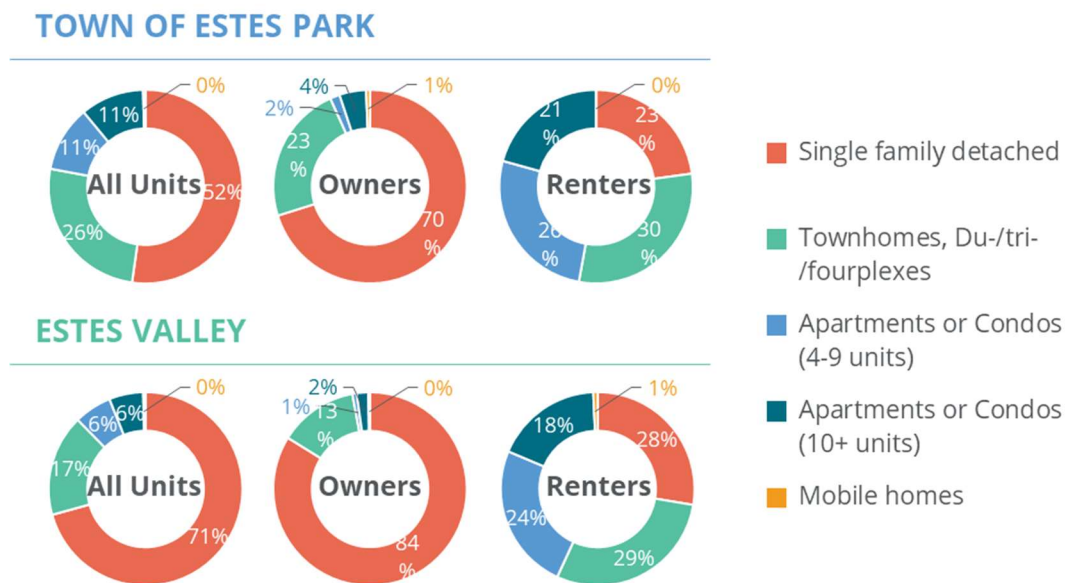
Source: Census, 2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

Owner-occupied units are more prevalent in the unincorporated Estes Valley than the Town of Estes Park. The same is true of vacant units. The result is that 87% of all rental units in the Estes Valley are located within the Town of Estes Park and just 2% of occupied units in unincorporated Estes Valley are rentals.

When compared to the surrounding region, the Estes valley has far more vacant units and fewer owner and renter occupied units. The Estes Valley ownership rate of 77% of occupied units is higher than neighboring areas (74% in Longmont, 71% in Loveland), but the Town of Estes Park ownership rate of 62% of occupied units is in line with the Fort Collins ownership rate of 63%. A rental rate of 23% of occupied units in the Estes Valley represents a very low rental inventory.

Type of Units. Most of the housing type diversity in the Estes Valley is in the Town of Estes Park. In fact, in unincorporated Estes Valley 88% of occupied housing units are owner-occupied, detached single-family homes.

Figure III-3.
Occupied Housing by Tenure and Type, Estes Park and Estes Valley, 2020



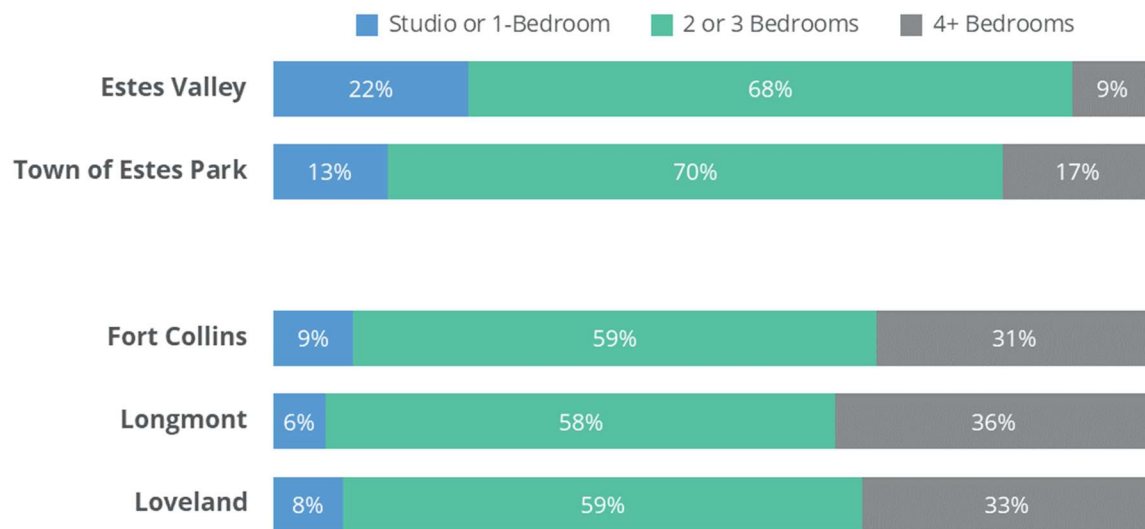
Note: Data are for occupied housing units. Larimer County Assessor data for the Town of Estes Park corroborates the ACS data.
 Source: 2020 5-year ACS.

In the Town of Estes Park, about half of the units are detached single-family and another quarter are townhomes or in buildings with 2-4 attached units. While about 22% of units are in multi-unit buildings with 5 or more units, those buildings account for less than 5% of the residential floor area in the Town. Meanwhile, the half of units that are detached single family homes use about 65% of the residential floor area, because they tend to have a larger square footage.

Multifamily units are also far more likely to be occupied by renters than single family homes.

Number of bedrooms. In the Estes Valley about 34% of units have 2 bedrooms and another 34% have 3 bedrooms according to Assessor data. Only about 9% of units have 4 or more bedrooms which is significantly less than surrounding areas where 31-36% of units have 4 or more bedrooms. The remaining 22% of units in the Estes Valley are studios or have 1 bedroom.

Figure III-4.
Number of Bedrooms, by Jurisdiction, 2020



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

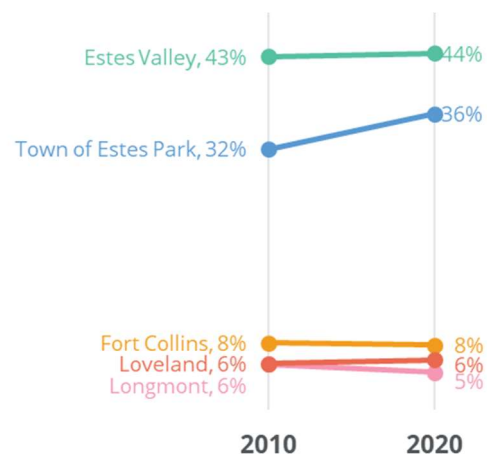
Source: Larimer County Assessor, 2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

The smaller units (studio and 1 and 2 bedroom) in Estes Park are typically found in multi-unit buildings, but there are a number of studio/1-bedroom units that are detached units or townhomes. However, there are relatively few detached, 2-bedroom units compared to the overall mix of unit sizes.

Vacancy. Estes Valley vacancy was about the same in 2020 (44%) as it was in 2010 (43%). The slight growth was the result of the Town of Estes Park seeing a continued increase in vacancy from 24% in 2000, to 32% in 2010, to 36% in 2020. And yet vacancy is still far more prevalent in the unincorporated areas of the Estes Valley where over half of all units are vacant.

The prevalence of second homes and vacation homes in the Estes Valley is evident when the vacancy rate is compared to the neighboring school districts. Looking more closely at the tenure and vacancy status evolution in the Town of Estes Park from 2010 to 2020 it appears that the vacancy increase is being driven by the transition of formerly owner-occupied units into season, recreational, or occasional use.

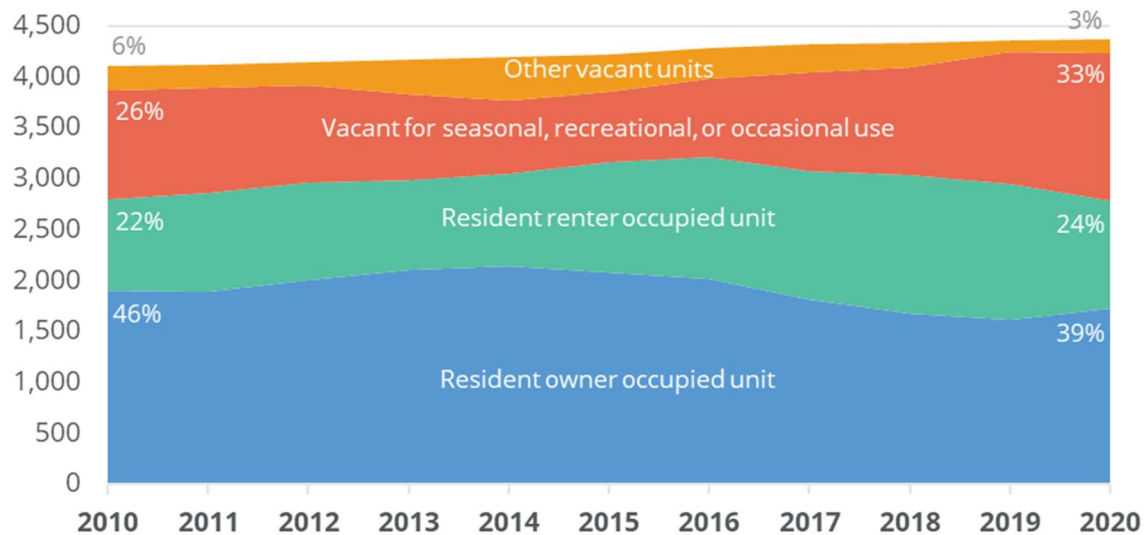
Figure III-5.
Vacancy, by Jurisdiction, 2010 to 2020



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source: Census, OPS Strategies.

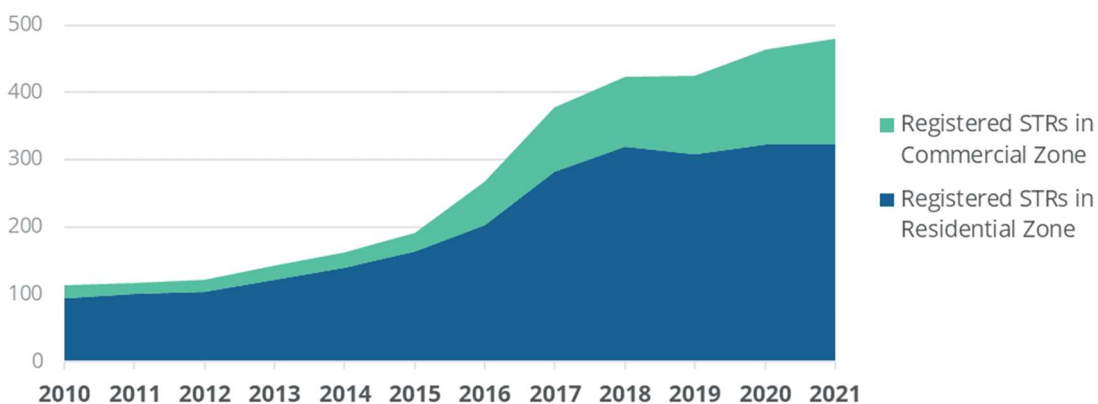
Figure III-6.
Occupancy and Vacancy Status of Housing Units, Town of Estes Park, 2010 to 2020



Source: DOLA, 5-Year ACS, Root Policy Research, OPS Strategies.

Short-term rentals. As of the drafting of this report, there were 480 registered short term rentals (STRs) in Estes Park: 322 in residential zone districts and 158 in commercial districts. As shown in Figure II-7, STRs have increased in both residential and commercial zone districts, particularly over the past six years.

Figure III-7.
Registered STRs by Zone, 2010-2021



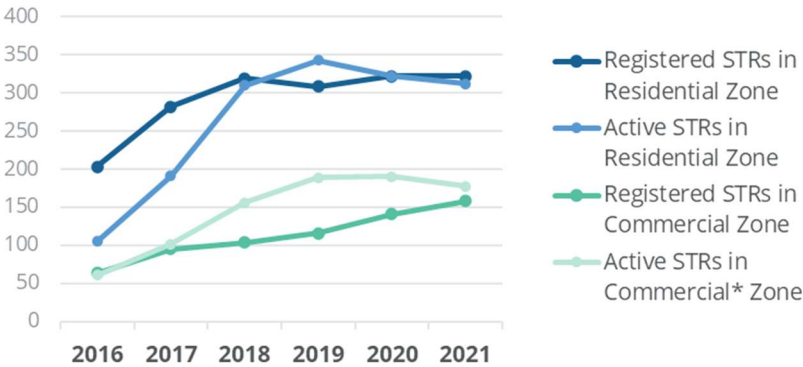
Source: Town of Estes Park.

Data from AirDNA (an online aggregator of STR listings) shows similar increases in the number of active STR listings in Estes Park over the past five years (regardless of registration status), despite a slight dampening of activity during COVID (2020-2021).¹

Figure III-8.
Active STR Listings
by Zone, 2017-2021

Note:
Active Commercial Listings
excludes listings in A
(Accommodation) Zone Districts
but includes A-1 zones.

Source:
AirDNA and Root Policy Research.



On average, Estes Park STRs have 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms with a guest capacity of six people. The average daily rate is \$328 per night. STRs in residential zones tend to be larger on average than those in commercial zones and, as such, command higher average daily rates than STRs in commercial zones.

Figure II-9.
Estes Park STR
Characteristics

Source:
AirDNA and Root Policy
Research.

	Bedrooms	Bathrooms	Guest Capacity	Average Daily Rate
All Active STRs	2.2	1.9	6.1	\$328
in Residential zones	2.7	2.1	6.7	\$366
in Accommodation zones	1.8	1.9	5.9	\$314
in Other Commercial zones	2.0	1.9	5.7	\$315

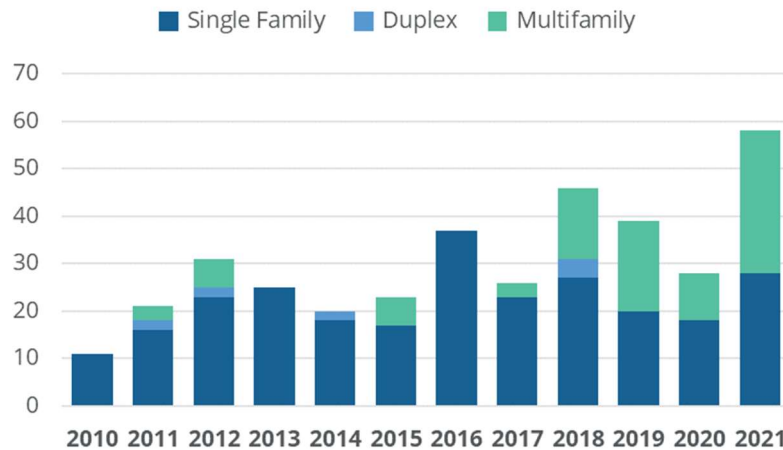
The typical STR in Estes Park is rented 167 days per year and generates \$53,684 in revenue annually.

