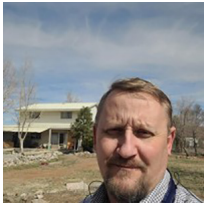


City Council declares a housing emergency

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 17 June 2022 03:58



Local Realtor Jason Valentine built his career on selling homes in Gallup. And over the years, he's noticed that the demand for homes has skyrocketed, but the inventory hasn't grown with that demand.

It was a problem he couldn't just walk past, so he launched the Gallup Housing Summit in March 2019. Yet, despite some deep conversations about what to do, housing problems remain the same.

And for this year's summit he wanted to hear from a wider group of community leaders — both in politics and business.

Mayor Louis Bonaguidi, Councilor Fran Palochak, Dist. 4, and Brett Newberry of the accounting firm Newberry and Associates, and many more, joined in to discuss Gallup's housing shorage.

In an interview with the *Sun* on May 27, Valentine said that according to the goals that were set in the 2020 housing analysis, 70 new units were supposed to be built every year to make up for the lack of housing in the city. He noted that only seven building permits have been dispersed

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this year.

“This thing is starting to become code red critical,” Valentine said. “Tax migration patterns show we lose about \$330 million a year leaving our community because people go to Albuquerque or Phoenix to do their shopping, or they emigrate over to those cities because there’s better job opportunities.”

During the April 29 housing summit, Valentine detailed the crisis at hand, and the community leaders in attendance ultimately decided that declaring a housing emergency would create the urgency needed to readily address the shortage.

Also, the summit focused on who still needs to be brought into the housing conversation. The group collectively agreed that the Mortgage Finance Authority, Gallup City Council, McKinley County Board of Commissioners, the Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Zuni, and other entities need to have a seat at the table.

“We’ve been trying to advocate for stronger-together partnerships; private, public, and tribal to come together on things that we regionally need,” Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments Deputy Director Evan Williams said during the summit. “The county has been a very good partner, as well as the city. The tribal communities we just need to outreach and bring to the table [...].”

Gallup Land Partners was another organization that the group noted that needed to participate in the discussion. According to the organization’s website, GLP owns approximately 26,000 acres of land in Gallup.

During the summit, Bonaguidi showed his support for declaring a housing emergency.

“ [... If] it could shake loose some of the federal funding I would do it immediately,” Bonaguidi said.

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Meanwhile, in response to community leaders' input during the summit, Valentine came before the city council at the May 24 regular meeting to present a resolution with the declaration.

"Our hope is that with a declaration of a housing emergency, our city will be able to align resources, both public and private, to assist with this dire situation as well as appointing a champion — hopefully from our elected officials — who will support the efforts of the private sector to develop and implement a plan to solve this housing emergency," Valentine said.

According to the resolution, the city council would declare a housing emergency, which would allow for more flexibility in finding remedies. The resolution also urges the governor and New Mexico legislature to provide a policy reform that would allow for flexible partnerships and incentives for market rate and missing middle housing in rural communities like Gallup.

Finally, the resolution calls on leaders to seek support from housing financing entities, such as the aforementioned MFA.

The council unanimously agreed to accept the resolution.

By Molly Ann Howell
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