

Whetstone Community Housing

Design Charrette Recap

On August 26 and 27, 2021, Gunnison County, with its consultant team - Trestle Strategy Group, Williford Housing, jv de Sousa Architecture, and JVA Engineering - invited Gunnison County community members and housing development experts to participate in a design charrette for the Whetstone parcel, located in Gunnison County, south of the town of Crested Butte.

30-35 participants in the workshop represented a wide range of professions and interests, including:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion specialists;
- Architects, engineers, landscape architects and sustainability consultants;
- Affordable and market-rate housing developers;
- Local government planners and executives;
- Whetstone neighbors;
- Business owners;
- Non-profit and community members and housing advocates.





The workshop gathered input from participants on what community needs housing at Whetstone would fulfill, ideas on how a site plan could function on the parcel and in its context, and what is financially sustainable. Participants expressed a desire for a neighborhood that allowed local residents to put down roots and have long-term stability, as well as an interest in a variety of housing options including live/work, accessible apartments, and attached single family.

Local resident Lindsey Freeburn said, “I applaud the County for including and elevating the voices of community members who may, one day, call the Whetstone parcel home. After attending the two-day Design Charette, it is clear that the County is willing to approach the Whetstone parcel creatively in order to best support the needs and unique character of our community. I'm looking forward to watching this project progress!”



Local business owners that attended said their businesses are suffering because their employees cannot find housing and they cannot hire enough people due to the lack of housing. Some attendees also described that their employees are well paid but still cannot afford a home in the upper valley due to the high housing costs. Local business owner, Melissa Lamonica attended the charrette to help find solutions for housing that could help her employees and also ensure sustainability for her business. Lamonica said, “I am struggling to focus on how the housing issues are affecting me as a business owner when my biggest issue is that I can't hire enough people to keep up with the increased demand, and our employees are waking up every day in tents, or cars, or temporary housing,

wondering how long they can go on when there are simply no housing options available, let alone affordable housing.”

Erica Nelson of REAL Consulting emphasized that a neighborhood needs to be designed for accessibility for those that may have a disability. Architect jv Desousa said that the community should consider how to make an inclusive neighborhood that is accessible to residents whether they’re recovering from a knee surgery, need accessibility as they are, or have a long term disability.

Participants worked through two full days of design and discussion to draft ideas for how the Whetstone site might be developed to address the community’s dramatic decrease in housing for locals due to rapidly changing demographics. Larger issues such as regional transportation and schools were also discussed. The participants and County staff emphasized the desire to have the Whetstone site connected to nearby neighborhoods and the Town of Crested Butte through multi-modal transportation options.



In the coming weeks, the project team will analyze all information and feedback gathered during the design charrette and continue refining the data. The goal is to create a [Sketch Plan](#) (preliminary, official step with the county to receive regulatory feedback from staff and the county commissioners) for the site that meets the County’s goals for community housing, sustainability, and financial feasibility. There will be additional opportunities for the community to provide feedback prior to the

sketch plan being presented to the Board of County Commissioners at the end of the year. These include:

- Engagement activities with school-age kids (September-November 2021);
- Outreach to employers in the Valley (September-October 2021);
- Community walkabouts on site (dates TBD);
- Financial feasibility work sessions (dates TBD).



Additional information and updates can be found at the project website:

<https://whetstonehousing.weebly.com/>.