Development activity. Building permit activity has increased over the last couple years with notable activity in the multifamily market. The permit data alone do not indicate whether developments will be occupied by local workforce or if they are primarily marketed as second home condo opportunities. However, specific multifamily projects in the planning and development pipeline are discussed following Figure III-10.

¹ For the purposes of this analysis, “active” means a property listed on AirBNB, VRBO, or other HomeAway site at least once per month in at least six months of a given year. The analysis focuses on “entire home” listings in order to exclude residents who may rent out a room in their home on occasion.

**Figure III-10.
Building Permits by
Type**

Source:
Town of Estes Park.



The proposed “Homes at Fish Hatchery” development, currently in the planning process, is a notable potential addition to the Town of Estes Park’s housing stock. The site is Town-owned land and as such, the Town plans to enter into a development agreement with a private developer to create approximately 190 units of workforce housing serving households in which at least one household member is employed within the boundary of the Estes Park School District for at least 30 hours per week year-round. The preliminary plan indicates that the development is intended to serve households earning 70% to 120% of area median income (AMI).² At least one other workforce housing development that could create about 90 new units is in the development pipeline.

² <https://estespark.colorado.gov/fishhatchery>

Rental Market

Average asking rent in Estes Park is about \$1,845 per month (according to an analysis of recent listings on apartment sites, including Craigslist). This reflects a 32% increase in average rent since 2015, when the same analysis showed average rents at \$1,395. Residents surveyed as part of the engagement efforts for this study (see Section IV for details) reported similar rents with an average of \$1,762 (and a median of \$1,550) before utilities.

Figure III-11 shows the distribution of all rents (including those currently occupied and not on the open market) in 2010, 2015, and 2020 as reported in the ACS. By that measure, the median rent paid by Estes Park households in 2020 was estimated at \$888 per month. This rental rate is substantially lower than the market-rate asking rent because it reflects rental payments of residents in income-restricted housing (e.g., EPHA units, LIHTC units, and housing choice voucher holders) and rental payments among residents who may be renting from friends/family or a long-term rental agreement (with lower rates).

According to the ACS, rent in the Town of Estes Park has increased at a rate of 1.2% per year since 2010, which is the same rate at which the median income of renters has increased.

Figure III-11.
Median Gross Rent, by Jurisdiction, 2010 to 2020

	2010	2015	2020	Growth	
				2010-2020	2015-2020
Estes Valley	\$791	\$857	\$1,015	28%	18%
Town of Estes Park	\$789	\$882	\$888	13%	1%
Fort Collins	\$857	\$1,064	\$1,356	58%	27%
Longmont	\$924	\$1,056	\$1,474	60%	40%
Loveland	\$832	\$995	\$1,344	62%	35%

Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

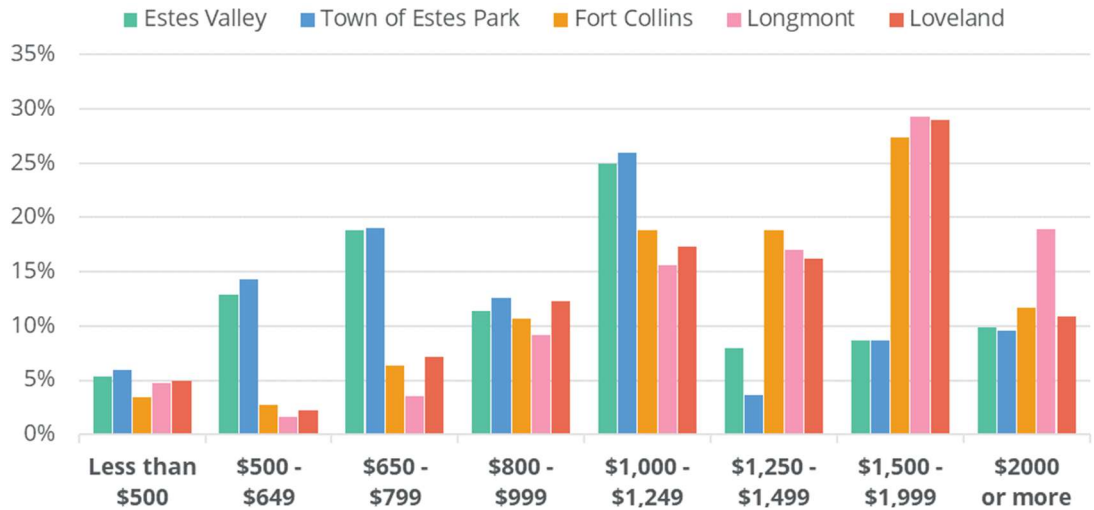
Source: 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

Rents in the Estes Valley are significantly lower than in surrounding areas, but there are also significantly fewer rentals in Estes than in the surrounding area. Fort Collins, with its student population, showed the most consistent rent growth. Loveland, Longmont, and Estes Valley all saw slow growth in rents from 2010-2015 as the economy recovered from the Great Recession, followed by rapid rent growth in the past five years. Rent increases from 2015 to 2020 were double the rent increases from 2010 to 2015 in those jurisdictions.

Given the relatively few rentals in unincorporated Estes Valley and the limited growth in Estes Park rents, this means that most, if not all rentals in unincorporated Estes Valley are

at the top end of the rent distribution. In fact, there are only an estimated 24 units in unincorporated Estes Valley that have rents below the median rent for the entire Valley.

Figure III-12.
Gross Rent Distribution, by Jurisdiction, 2020



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source: 2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

The higher rents in surrounding areas are partly explained by the larger units in surrounding areas. More bedrooms accommodate larger households and larger households tend to have larger incomes. Renters in surrounding areas also have incomes that are 45%-80% higher than renters in Estes Park.

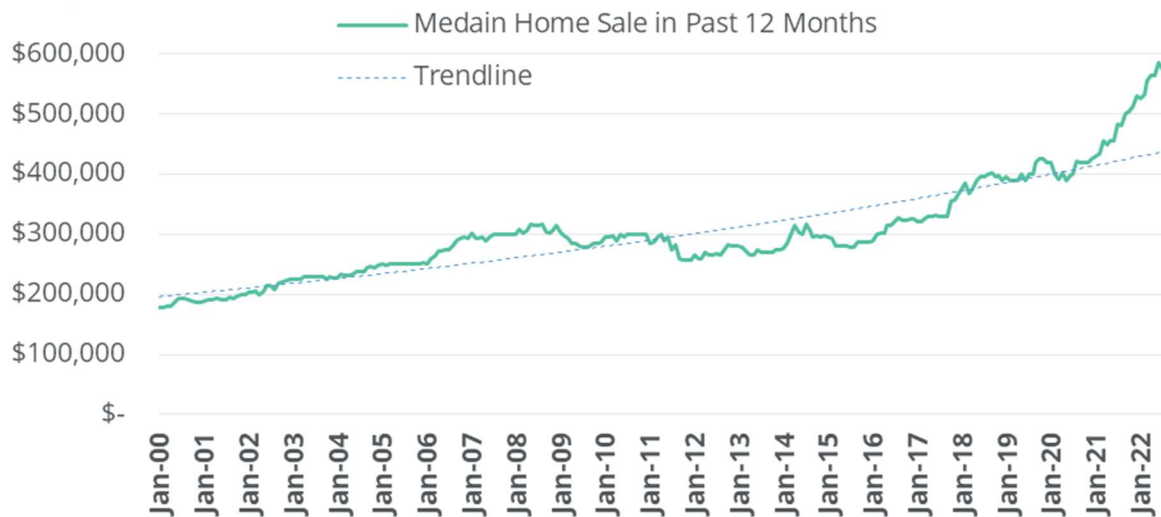
The stability of the lower rents and lower wages for renters in Estes Park is notable. This is often indicative of a “company town” housing dynamic where there is a limited supply of rental housing and the rentals that do exist are controlled by the same employers that set wages and are reserved to ensure those employers can fill jobs. This is typical in seasonal economies. It also speaks to the success of the Estes Park Housing Authority, which has been able to consistently offer below-market rents to income-qualified households. Even so, the demand for affordable rentals far exceeds the supply (as will be discussed in the subsequent affordability section).

Ownership Market

In September 2022, the median home sale in the Town of Estes Park in the past 12 months was \$585,000 according the Larimer County Assessor. In March 2020, the median home sale in the Town of Estes Park was \$392,000 – which means Estes home values rose 50% in two and a half years during the pandemic.

Figure III-13.

Median Sales Price in the Past 12 Months, Town of Estes Park, 2000-2022



Source: Larimer County Assessor, OPS Strategies

Prior to the pandemic, home sales had recovered from the housing bubble and Great Recession to reestablish the long-term trendline. The two and a half-year home value growth of 49% during the pandemic is unprecedented and dwarfs the growth seen during the housing bubble, where home values grew 23% over the two and a half months from February 2006 to August 2008.

Figure III-14.

Median Home Value, by Jurisdiction, 2010 to 2020

	2010	2015	2020	2021	Annual Growth	
					2015-2020	2020-2021
Town of Estes Park	\$297,500	\$279,950	\$392,000	\$456,000	8%	16%
Fort Collins	\$246,800	\$310,900	\$430,900	\$497,400	8%	15%
Longmont	\$259,500	\$317,400	\$461,700	\$498,000	9%	8%
Loveland	\$239,500	\$280,300	\$392,300	\$462,500	8%	18%

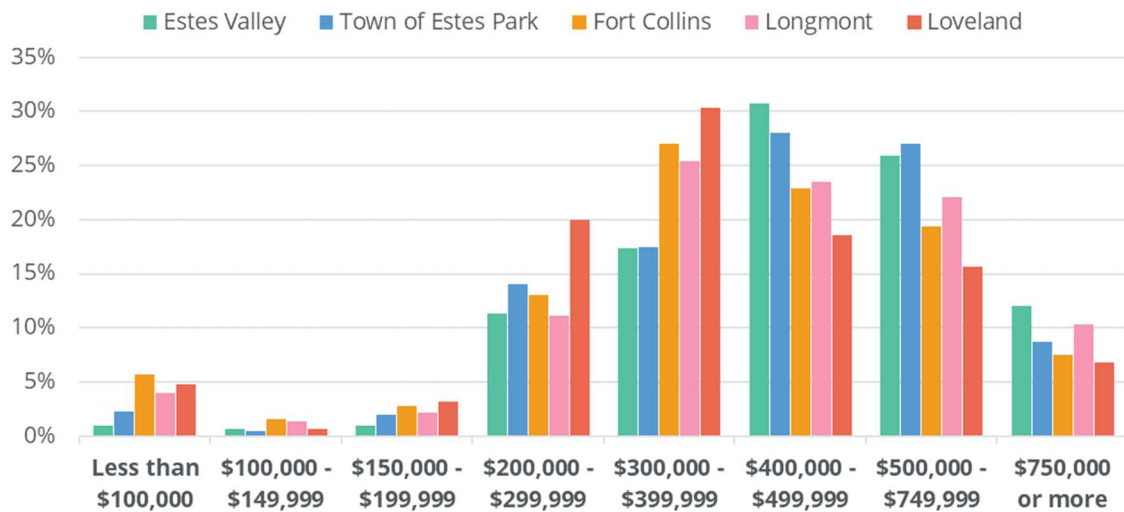
Note: Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source: Larimer County Assessor, 1-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

The median home value for the Estes Valley as a whole is about the same as the median home value for the Town of Estes Park. The 1-year ACS estimates for the surrounding areas would indicate that Fort Collins and Loveland are seeing similar home value growth during the pandemic, while Longmont is not.

The regional data also indicates the Estes home values are keeping pace with neighboring home values while the incomes of Estes renters are not. This means that Estes renters, who already had few opportunities to move into the market are seeing the situation worsen and the low paying service workers at the core of the Estes economy will need rental housing, price restricted housing, or have to commute.

Figure III-15.
Home Value Distribution, by Jurisdiction, 2020



Note: Estes Valley, Fort Collins, Longmont, and Loveland data are for their respective school districts.

Source: 2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.

Across the region, fewer than 10% of units had a value under \$200,000 in 2020 – the price affordable to a household making 80% of median income in 2020. In the Estes Valley only 3% of units were valued under \$200,000. Across the region about half of units are priced between \$300,000 and \$500,000 around the median value. This concentration of home values around the median value is not matched by incomes which have a much more uniform distribution from the extremes through the median.

Income Restricted and Workforce Housing Inventory

There are currently 288 income-restricted housing units in the Estes Valley most of which are rental units and affordable to households earning less than 60% AMI. There are another 61 workforce housing units in the Valley, which do not have an income requirement but do require that at least one household member is employed in the Estes Valley at least 30 hours per week.

Figure III-16 shows the current income-restricted and workforce inventory in the Estes Valley by AMI and tenure. In addition to the units shown in the figure, there are another 88 ownership workforce units and 94 rental workforce units in the pipeline and 190 workforce units proposed across three different developments in the Estes Valley, at the time this report was drafted.

Figure III-16.
Income-Restricted and
Workforce Housing Units,
Estes Valley

Source:
Estes Park Housing Authority and Root Policy
Research.

Type of Unit and AMI Maximum	Rental Units	Ownership Units	Total Units
Income-Restricted Units	250	48	288
55% AMI	57	0	57
60% AMI	192	0	182
80% AMI	1	31	32
125% AMI	0	17	17
Workforce (no AMI max)	47	4	61

According to applicant data from EPHA, 42% of applicants for housing services are households that include children under 18—this compares to 17% of households valley-wide that include children. In other words, EPHA services are particularly important in helping stabilize households with children. About 13% of EPHA applicants are seniors living alone—the same proportion as in the Estes Valley overall.

Affordability

The most common definition of affordability is linked to the idea that households should not be cost burdened by housing. A cost burdened household is one in which housing costs—the rent or mortgage payment, plus taxes and utilities—consumes more than 30% of monthly gross income.

Figure III-17.
Affordability Definitions

Federal definition of affordability

- 1) Housing costs are “affordable” if they do not exceed 30% of household’s gross monthly income
- 2) “Costs” include basic utilities, mortgage insurance, HOA fees, and property taxes



Cost Burden. The 30% proportion is derived from historically typical mortgage lending requirements.³ Thirty percent allows flexibility for households to manage other expenses (e.g., childcare, health care, transportation, food costs, etc.). Spending more than 50% of income on housing costs is characterized as severe cost burden and puts households at high risk of homelessness—it also restricts the extent to which households can contribute to the local economy.

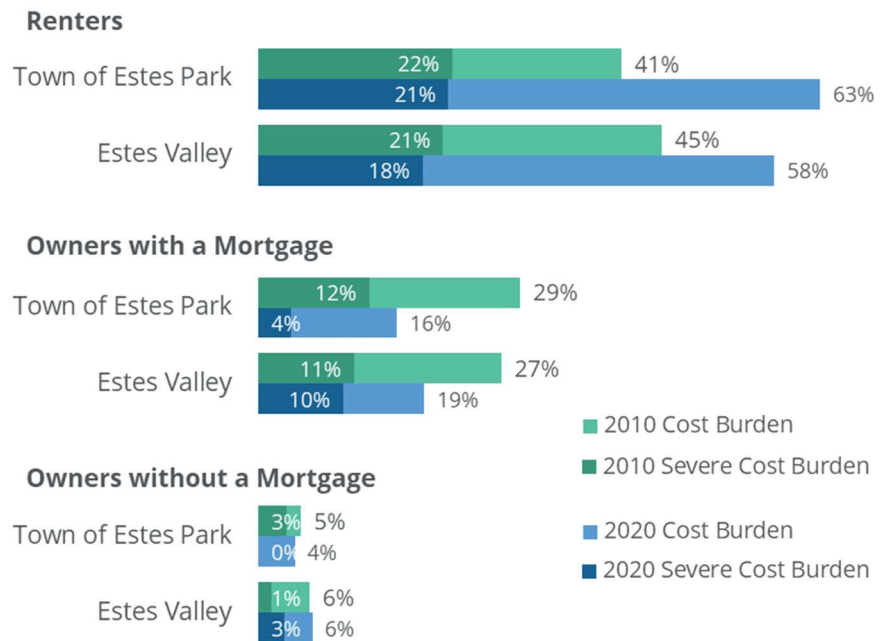
Over half (58%) of renters in the Estes Valley are cost burdened, and 63% of renters in the Town of Estes Park are cost burdened. Most households that are cost burdened and all 280 of the households that are severely cost burdened are in the Town of Estes Park.

³ In the recent past, the 30% threshold has been questioned as possibly being lower than what a household could reasonably bear. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has considered raising the contribution expected of Housing Choice (“Section 8”) Voucher holders to 35% of monthly income. However, most policymakers maintained that the 30% threshold was appropriate after considering increases in other household expenses such as health care, and especially now that interest rates are rising again.

**Figure III-18.
Cost Burden, by
Jurisdiction and
Tenure, 2010
and 2020**

Source:

2010 and 2020 5-year ACS,
OPS Strategies.



The percentage of cost burdened renters grew significantly from 2010 to 2020, while the percentage of cost burdened owners with a mortgage shrank. The increase in cost burdened renters indicates that rents grew faster than wages.

The decrease in the percentage of owners with mortgages who are cost burdened owners with mortgages is likely due in part to refinancing as interest rates fell. It is also an indicator that the available housing was purchased by households from outside of the Estes Valley with more income.

Rental affordability gap. To examine how well the Estes Valley’s current housing market meets the needs of its residents Root Policy Research conducted a modeling effort called a “gaps analysis.” The analysis compares the supply of housing at various price points to the number of households who can afford such housing. If there are more housing units than households, the market is “oversupplying” housing at that price range. Conversely, if there are too few units, the market is “undersupplying” housing. The gaps analysis conducted for the Estes Valley addresses both rental affordability and ownership opportunities for renters who want to buy (see below).

Figure III-19 compares the number of renter households, their income levels, the maximum monthly rent they could afford without being cost burdened, and the number of units in the market that were affordable to them.

The “Gap” column shows the difference between the number of renter households and the number of rental units affordable to them. Negative numbers (in parentheses and red font) indicate a shortage of units at the specific income level; positive units indicate an excess of

units. The rental supply data does account for publicly assisted units so gaps are above and beyond currently provided income-restricted units.⁴ Renter households who face a rental gap are not homeless; they are cost burdened, occupying units that are more expensive than they can afford. Those who struggle to pay rent include working residents earning low wages, residents who are unemployed, and residents who are disabled and cannot work.

Figure III-19.
Gaps in Rental Market, Estes Valley, 2020

Renter Incomes	Maximum Affordable Gross Rent	Rental Demand (Current Renters)		Rental Supply (Current Units)		Rental Gap	Cumulative Rental Gap
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Less than \$25,000 (≈30% AMI)	\$625	491	32%	250	16%	(241)	(241)
\$25,000 - \$35,000 (≈40% AMI)	\$875	331	22%	447	9%	116	(125)
\$35,000 - \$50,000 (≈60% AMI)	\$1,250	100	7%	435	9%	335	210
\$50,000 - 100,000 (≈120% AMI)	\$2,500	360	24%	368	7%	8	218
\$100,000 - 150,000 (≈200% AMI)	\$3,700	169	11%	41	1%	(128)	90
\$150,000 or more		65	4%	0	0%	(65)	25

Note: Approximate AMIs shown for a 2-person household size.

Source: 2020 5-year ACS, Root Policy Research, OPS Strategies.

The gaps analysis in Figure III-19 shows that:

- About one third of renters in the Estes Valley are extremely low-income households making less than \$25,000 per year (about 30% AMI for a 2-person household). These households need units that rent for \$625 a month or less to avoid being cost burdened. Just 16% of the rental supply meets that need – 241 units short of demand.
- The cumulative gap column indicates that the overall affordability shortage is not fully resolved until households are earning more than \$35,000 per year (about 40% of AMI for a 2-person household size).
- The market is over supplying units in the \$875-\$1,275/month rent range. As a result, lower income renters are having to reach into this range and pay double what they can afford.

The “shortage” shown for higher income renters (earning more than \$75,000 per year) suggests those renters are spending less than 30% of their income on housing. This points

⁴ Publicly supported housing means housing that received public funding and has an income restriction (e.g., Public Housing units, project-based Section 8, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, etc.).

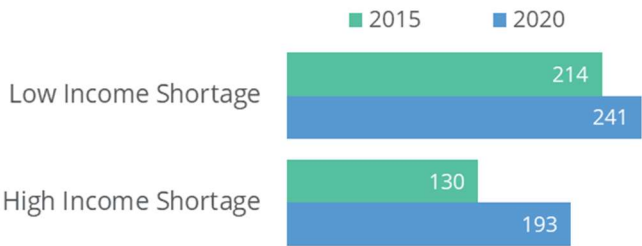
to an income mismatch in the market in which higher income households are occupying homes affordable to lower income households.

Overcrowding. The “shortage” at higher incomes can also be the result of overcrowding that gives the indication of higher income because there are actually multiple families living as a single household. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines overcrowding as more than one person per room and ACS estimates indicate very little overcrowding in Estes. However, the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment, which defined overcrowding as more than 2 people per bedroom (which the ACS does not estimate) found 12% of households of Estes employees to be overcrowded, indicating a need for 160 units to address overcrowding. For reference, the gaps analysis for 2015 indicated a high income “shortage” of 130 units.

Interviews and public comment indicate that overcrowding continues to be a critical issue, especially among the immigrant community. Whether the rental shortage is estimated based on low income need or a survey of overcrowding, additional low rent housing is needed to accommodate the growth in low wage jobs.

Figure III-20.
Gaps in Rental
Market, Estes Valley,
2015 and 2020

Source:
5-year ACS, OPS Strategies.



The shortage of low-income rentals and the “shortage” of high-income rentals both grew from 2015 to 2020. With wages and rents increasing at about the same rate, the increasing shortage is largely a function of lack of supply.

Ownership affordability gap. The gap between interest in buying and available product is demonstrated by the for-sale gaps analysis shown in Figure III-21. Similar to the rental gaps analysis, the model compares renters, renter income levels, the maximum monthly housing payment they could afford, and the proportion of units in the market that were affordable to them.

The maximum affordable home prices used for the analysis assume a 30-year mortgage with a 10% down payment and an interest rate of 5.22%⁵. The estimates also incorporate property taxes, insurance, HOA payments and utilities (assumed to collectively account for 25% of the monthly payment).

⁵ This is the Freddie Mac rate for August 2022.

In addition to the rapidly increasing home prices discussed above, rising interest rates are decreasing the purchasing power of lower- and middle-income households at the same time housing prices are running away from them. At 5.22% interest a household can afford 77% of what it could afford at 3.10% interest, which was the average Freddie Mac interest rate in 2020.

The “Gap” column shows the difference between the proportion of renter households and the proportion of homes sold between August 2021 and July 2022 that were affordable to them. Negative numbers indicate a shortage of units at the specific income level; positive units indicate an excess of units. It is important to note that the gaps column accounts only for units that fall precisely within the affordability range of the household.

The for-sale gaps analysis shows the Estes Valley market to be affordable for renter households earning more than \$100,000 per year. At that level, the proportion of homes for sale exceeds the proportion of renters who may be in the market to purchase.

Figure III-21.
Options for Renters Wanting to Buy, Estes Park, 2022

Renter Incomes	Maximum Affordable Home Price	Potential Demand (Current Renters)		For-Sale Supply (Home Sales 8/1/21-8/1/22)		Purchase Gap	Cumulative Purchase Gap (excl. <\$25K)
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Less than \$25,000 (≈30% AMI)	\$93,700	491	32%	5	2%	-30%	n/a
\$25,000 - \$35,000 (≈40% AMI)	\$131,200	331	22%	2	1%	-21%	-21%
\$35,000 - \$50,000 (≈60% AMI)	\$187,400	100	7%	5	2%	-5%	-25%
\$50,000 - 100,000 (≈120% AMI)	\$374,800	360	24%	44	15%	-9%	-34%
\$100,000 - 150,000 (≈200% AMI)	\$562,100	169	11%	81	28%	17%	-17%
\$150,000 or more		65	4%	150	52%	48%	31%

Note: Home sales are for the Town of Estes Park only. Approximate AMIs shown for a 2-person household size.

Source: 2020 5-year ACS, Larimer County Assessor, Freddie Mac, OPS Strategies.

Renters earning less than \$100,000 per year (about 120% of median income) can afford a maximum home price of about \$374,800. While such renters represent 85% of potential new home owners, only about 20% of Estes Valley’s homes sold last year were affordable to them (56 homes).

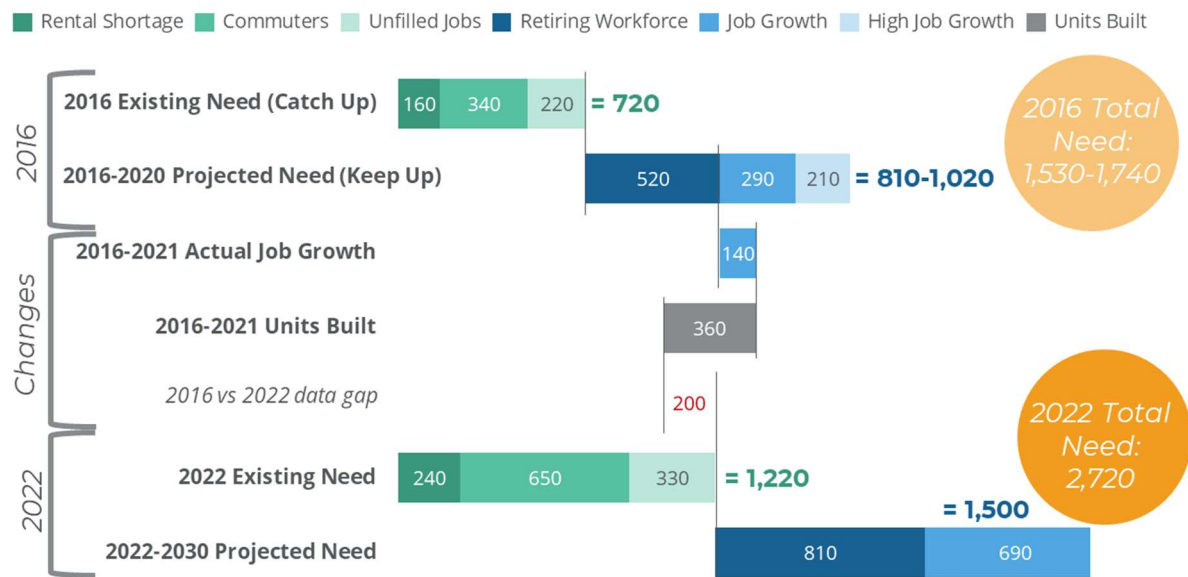
By comparison, renters making 80-120% of median income in 2015 could still afford market housing and there were 82 homes sold at prices affordable to households making less than 80% of median income.

Housing Need

About 2,720 new housing units are needed by 2030 to address the existing shortage and account for forecasted employment trends. Figure III-22 illustrates the current housing need and shows how needs have grown since 2016 (the 2016 HNA identified a 1,530 unit housing need).

The lack of housing construction and decreasing affordability of housing have increased the existing shortage of units – the “catch up” need. At the same time, retirement of current employees coupled with projected job growth continue to forecast additional need.

Figure III-22.
Housing Need, Estes Valley, 2016 and 2022



Note: The 2016 HNA miscalculated the housing need of commuters as 290 by applying the jobs/employee factor twice.

Source: 2016 Housing Needs Assessment, LEHD, ACS 5-year estimates, Larimer County Assessor, DOLA job forecast, RMNP, OPS Strategies.

Components of housing needs. The individual components of needs outlined in the previous figures are discussed in more detail below.

- Rental shortage.** As discussed in the rental affordability gap and overcrowding sections above, there is a shortage of about 240 low-income rentals in Estes Park. That shortage of low-income rentals is likely contributing the overcrowding issues facing Estes Valley households and is comparable to the 160-unit rental shortage identified in the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment as a result of overcrowding. The increased need is the result of increases in low wage jobs without a commensurate increase in low rent housing.

- **Commuters.** The percentage of the workforce commuting has increased from 2015 as has the size of the overall workforce. The compound effect is that a modest increase in the commuter rate represents nearly a doubling in the number of units needed to accommodate those commuters who want to live in Estes Park.

Figure III-23.
Units Needed for
Commuters, Estes
Valley, 2016 to 2022

Note:

The 2022 commuter rate was reduced by 4% to account for residents of Drake and Glen Haven who were not counted as commuters in 2016.

Source:

2016 Housing Needs Assessment, LEHD, BEA, RMNP, OPS Strategies.

	2015	2022
Jobs	7,571	7,938
Jobs per Employee	1.2	1.2
Employees	6,309	6,615
In-commuters	1,020	1,925
Commuter rate	16%	29%
Commuters that want to move to Estes	62%	62%
Employees per household	1.84	1.84
Commuter housing need	340	650

- **Unfilled jobs.** As discussed above in the section on Rocky Mountain National Park visitation and unfilled jobs there are an estimated 737 unfilled jobs in the Estes economy compared to historical ratios. At 1.2 jobs per employee and 1.84 employees per household that equates to a need for about 330 housing units. As discussed in Section II, about 60% of jobs in the Estes Valley are year-round. Applying this percentage to the unfilled jobs estimate yields a need for 198 units to accommodate permanent workforce and 132 units to accommodate seasonal workforce.
- **Retiring workforce.** As discussed above in the employment profile for the retiring workforce, there are about 1,870 Estes Valley residents with earnings who are age 60 or older and can be expected to retire by 2030. This equates to a housing need for about 690 units because if the employees retire in place, their homes will not be available to their replacements in the workforce and if they sell their homes, they will no longer be affordable to the workforce.

Figure III-24.
Units Needed to
Replace Retiring
Workforce, Estes
Valley, 2016 to 2022

Source:

2016 Housing Needs Assessment, ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies.

	2015	2022
2016 estimated employee to retire	1,150	
ACS residents over 60 with earnings	1,205	1,867
2015 survey to ACS adjustment	0.95	0.95
Jobs per employee	1.2	1.2
Employees per household	1.84	1.84
Commuter housing need	520	810

- **The 2016 vs 2022 data gap.** With actual job growth of only 367 jobs equating to about 140 units of housing demand and 360 units having been built since 2015, the existing need in 2022 is about 200 units higher than expected. However, we know that not all of the 360 new units were affordable to the workforce and it is likely that some of the projected retirees are still in the workforce. While the 2016 and 2022 numbers do not align perfectly they corroborate the story of what has happened on the ground since the last housing needs assessment and emphasize the growing need for affordable housing in the Estes Valley.
- **Forecasted job growth.** Based on the DOLA forecast for Larimer County, the Estes Valley will add 1,785 jobs by 2030. At 1.2 jobs per employee and 1.84 employees per household, if Estes houses 85% of the job growth locally the job forecast represents a housing demand of 690 units. The assumption that 85% of the employees will be housed locally is carried forward from the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment. Applying the seasonality proportion to the 690 units for job growth yields a need for 414 permanent household units and 276 seasonal workforce units.

Housing needs by income, tenure, and price-point. The number of bedrooms and affordability for the future housing units will be a function of all the household characteristics discussed in Section I. Demographic Profile. Those characteristics are summarized below and then applied to the catch-up and keep-up housing needs.

Profile of renters and owners. Figure III-25 summarizes characteristics of renters and owners in the Estes Valley that inform the types of housing that will be needed. The figure displays the number and distribution of renter and owner households by demographic characteristics and provides the homeownership rate by income, age group, household type and race/ethnicity. Homeownership rates that are highlighted indicate rates that are 5 or more percentage points lower than the overall homeownership rate of 77%.

- As expected, owners tend to be older and earn higher incomes than renters. Median income for renters is about a third (36%) of the median income for owners.
- Renters are more likely than owners to be living in non-family households (e.g. living alone, living with roommates, or living with as unmarried partners). These renters have a greater variety in needed housing types due to their varying size.
- The vast majority (92%) of householders in the Estes Valley are non-Hispanic whites. Hispanic households are significantly more likely to be renters than owners, with a homeownership rate of 37%. Households held by other races/ethnicities are few, but are more likely to be owners.

Figure III-25.
Profile of Households by Tenure, Estes Valley, 2020

	Renters		Owners		Ownership Rate
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total Households	1,516	100%	4,954	100%	77%
Median Income	\$33,140		\$92,050		
Income Distribution					
Less than \$25,000	491	32%	337	7%	41%
\$25,000 - \$35,000	331	22%	80	2%	19%
\$35,000 - \$50,000	100	7%	849	17%	89%
\$50,000 - 100,000	360	24%	1,322	27%	79%
\$100,000 or more	234	15%	2,366	48%	91%
Age of Householder					
Younger households (15-24)	156	10%	0	0%	0%
All householders 25 and over	1,360	90%	4,954	100%	78%
Ages 25-34	184	12%	151	3%	45%
Ages 35-44	176	12%	590	12%	77%
Ages 45-64	537	35%	2,015	41%	79%
Ages 65 and older	463	31%	2,198	44%	83%
Household Type					
Family without children	471	31%	2,717	55%	85%
Family with children	149	10%	707	14%	83%
Living alone	770	51%	1,273	26%	62%
Other nonfamily	126	8%	257	5%	67%
Race/Ethnicity of Householder					
Non-Hispanic White	1,221	81%	4,730	95%	79%
Hispanic	295	19%	173	3%	37%
Native American*	0	0%	19	0%	100%

Note: *Due to the small sample size of Native American householders in the ACS data, the available information on homeownership may reflect a substantive margin of error.

Source: 2020 5-year ACS, OPS Strategies

Figure III-26 shows the income distribution and rental/ownership need of the 2,720 units. With the market not currently providing any ownership product under 120% of median income and no rental product at the extremely low income levels, many of these units will have to be deed restricted in some way. Based on the seasonality of unfilled and

forecasted jobs, up to 408 of these units could be needed to accommodate seasonal worker households.

Figure III-26.
Projected New Households by 2030, Estes Valley, Based on Job Growth

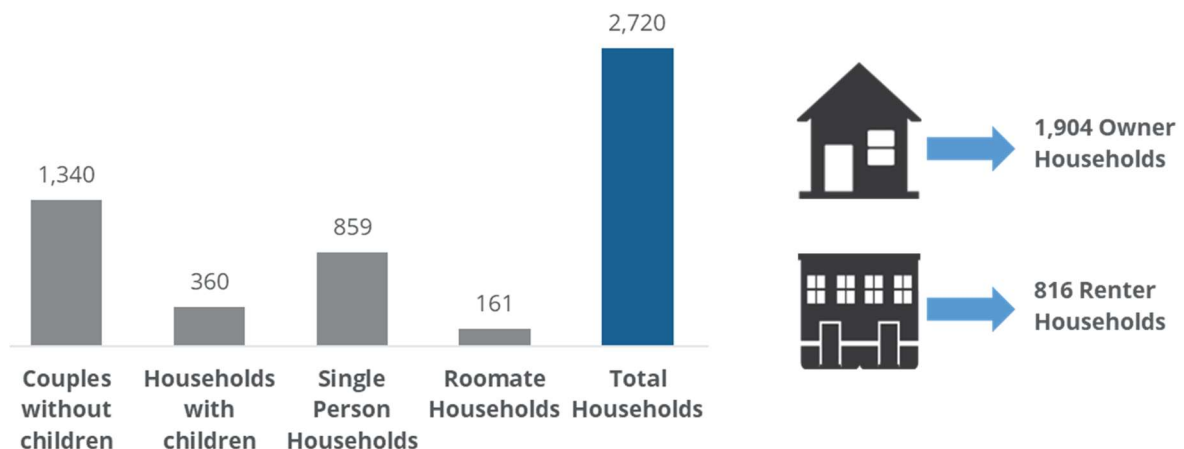
Renter Incomes	Gap (Catch Up)		Projected (Keep Up)		Total		Total
	Rental	Owner	Rental	Owner	Rental	Owner	
0-30% AMI	315	52	115	80	430	132	562
30-50% AMI	48	11	73	17	121	28	149
50-80% AMI	16	131	25	200	41	331	372
80-120% AMI	54	201	82	308	136	509	645
120-200% AMI	25	181	39	276	65	456	521
Over 200% AMI	10	176	15	270	25	447	471
Total	468	752	349	1,151	818	1,903	2,720

Note: Assumes current income and tenure distributions remain constant.

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies

Figure III-22 shows how 2,720 new housing units would need to be designed to accommodate their likely households, assuming the same household distribution as is currently reflected in the community. If, however, the community wants to pursue a more diverse demographic with more families with children, as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan, the types of households needed would shift.

Figure III-27.
Projected New Households by 2030, Estes Valley, Based on Job Growth



Note: Assumes current household type distribution and homeownership rates remain constant.

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, OPS Strategies.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SECTION IV. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

SECTION IV.

Community Engagement Findings

This section of the report presents the findings from community engagement processes conducted to support the Housing Needs Assessment. Data explored in this section was gathered from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey which assessed the housing needs and experiences of different groups in the Estes Valley. For this reason, the section is broken down into three subsections—year-round Estes residents and in-commuters, seasonal residents and second homeowners, and lastly, seasonal workers. This divided approach to survey analysis allowed for a greater understanding of each group's needs and preferences. Survey findings are then followed by a summary of insights gathered from stakeholder engagement.

Community Engagement Elements

The community engagement process included:

- A survey available in English and Spanish (882 total responses, 190 Spanish speakers) with tailored questions to local permanent residents, in-commuters, seasonal homeowners, and the seasonal (summer) workforce.
- Stakeholder interviews from varying sections including developers, economic development organizations, social service providers, and employers.

Survey sampling and respondents. The survey was open to anyone interested in participating (as long as they identified as an Estes Valley resident, worker, or seasonal homeowner), meaning the results are based on non-probability sampling methods. Responses were specifically derived from convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. Convenience sampling refers to promoting the survey to known individuals or organizations through direct contact (e.g., email invitation) or public relations and social media. Snowball sampling is when a respondent to the survey promotes the survey to their peers or social networks (e.g., sharing the survey link by email or social media).

Root monitored the survey as it progressed and compared demographic and socioeconomic indicators of resident respondents with the overall population and continually worked to adjust outreach efforts as necessary to make sure we were reaching all segments of the population. A total of 882 residents, workers, and seasonal owners participated in the survey. The demographic characteristics of resident respondents mirrored the Town's demographic characteristics, as discussed in the Resident and In-commuter Survey Respondent portion of this section of the report.

Surveys were available online and in paper form in both English and Spanish and participation was promoted through the Town and Housing Authority's various outreach

channels (namely email blasts and social media), as well as through both local newspapers, stakeholder groups, the school district, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Key Findings

Conclusions and findings derived from survey respondents and stakeholder engagement are summarized below.

Residents and In-commuters:

- Cost was the most important factor in choosing a current home for both residents and in-commuters, followed by liking the type of home, safety (low crime), and proximity to parks and open space. Most current in-commuters did consider living in the Estes Valley (83%) but chose to live elsewhere, most commonly due to affordability, availability, or quality of housing.
- Housing challenges in Estes Park have a disproportionate impact on renters, residents of Hispanic descent, lower/middle income and younger residents. 70% of renters are worried about the rent going up more than they can afford and nearly half are worried their landlord will sell the home. Only half of owners reported any housing challenges, most commonly size of home (not big enough to accommodate their family) and affordability (struggling to pay property taxes or mortgage).
- Displacement is also a concern, with 26% of all residents/in-commuters reporting they have had to move from their home in the past five years when they did not want to—a higher proportion than the 20% who said they had been displaced in the 2016 housing needs survey. Again, renters (along with minority and low-income residents) are disproportionately impacted with 43% saying they had to move then they didn't want to in the past five years. The most common reasons for displacement include inability to pay rent/mortgage due to job or income loss, landlords selling the rental unit, rent/property tax increases, and change in household size.
- Most renters (60%) who responded to the survey want to buy a home in the Estes Valley but are unsure if they will be able to due to expected challenges in finding an affordable home (84%), affording down payments (56%), and not being able to compete with other buyers in the market (43%).

Seasonal workers:

- On average, seasonal workers typically find their housing from online listings (30%) or through their employer (27%). Of those who live in employer-provided housing, 48% live in Estes rent-free during employment, 17% are on a 6-month lease and 20% have shorter (month-to-month or 3-month) leases.
- Nearly three in four seasonal workers (72%) have considered living in Estes year-round but have not done so because they have family or friends elsewhere (49%), cannot find a permanent job in the area (40%), or cannot find year-round housing (27%).

Seasonal/Second Homeowners:

- Nearly half (46%) of second homeowners bought their property in the Estes Valley primarily because they plan to retire in Estes. Over half (56%) of current second homeowners indicated that they have plans to live in Estes full-time in the future.
- Seasonal/second homeowners are most likely to use their property for personal reasons in the summer and fall, with about one-third living in their home for the duration of the season.
- Half of second homeowner respondents choose not to lease their property when they are not using it, 27% lease as a short-term rental, and the remaining 33% lease as a month-to-month or three-month rental (most commonly in the winter months).
- Among those that do not currently lease, most (76%) say they would not consider leasing, citing reasons such as desire for flexible/personal use, HOA/Town restrictions on renting, or concerns about property damage.

Stakeholders:

- Gaps in housing and social service needs have become increasingly burdensome on year-round residents and workers in the Estes Valley. Rising housing and rental prices, low vacancy rates, and underfunded social service programs have exacerbated these needs—specifically vulnerable populations struggling to find market rate housing.
- Overcrowding of existing housing units was identified as a key concern among housing and service providers. They attribute such overcrowding to a lack of both availability and affordability of units and note that this trend disproportionately impacts service workers, Hispanic residents, and households with undocumented members.
- Economic development representatives and business owners in the Valley are acutely concerned about housing for workers which created material barriers to employee recruitment and retention. A number of employers have even purchased homes/apartments to rent to their employees, and others provide rental assistance and/or rent their personal homes to their employees.
- Stakeholders emphasized the importance of Estes establishing a year-round economy (independent of visitation) but also acknowledge that housing solutions in the Valley will have to address housing needs for seasonal workforce in addition to long-term housing for permanent residents/workers.
- Residential developers highlighted infrastructure costs and land availability as barriers to attainable housing development and encouraged the Town to pursue public-private partnerships for affordable and workforce development (e.g., incentives, subsidies, etc. for affordable production).

Resident and In-commuter Survey Respondents

This section reports survey results from respondents who identified as year-round residents of the Estes Valley (i.e., residents) or non-seasonal workers who are employed in the Estes Valley but live elsewhere (i.e., in-commuters).

Respondent profile. As shown in Figure IV-1, the demographic profile of resident survey respondents is similar to resident demographics overall (discussed in detail in Section I of this report). Renters, racial/ethnic minority groups, and households with children have slightly higher representation in the survey results than in the Valley overall.

Compared to resident respondents, in-commuters in the Estes Valley are younger, more likely to be employed full-time, and less likely to be homeowners. The majority of in-commuters live in Loveland (26%) and Windsor (19%). Fort Collins, Longmont, and Boulder are also popular locations among in-commuters in the Estes Valley.

**Figure IV-1.
Respondent
Profile**

Note:

N=602

Source:

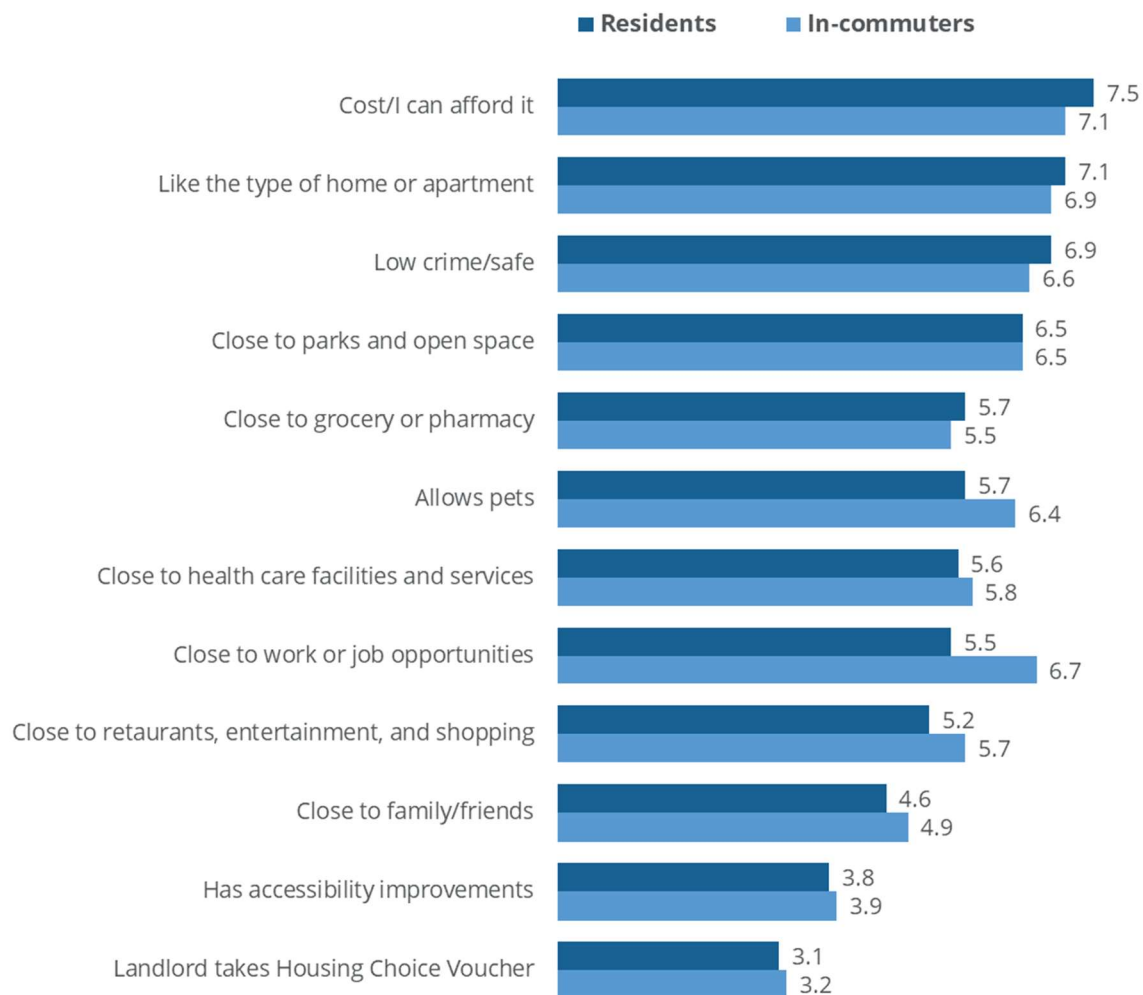
Root Policy Research from
the Estes Valley 2022
Housing Survey.

	Survey Respondents		Estes Valley Demographics (Report Section I)
	Residents	In- Commuters	
Total Respondents/Population	543	59	11,761
Household income			
\$0 up to \$50,000	29%	24%	41%
\$50,000 up to \$75,000	23%	27%	15%
\$75,000 up to \$150,000	36%	39%	31%
\$150,000 or more	12%	10%	13%
Age			
18 to 35 years	20%	30%	15%
35 to 64 years	49%	63%	43%
65 years or older	31%	7%	31%
Tenure			
Homeowner	63%	47%	77%
Renter	31%	21%	23%
Staying with friends or family	6%	17%	n/a
Camping or living in RV	0%	8%	n/a
Property caretaker	0%	8%	n/a
Race/Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic White	72%	53%	84%
Hispanic/Latino	22%	32%	10%
Non-Hispanic Minority	5%	15%	5%
Household composition			
With Children under 18	33%	40%	13%
Without Children under 18	67%	60%	87%

Housing choice. This section explores year-round residents' and in-commuters' housing preferences, choices, and experience with the housing market in the Estes Valley. Where applicable, survey data are reported by respondent and household characteristics (e.g., income, demographics, age).

Most important factors in choosing current home. Figure IV-2 shows the importance of various factors respondents considered when choosing their current home or apartment. Respondents rated the importance of each factor on a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 means "not at all important" and 9 means "extremely important."

Figure IV-2.
How important are the following factors when choosing your current home or apartment?



Note: n=598.

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

Cost was the most important factor for both residents and in-commuters, followed by liking the type of home, safety (low crime), and proximity to parks and open space.

In-commuters appear to place a higher priority on proximity to work than residents; in actuality this simply reflects the fact that in-commuters are more likely to be working-age than residents as a whole. Working age residents place a similar level of importance on proximity to work (6.7).

Figure IV-3 shows responses to the same question by various resident characteristics (tenure, income, age, and race/ethnicity). Each group's top three factors are highlighted in green.

- Respondents from almost all groups prioritized cost/affordability, liking the type of home/apartment, and low crime as a top factors when choosing their home.
- Residents under the age of 35 prioritized proximity to work or job opportunities higher than other groups. Those aged 35 years to 55 years also indicated a preference for job proximity, while those older than 55 years prioritized proximity to health care services and facilities. This is likely due to higher retirement rates among those 55 years and older and a greater need for health care services.
- Hispanic respondents' average ratings placed housing factors in a similar order but with less differentiation than non-Hispanic white respondents: average ratings ranged from 5.0 to 6.8 from bottom to top for Hispanic residents but from 2.3 to 8.0 for non-Hispanic white respondents.
- Lower income groups place a lower value housing type and on proximity to amenities (open space, grocery, entertainment and healthcare) than higher income groups. This likely signals a tolerance for finding an available, affordable option even if it doesn't meet their other preferences.

Figure IV-3.

How important are the following factors when choosing your current home or apartment?

By Respondent Characteristics

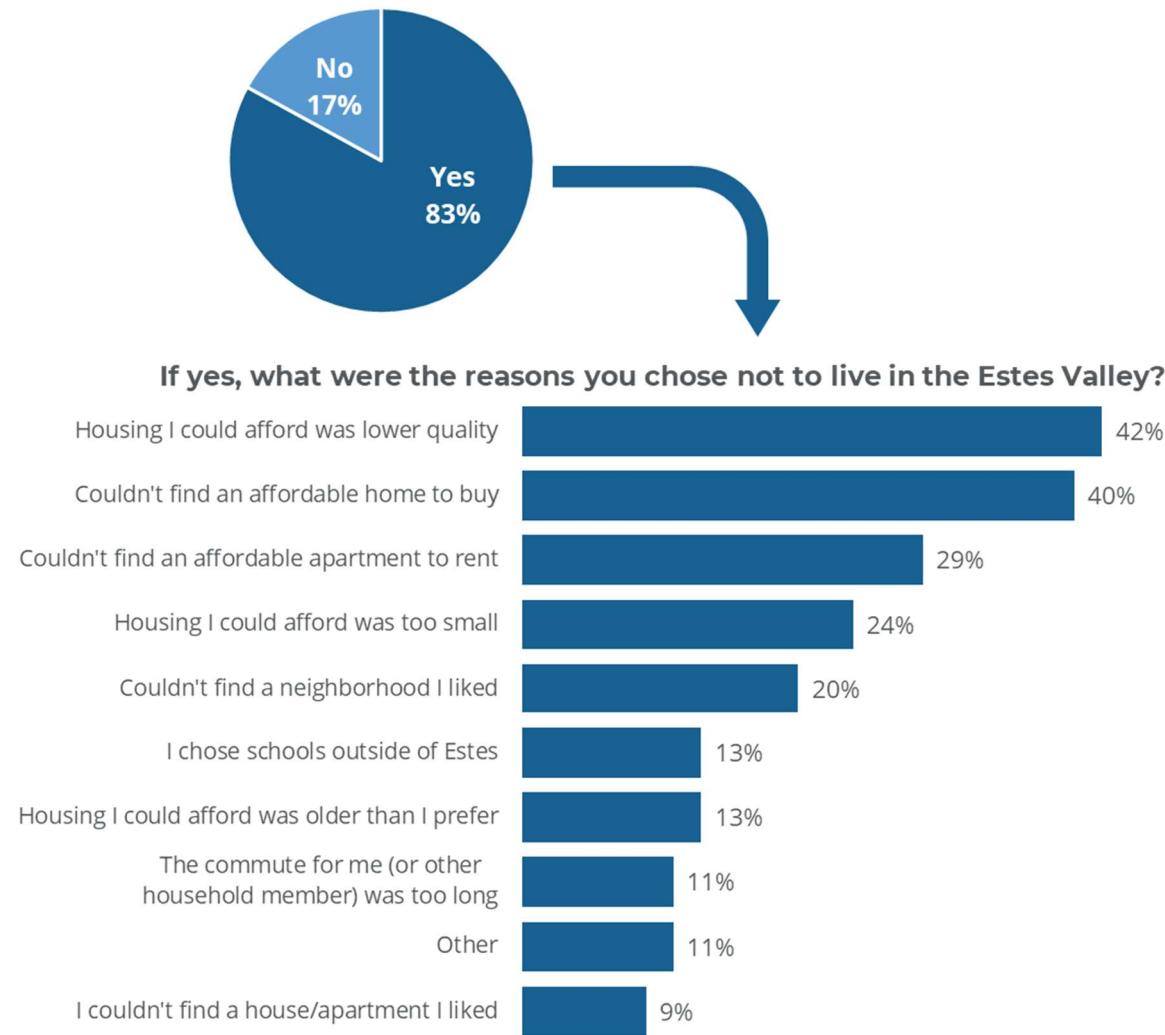
Housing factors	All Residents	Tenure		Age			Household Income			Race/Ethnicity	
		Owners	Renters	Under 35 years	35 to 54 years	55 or older	\$0 up to \$50,000	\$50,000 up to \$75,000	\$75,000 or more	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic or Latino
Cost/I can afford it	7.5	7.7	7.8	7.3	7.4	7.9	7.8	7.1	7.6	8.0	6.7
Like the type of home or apartment	7.1	7.6	6.4	6.6	6.9	7.5	6.6	6.8	7.5	7.3	6.8
Low crime/safe	6.9	7.2	6.4	6.3	7.0	7.1	6.8	6.8	6.9	7.0	6.8
Close to parks, open space, or outdoor rec.	6.5	7.0	5.7	6.5	6.1	6.5	6.2	5.9	6.8	6.6	6.5
Close to grocery or pharmacy	5.7	6.1	5.0	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.6	5.3	5.7	5.6	6.1
Allows pets	5.7	5.6	6.0	6.0	6.7	5.3	6.1	6.0	5.5	5.8	5.7
Close to health care facilities and services	5.6	5.9	4.8	5.5	5.5	5.9	5.4	5.2	5.6	5.4	6.1
Close to work or job opportunities	5.5	5.1	6.1	6.8	6.7	4.6	6.1	5.7	5.3	5.4	6.4
Close to restaurants, entertainment, shopping	5.2	5.5	4.6	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.0	4.7	5.4	4.9	6.0
Close to family/friends	4.6	4.6	4.2	5.5	5.2	3.9	4.5	4.3	4.6	4.2	5.5
Has accessibility improvements	3.8	3.9	3.4	4.4	4.4	3.4	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.4	5.0
Landlord takes Section 8	3.1	2.7	3.3	4.4	4.2	2.0	3.5	3.3	2.8	2.3	5.5

Note: Data are represented as average importance rating. N=542.

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

In-commuter housing choice. Estes Valley in-commuters were asked to share their if they had considered living in the Estes Valley when looking for their current housing. Most in-commuters did consider the Estes Valley (83%) but chose to live elsewhere for a variety of reasons, most commonly affordability, availability, or quality of housing (see Figure IV-4).

Figure IV-4.
When you were looking for your current housing, did you consider living in the Estes Valley?



Note: N = 54.

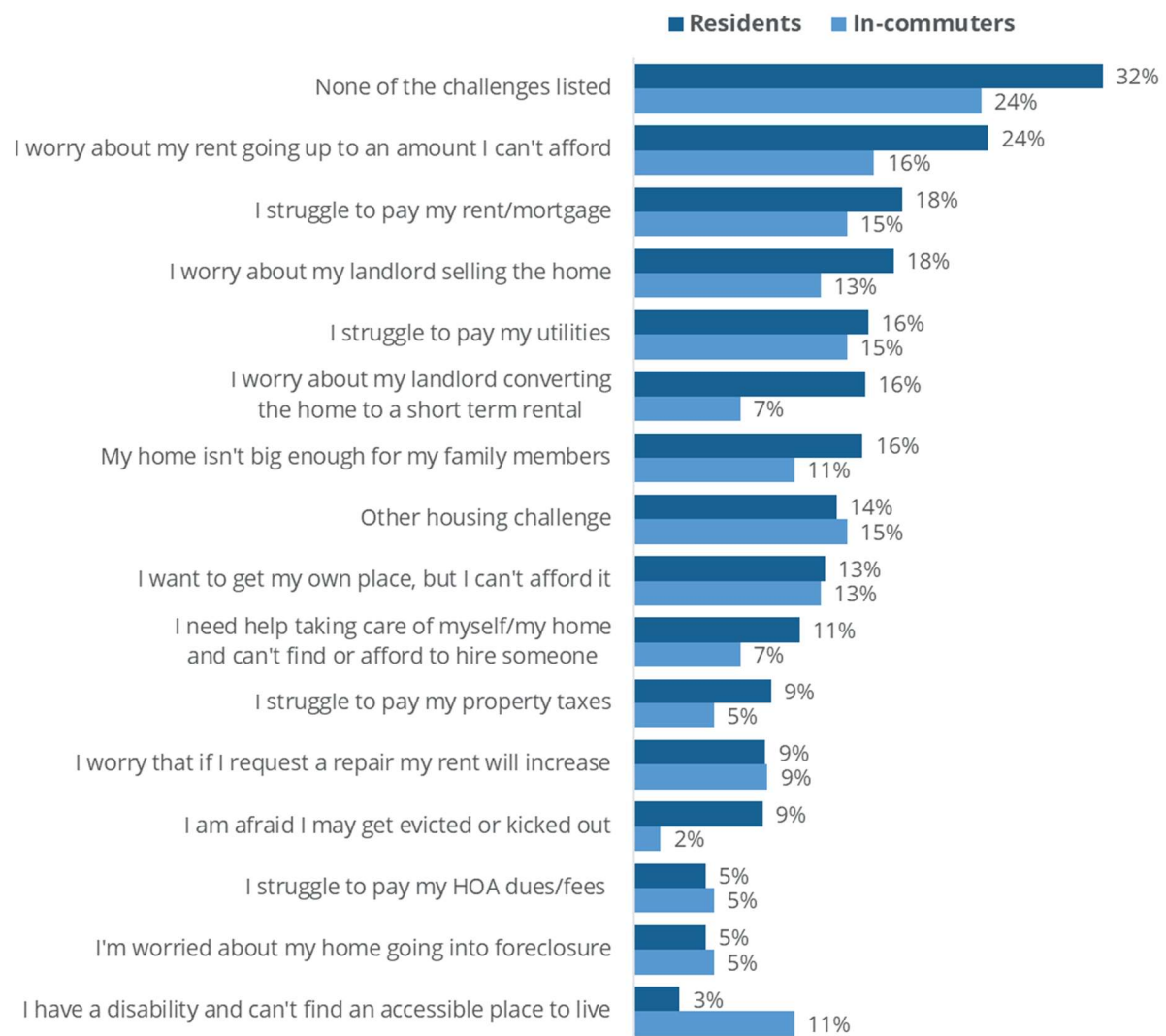
Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

The 17% of in-commuters who did *not* consider living in Estes indicated a preference for an urban environment, having family or friends elsewhere, or the lack of affordable options in the Estes Valley.

Housing challenges. Year-round residents and in-commuters reviewed a list of common housing challenges and were asked to indicate if they have or are experiencing these challenges. Overall, 31% survey respondents indicated that they have not experienced any common housing challenge—homeowners and residents over the age of 75 were the most likely groups to indicate they had no housing challenges (50% and 58%, respectively).

Nearly one in four respondents (24%) noted that their greatest housing challenge was concern over rent increases. Struggling to pay current rent and/or mortgage payments (18%) was also a top concern. Responses from residents and in-commuters are presented in Figure IV-5; other groups are shown in Figure IV-6.

Figure IV-5.
Do you face any of these challenges in your housing situation?



Note: n=437

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

Primary findings from cross tabulation analyses (shown in Figure IV-6) include:

- Homeowners are less likely to experience housing challenges in Estes. For owners who did report housing challenges, the most common concerns were size of home (not big enough and affordability (struggling to pay property taxes or mortgage).
- Most renters (70%) are concerned about rent increases and nearly half of renter respondents (47%) worry that their landlord will either sell their home or convert it to a short-term rental (40%).
- Racial and ethnic minority groups are much more likely than non-Hispanic White respondents to experience housing challenges. Top concerns among Hispanic respondents were rent increases and landlords selling or converting the home to short-term rentals.
- Hispanic respondents and low income respondents were more likely than any other group to want to move in order to live with fewer people. Other engagement efforts also indicate these groups are “overcrowding” in order to afford housing.
- Hispanic/Latino residents (33%) and non-Hispanic minorities (28%) disproportionately experience challenges in finding/keeping housing that meets their family’s needs. Only 10% of non-Hispanic residents reported that their home is not big enough for their family members.

Open ended responses by residents shed additional light on specific concerns:

- *“I worry if we ever had to move we couldn’t find housing in Estes and I would be forced to quit my job and uproot my family to live elsewhere.”*
- *“I am OK now but worry that as taxes & insurance rise (increasing my mortgage payment) & cost of living increases I may not be able to afford to continue to live in Estes Park.”*
- *“I have issues covering the costs of keeping my house in good repair and finding craftsmen to do the work.”*
- *“Worried they might prefer renting to someone making more but doesn’t work in Estes (remote work).”*

Figure IV-6.

Do you face any of these challenges in your housing situation?

Housing challenges	All Residents	Tenure		Age			Household Income			Race/Ethnicity	
		Owners	Renters	Under 35 years	35 to 54 years	55 years or older	\$0 up to \$50,000	\$50,000 up to \$75,000	\$75,000 or more	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic or Latino
None of the challenges listed	32%	50%	7%	5%	17%	58%	14%	25%	44%	43%	8%
At least one housing challenge:	68%	50%	93%	95%	83%	42%	86%	75%	56%	57%	92%
I worry about my rent going up to an amount I can't afford	24%	3%	70%	40%	32%	13%	47%	22%	12%	21%	35%
I struggle to pay my rent/mortgage	18%	11%	33%	24%	28%	9%	30%	16%	12%	17%	25%
I worry about my landlord selling the home	18%	2%	47%	31%	25%	8%	33%	17%	8%	15%	34%
I struggle to pay my utilities	16%	9%	27%	16%	23%	12%	24%	14%	11%	17%	15%
I worry about my landlord converting the home to a short term rental	16%	3%	40%	27%	19%	8%	29%	16%	7%	12%	29%
My home isn't big enough for my family members	16%	13%	18%	21%	26%	5%	12%	18%	16%	10%	30%
Other housing challenge	14%	12%	18%	10%	15%	18%	22%	16%	10%	18%	9%
I want to get my own place/live with fewer people, but I can't afford it	13%	2%	35%	30%	16%	6%	25%	13%	6%	11%	23%
I need help taking care of myself/my home and can't find or afford to hire someone	11%	11%	6%	15%	14%	7%	9%	15%	11%	7%	20%
I struggle to pay my property taxes	9%	12%	2%	7%	13%	5%	8%	9%	8%	8%	5%
I worry that if I request a repair my rent will go up	9%	1%	25%	11%	12%	7%	21%	8%	3%	7%	13%
I am afraid I may get evicted or kicked out	9%	2%	19%	15%	11%	5%	14%	10%	4%	5%	21%
I'm worried about my home going into foreclosure	5%	4%	4%	8%	7%	3%	7%	5%	4%	3%	6%
I struggle to pay my HOA dues	5%	6%	1%	5%	3%	5%	5%	6%	4%	3%	8%
I have a disability and can't find an accessible place to live	3%	1%	3%	6%	3%	1%	5%	5%	2%	2%	9%

Note: N=510

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

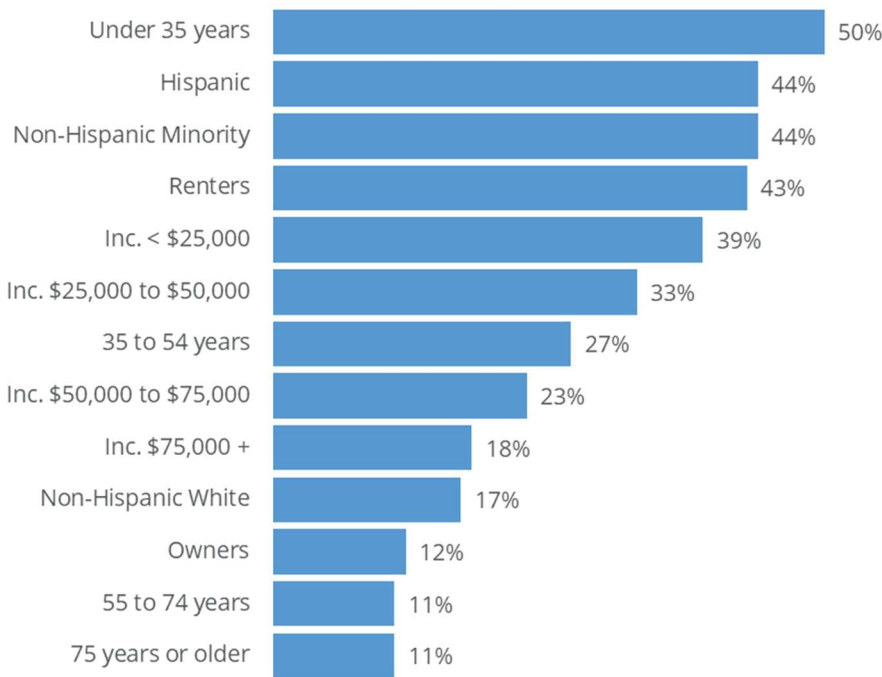
Displacement and experience looking for housing. This section explores recent experiences with displacement (having to move when you did not want to move) and experiencing looking for housing in Estes Park..

Displacement. In the past five years, 26% of year-round residents and in-commuters have had to move from their home or apartment in the past five years when they did not want to—a higher proportion than the 20% who said they were displaced in the 2016 Housing Needs Survey.¹ Respondents who are younger (under 35), identify as a racial/ethnic minority, have low incomes (less than \$50,000) are the most likely groups to have been displaced. Renters are much more likely to be displaced than owners.

Figure IV-7.
Percent of
Respondents
Displaced in
the Past Five
Years

Note:
N=130

Source:
Root Policy Research from
the Estes Valley 2022
Housing Survey.



Older residents in the Estes Valley are significantly more likely to have not moved in the past five years—66% of residents aged 55 to 74 years and three in four respondents (75%) over the age of 75 have not moved in five years. These trends provide important insight on town and city planning for young residents looking to start families in the Estes Valley and seniors hoping to age in place.

This is similar to displacement among renters and owners. Only 12% of owners responded that they had moved when they did not want to compared to 43% of renters—a difference

¹ According to the 2016 HNA, 20% of residents overall (32% of renters and 9% of owners) were evicted or forced to move from their home or apartment when they did not want to. Top reasons for displacement in 2016 included rental conversations (e.g., short-term and vacation rentals), owners moving into previously rented homes, and flood damage.

of thirty-one percentage points. Reasons for displacement among owners and renters vary as well. Most owners cited inability to pay rent/mortgage due to job or income loss (34%), change in household size (29%), and an increase in property taxes (23%) as reasons for displacement. Renters, on the other hand, identified reasons related to landlords such as the unit being sold (38%), rental unit conversions from long-term to short-term rentals (22%), owners not committing to a long-term lease (21%).

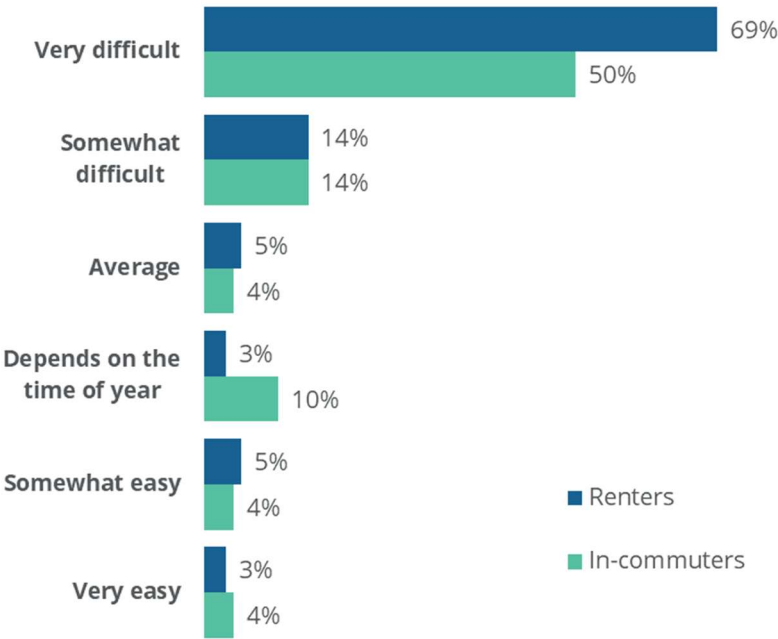
Difficulty finding housing. Survey respondents were also asked about their experience finding affordable housing that meets their household’s needs in the Estes Valley. Note that existing owners are excluded from this analysis as most have been in their current home for an extended period and their experience may not reflect current market conditions.

Two-thirds of Estes Valley renters and half of Estes-Valley in-commuters said it was “very difficult” to find housing that meets their needs in the Estes Valley. Fewer than one in ten said it was either “somewhat easy” or “very easy” to find housing meeting their needs.

Figure IV-8.
What is your experience with finding housing that meets your needs in the Estes Valley?

Note:
N=555

Source:
Root Policy Research from the
Estes Valley 2022 Housing
Survey.

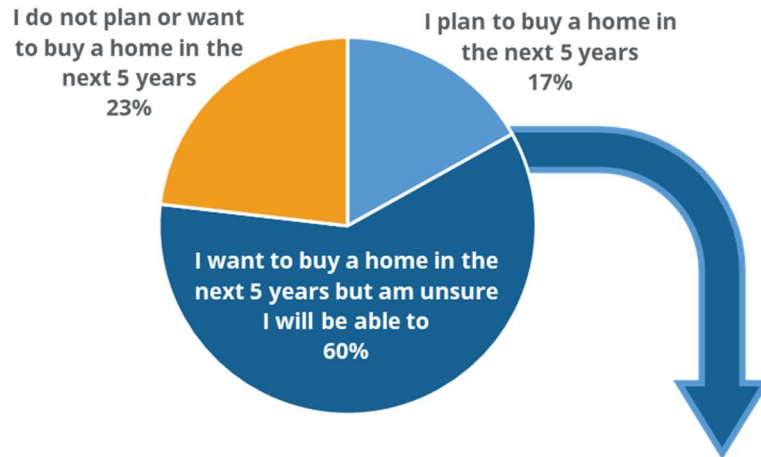


Renter desire to own. Most year-round Estes renters (60%) want to buy a home but are unsure if they will be able to, primarily due to affordability and availability concerns in the for-sale market:

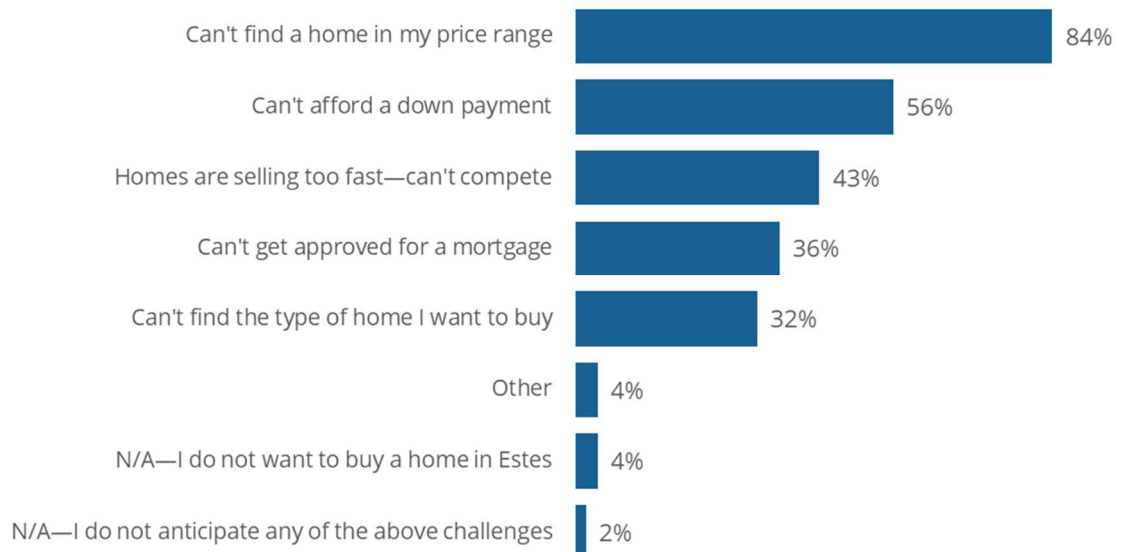
- 86% of renters said finding a home in their price range is the greatest challenge they will likely face in buying a home in the Estes Valley;
- Over half (56%) anticipate not being able to afford a down payment; and
- 43% of respondents believe that homes are selling too fast in Estes and worry that they won't be able to compete with other buyers.

**Figure IV-9.
Renter Desire to Purchase a Home**

Which of the following is most true for you?



If yes, what are the biggest challenges you are likely to face in buying a home?



Note: n=146 and n=111

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

For renters who anticipate challenges not provided on the survey, important comments include:

- *"Straight up availability!!!"*
- *"The quality of homes in an affordable price range are highly lacking."*
- *"There's also not a very strong guarantee of a secure job which would allow me to maintain a mortgage."*

Seasonal Worker Survey Respondents

This section of the report analyzes survey responses collected from seasonal workers in the Estes Valley, their housing situations during employment, experience with finding housing, and plans to transition to full-time residence.

Respondent profile. Seasonal workers in the Estes Valley are often young (half of respondents are under the age of 35), from lower to middle-income households, and rent seasonally when they are working in Estes. Seasonal workers were also more likely than permanent resident respondents to identify as a racial/ethnic minority group (58% identified as Hispanic and 23% identified as a non-Hispanic minority).

Most seasonal workers in Estes Park work in the area for six months or less during the year and live in other parts of Colorado when they are not working/living in the Estes Valley.

Figure IV-10.
Respondent Profile

Note:

N=112

Source:

Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

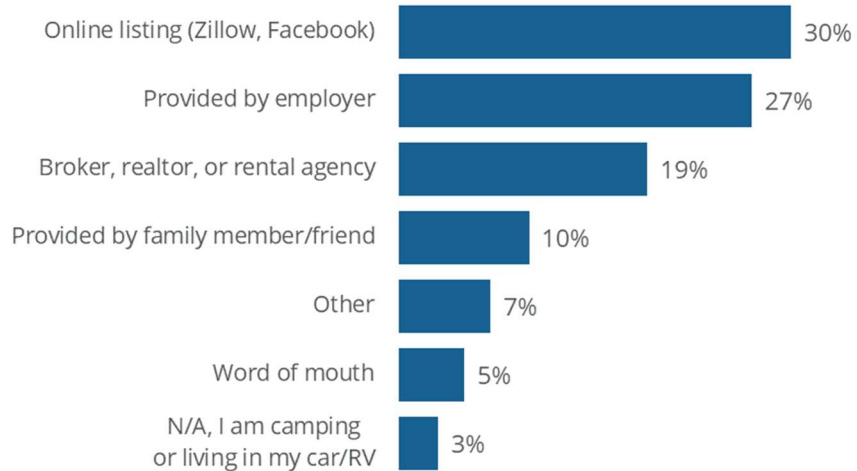
Seasonal Worker Respondents	
Seasonal workers	112
Household income	
\$0 up to \$50,000	47%
\$50,000 up to \$75,000	24%
\$75,000 up to \$150,000	28%
\$150,000 or more	1%
Age	
Under 35 years	51%
35 to 54 years	41%
55 years or older	8%
Race/Ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic White	20%
Hispanic/Latino	58%
Non-Hispanic Minority	23%
Months per year in Estes	
1 to 4 months	23%
5 or 6 months	39%
7 to 9 months	31%
10 or 11 months	8%

Finding housing. Seasonal workers are most likely to find their housing online (30%) or through their employers (27%). Brokers and realtors also play a significant role in finding seasonal housing. Three percent of seasonal workers indicated living in their car, camper, or RV.

Figure IV-11.
How do you find your housing in the Estes Valley?

Note:
N=107

Source:
Root Policy Research from the
Estes Valley 2022 Housing
Survey.

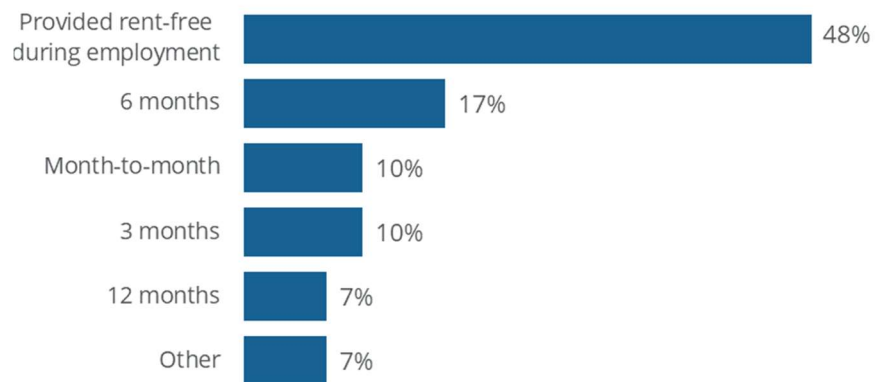


Of those who find housing from their employers, nearly half (48%) live in the Estes Valley rent-free during employment and 17% sign a 6-month lease. Another 20% have shorter leases (month-to-month or 3 months).

Figure IV-12.
If housing is provided by your employer, what is your lease type?

Note:
N=29

Source:
Root Policy Research from the
Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

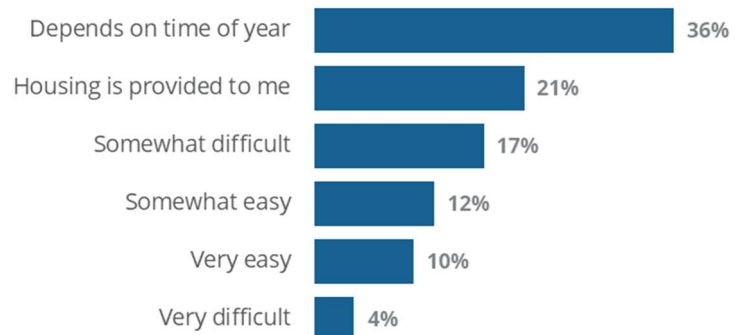


Only 4% think finding housing in Estes is “very difficult,” compared to 69% of permanent resident renters in the Estes Valley. This is driven in part, by employer provided housing, but also the seasonality of the rental market in the Valley.

Figure IV-13.
What is your experience finding housing that meets your seasonal needs in the Estes Valley?

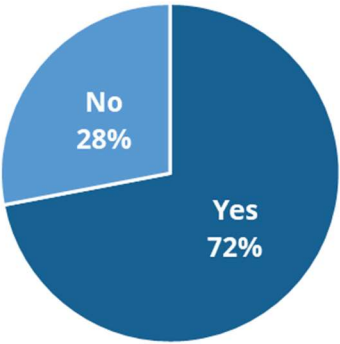
Note:
N=106

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes
Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

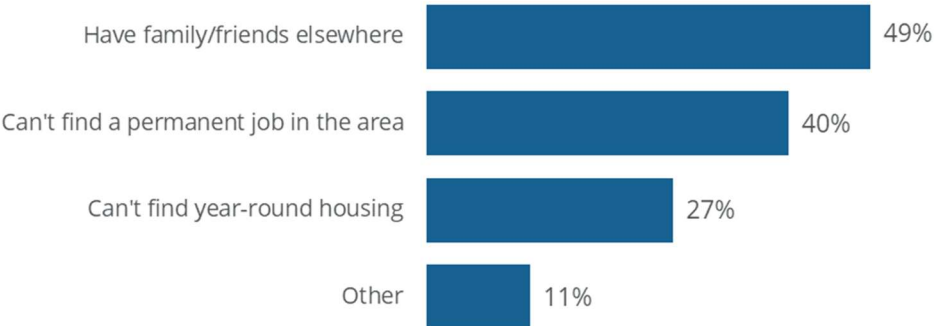


Full-time residence. Most seasonal workers (72%) have considered living in the Estes Valley full time, as shown in Figure IV-14. About half chose not to live in the Estes Valley due to relationships elsewhere and 40% said they could not find a permanent job in the area. Housing availability is also a driver—27% said they chose not to live in the Valley because they could not find year-round housing.

Figure IV-14.
Have you considered living in the Estes Valley year-round?



If yes, what were the reasons you chose not to live in the Estes Valley?



Note: N=70

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

Second Homeowner Survey Respondents

This section focuses on seasonal homeowners in the Estes Valley—those who own a home in the valley but do not live there full-time.

Respondent profile. Seasonal and second homeowners in Estes tend to be older (between 55 and 74 years old), higher income, and non-Hispanic White. On average, seasonal owners have had their second/seasonal home for 14 years.

Figure IV-15.
Respondent profile

Note:

N=161

Source:

Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

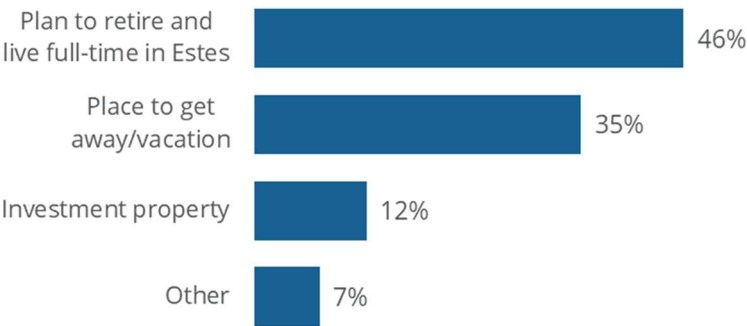
Seasonal & 2nd Homeowners	
Seasonal/second homeowners	161
Household income	
\$0 up to \$50,000	18%
\$50,000 up to \$75,000	14%
\$75,000 up to \$150,000	40%
\$150,000 or more	29%
Age	
Under 35 years	14%
35 to 54 years	25%
55 years or older	61%
Race/Ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic White	58%
Hispanic or Latino	30%
Non-Hispanic Minority	12%
Households Composition	
With Children under 18	44%
Without Children under 18	56%

Motivation for purchase. Nearly half of seasonal respondents (46%) indicated that primary motivation for buying their house in Estes was they “plan to retire and live full-time in Estes.” This is followed by 35% of seasonal residents who bought to have a place to get away/vacation. Only 12% bought their second home specifically as an investment property.

Figure IV-16.
What was your primary motivation for buying in the Estes Valley?

Note: N=151.

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

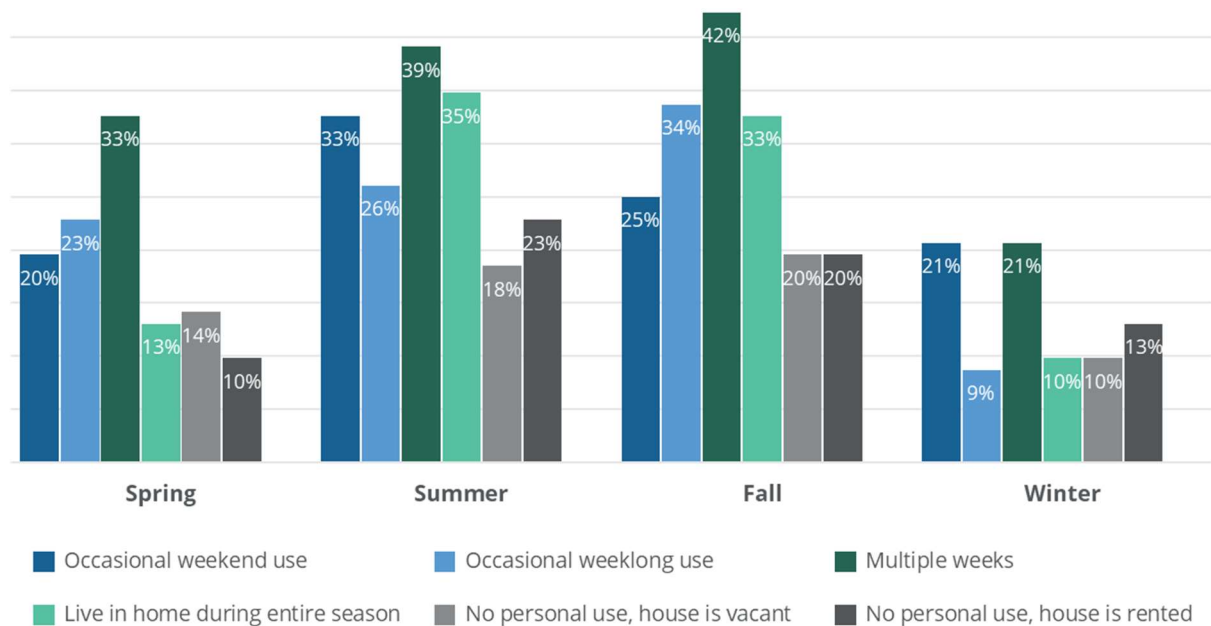


Property usage. Seasonal and second homeowners were asked how often and during which seasons they use their home in the Estes Valley and if they lease their property when they are not in Estes. Blue and green bars in the figure represent variations on personal use; gray bars show variations of non-personal use.

All types of use—particularly personal use—are highest in the summer and fall months while winter has the lowest use. About one-third of seasonal homeowners live in their Estes Park home for the entire season in summer and fall.

Figure IV-17.

About how often do you or your family use your property in each season?



Note: n=92

Source: Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022 Housing Survey.

As shown in Figure IV-18 (on the following page), half of seasonal owners do not lease their home when not using it, about 27% lease as a short-term rental, and another 33% lease it as a month-to-month or three-month rental (most commonly in the winter months).

Among those who do not currently lease, most (76%) say they are not interested in leasing citing reasons such as desire for flexible personal use, HOA/Town restrictions, or concerns about property damage. Comments included:

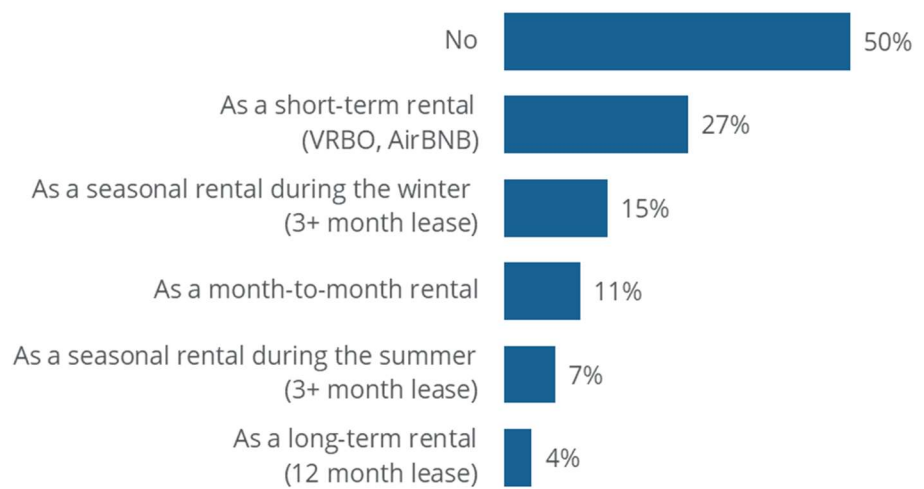
- *"We want to be able to use our home spontaneously whenever we want, not be limited to when renters are using it."*
- *"I would like to do short-term rentals but aren't allowed due to my zoning district and lack of permit."*

- *“Too many horror stories about lease outs or rentals. Just not worth the trouble for a home we love.”*

Figure IV-18.
When you are not using your home in Estes, do you lease it out?

Note:
N=150.

Source:
Root Policy Research
from the 2022 Housing
Survey.



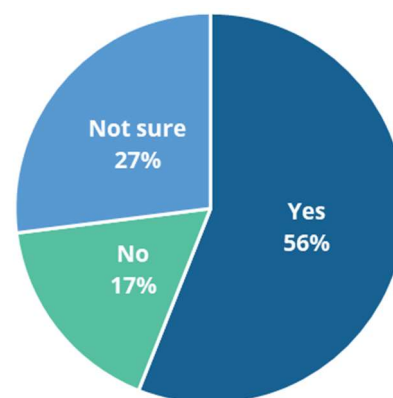
Respondents who do not currently (but have considered) leasing their residence also provided insight on why they would lease. Frequently cited reasons include addressing Estes’ affordable housing shortage and earning a second income while avoiding home idle time.

Future plans. As noted previously, nearly half of respondents (46%) indicated that their primary motivation in buying their Estes Valley home was they “plan to retire and live full-time in Estes.” When asked specifically about their future plans, more than half of all seasonal owners (regardless of their original purchase motivation), plan to transition from seasonal residence to full-time residence in the future. Only 17% do not have plans to live in Estes full-time while one in four second homeowners are unsure. (27%).

Figure IV-19.
Do you have future plans to live in Estes Park full-time?

Note:
N=149

Source:
Root Policy Research from the Estes Valley 2022
Housing Survey.



Estes Valley Stakeholder Perspectives

Community engagement for the Estes Valley Housing Needs Assessment included extensive outreach efforts to community stakeholders. A list of stakeholder participants was consolidated by Town staff and contacted by email to participate in virtual interviews on housing needs, workforce needs, development, and housing market trends in the Estes Valley. Interviews were conducted in September and October 2022. Participants represented a wide range of groups and stakeholders with experience in economic development, housing and social services, and housing development. The following section summarizes the main findings from engagement efforts.

Housing and Social Service Needs. Gaps in housing and social service needs have become increasingly burdensome on year-round residents and workers in the Estes Valley. Rising housing and rental prices, low vacancy rates, and underfunded social service programs have exacerbated these needs—specifically vulnerable populations struggling to find market rate housing.

Housing supply. The greatest housing need in Estes is increasing the Valley's inventory of reasonably priced housing. Stakeholders believe that housing inventory has progressively worsened in the past five years and many perceive affording housing in the Estes Valley as nearly impossible for year-round residents and families to attain. Housing supply trends and challenges noted by stakeholders include:

- Supply of housing—specifically rentals—is lowest in the spring and beginning of summer. Stakeholder perception is that in recent years, landlords and property owners have changed lease terms from 12 months to 6 months. In peak seasons, many landlords increase rent by 20% to 30%.
- Strong demand for vacation homes and retirement homes puts significant pressure on the housing market and prices making it difficult for young families and workers to access homeownership. Stakeholders indicate there is substantial unmet demand for homes priced around (and below) \$300,000, which is well-below current market prices.

Workforce housing needs. Stakeholders provided in-depth information on year-round and seasonal workforce needs. Nearly all stakeholders agree that preserving and retaining the Estes Valley's young workforce is vital to the Estes Valley's long-term success. Without meaning full action to address workforce housing and needs, Estes will continue to lose its young population and fail to meet the needs of its older population. Overall sentiments shared by stakeholders include:

- There is high demand for rentals among year-round and seasonal workers, especially in the spring and summer. Housing is easier to find in the fall and early winter when visitation decreases, however, many seasonal workers leave Estes during this time. General consensus among industry groups seems to be that Estes needs to improve

its inventory of seasonal worker housing such that workers have housing in peak season that does not displace permanent residents..

- Wages do not match housing and rental prices in Estes. Housing prices have risen faster than wage and many workers do not make enough money to enter homeownership. In fact, it is hardest to house early- and mid-career professionals as they are less likely to have accumulated wealth and equity.
- Stakeholders recommend that the Town address seasonal worker housing needs through employer partnerships and seasonal housing. Recommendations for addressing non-seasonal workforce included deed restrictions, rental assistance, and innovative solutions to match supply and demand.

Undocumented residents. Stakeholders indicated that households with undocumented residents (and those in the process of documentation) are particularly vulnerable to housing challenges. Many property owners and management companies require documentation for application approval and often the options available to residents without documentation are underserved, overcrowded, or in poor condition.

Residents lacking documentation are particularly vulnerable when properties are sold (if that results in a change in rental requirements) and typically do not seek public assistance or publicly supported housing options.

Persons experiencing homelessness. There is a general perception that housing for persons experiencing homeless has progressively worsened, especially for those who struggle and/or are hesitant to access Estes' resources and services. Many stakeholders attributed this trend to the lack of attention and priority the Town has placed on homeless people and capacity constraints. In fact, "hidden homeless" has increased in recent years, with more residents couch surfing or living in their cars. Residents with a criminal or eviction history may be at higher risk of homelessness as they are often excluded from rental opportunities.

Mental health services. Social service providers in Estes Park highlighted a need for additional mental health services to improve household stability. Stakeholders highlighted mental health service needs specifically for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, children in overcrowded households, and low-income families.

Displacement mitigation. Year-round residents have increasingly faced challenges of residential displacement, especially undocumented residents and low-income residents that cannot keep up with rising housing and rental costs. Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of prioritizing young workers as essential to the Estes Valley. Specific displacement challenges highlighted by stakeholders include:

Barriers to Economic Development. Economic development in the Estes Valley is largely reliant on its seasonal economy and visitation. Estes Valley stakeholders spoke to the importance of establishing a year-round economy independent of visitation. Barriers to becoming a year-round economy include rental prices and inventory which have a significant impact on employers' ability to recruit and retain employees, as well as consistent loss of workforce being priced out of the community.

In recent years, employers have struggled to recruit and retain employees due to the housing market in Estes and the lack of available and affordable apartments. These challenges have been exacerbated by the increase in retirees and second homeowners, the COVID-19 pandemic, and business closures.

To ensure their business is not understaffed during peak seasons, some employers have begun buying apartment complexes/units or renting their home to their employees who cannot find housing. Employers have also engaged in alternative housing solutions such as offering direct rental assistance/aid.

Many employers have anecdotes of potential employees rejecting job offers because they were unable to find housing or childcare. For employees who do decide to relocate to the Estes Valley for work, employers often struggle to keep their workers longer than 3 to 5 years, especially young employees looking to settle down, start families, and/or transition to homeownership.

Barriers to residential development. Stakeholders identified various barriers to development of both affordable units and workforce housing in the Estes Valley:

- **Infrastructure uncertainties.** Infrastructure can be extremely costly in mountain communities and the uncertainty associated with both cost and implementation can create delays in housing production increase risk for developers.
- **Land limitations.** The Estes Valley's lack of developable land has also slowed housing production and made it more difficult to identify affordable housing solutions.

Despite the aforementioned barriers, stakeholders did commend the Town for addressing some previous barriers including prohibitive zoning codes and incentives for affordable development.

Stakeholder recommendations. Stakeholder provided numerous recommendations and solutions for housing, workforce, and social service needs.

Stakeholder recommendations to address social service needs (that could increase housing stability) include:

- Provide increased funding to non-profit organizations and service providers that work with people experiencing housing instability, residents with a mental illness, and homeless residents.
- Establish social service programs and outreach/advocacy positions. Stakeholders mentioned that Estes needs to increase its services and capacity. Increased capacity would allow for more programs such as providing transportation to shelters or agencies providing on-site case management.
- Follow Evergreen's model and approach to homelessness: consider establishing overnight shelters during cold weather seasons and programs that provide temporary housing while residents pursue workforce development training.
- Expand the circle of care from day-to-day services to programs and services that address long-term challenges, specifically mental health and addiction treatment. This is especially important for residents who will likely face challenges when they leave shelters or temporary housing situations.

Stakeholder recommendations to address affordable housing gaps and barriers to residential development include:

- Support income-restricted workforce housing to prevent displacement and ensure that housing is affordable and attainable for low-income families and workers.
- Use lodging tax revenue to expand workforce housing and repurpose older buildings into dorms for workers and seasonal renters.
- Increase rental assistance/aid while working towards achieving realistic housing price points.
- Focus on public-private partnerships and developer incentives to increase the supply of workforce housing. Specific suggestions include building partnerships with developers, donating land, tax/fees forgiveness, and other incentives. Developers also noted that subsidizing infrastructure is more valuable than a land donation (both reduce cost but infrastructure provision would also reduce uncertainty).
- Identify displacement prevention policies including potential incentivizes for property owners to preserve existing naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Determine incentives for year-round residents and/or second homeowners to build and lease Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Incentives could include waiving fees for individual developments or incentives for property owners to lease their homes as long-term rentals rather than seasonal rentals.

- Begin a “Mortgage Matching” program that provides temporary housing to young working adults while saving up for down payments for a home. This program would help individuals build equity while saving money to transition into homeownership without worrying about housing costs.
- Funding for housing needs to focus on deed restrictions, converting old buildings and units, purchasing properties outright, water subsidizes and more rental assistance.
- Work towards building a self-sufficient, independent community and economy reliant on year-round residents and workers rather than the seasonal workforce and in-commuters.

Stakeholder recommendations related to implementation and oversight include:

- Consider a housing board or task force to monitor housing investments and strategies.
- Ensure transparency by tracking affordable/workforce housing goals, progress, and investments and clearly communicating milestones with residents.

APPENDIX A.

UPDATE ON 2016 RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX A.

Update on 2016 Recommendations

Since the 2016 Housing Needs Assessment, the Town of Estes Park and the Estes Park Housing Authority have made good progress implementing several of the recommendations of that report. Many of these strategies have been implemented relatively recently and are ongoing. The table below provides a status update, and links those actions to the recommendations of this plan.

2016 Housing Needs Assessment Recommendations	Current Status	Forward Looking Recommendations - Crosswalk to 2023 Action Plan
Allocate the resources needed to make workforce housing a priority with a commitment to figure out “how” to build homes, not “if” workforce housing should be built.	Community now focused on “how.”	Continue community engagement – focused on implementation specifics. (2023 Action #17)
Immediately initiate work on the development of additional rental units that are scattered throughout neighborhoods in the community (accessory units), on site as part of commercial/institutional developments, and in apartment complexes. Create diversity in the rental inventory in unit type, location and income targeting.	Code updates regarding accessory complete.	<p>Ensure the success of rental projects that are in the predevelopment stages (2023 Action #5)</p> <p>Add additional incentives that support creating accessory dwelling units. (2023 Action #9)</p> <p>Seek new development and preservation of buildings to serve a broader range of local workforce households. (2023 Action #1-10)</p>
Pursue the development of additional ownership housing immediately, though only consider condominiums in unique situations like the downtown area and provided that mortgage financing is approved for the units. Townhomes, duplexes and single-family homes in neighborhoods with the amenities desirable by families should be a high priority.	Wildfire in process.	<p>Cultivate additional new homeownership development opportunities. (2023 Action #5,6)</p> <p>Pursue Missing Middle Strategic Plan. (2023 Action #13)</p> <p>Provide gap funding for homeownership affordable to local workforce. (2023 Action #14)</p>

Create opportunities to effectively use limited land and financial resources for workforce housing.	Several land use code updates have been implemented that address this recommendation including linkage, ADUs, STRs, and density bonus in RM zone.	<p>Ensure the success of a local dedicated funding source, and build capacity and program guidelines to deploy it quickly and effectively. (2023 Action #11)</p> <p>Seek additional opportunities to zone for affordability. Very little land in Estes allows for efficient construction of apartments and townhouses. (2023 Action #13)</p> <p>EPHA to lead land acquisition efforts. (2023 Action #7)</p> <p>Work with employers on use of land and buildings for employee housing. (2023 Action #8)</p>
Develop deed restrictions that can be applied uniformly to ownership housing for the workforce and that include employment requirements.	Some deed restrictions put in place through new density bonus.	Develop a comprehensive set of guidelines to create consistent expectations for community members, developers, funders, and compliance staff. Create a database for compliance and online portal for applications. (2023 Action #19)
Engage the community, build momentum and develop capacity to implement strategies over the long term.	Current community engagement is focused on Comp Plan update, Housing Needs Assessment Update, and Lodging Tax Ballot Initiative.	<p>Continue community engagement, education, and outreach on broad housing topics and specific project and policy initiatives. (2023 Action #17)</p> <p>Additional staff capacity will be needed at the Town, Housing Authority, and/or partner non-profits if the community desires to increase workforce housing production over historic levels. (2023 Action #18)</p>
Learn from other communities	Ongoing. EPHA has recently done a listening tour on best practices for compliance management.	Ongoing. Complete deed restriction compliance survey with CAST members. Continue to learn from peer communities. (2023 Action #18-19)