



DON'T LET THE PERFECT BE THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD

MEMBERS OF THE BLUE RIBBON HOUSING COMMISSION DISCUSS HOW CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS—AS WELL AS TACTICS—CAN HELP ADDRESS THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS IN PARK CITY

From November 2015 through April 2016, Park City Municipal Corporation convened a blue ribbon panel to study and provide recommendations for the city's housing resolution. The panel, composed of seven residents and four city staff members, presented their [recommendations to City Council](#) on April 14, 2016.

Three members of the panel reflected on the process and what makes them optimistic.

Park City Municipal Corporation: Nicole and Mike, what inspired you to apply for the Blue Ribbon Housing Commission?

Nicole Butolph, Commission Member: I worked for and served on the board of Mountainlands Community Housing Trust, so I've been on the front lines of fighting for and providing affordable housing. In addition, I've worked in Title I schools (schools in which fifty percent or more of the student population qualifies for free or reduced-fee lunches). I've seen firsthand what a huge

impact adequate housing can have on a family's stability.

On a personal level, my husband and I are raising two small children in Old Town, but we are the only young family on our street. In my 15 years of living here, I've slowly watched my community disappear before my eyes. I want to have a street full of kids playing and people watching out for them; block parties and community events. But

lack of housing is pushing my peers out to the county.

PCMC: Mike, why did you apply to the commission?

Mike Stewart, Commission Member: I've been

in the home-building industry for many years and have built affordable projects across multiple states and cities. Park City is the most challenging community I've ever experienced in the affordable housing realm. I applied in part to better understand the city's process, especially from a cost perspective.

"I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A SUSTAINABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM WITH AS MUCH ENERGY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT AS THERE IS FOR OPEN SPACE."



On a personal level, in my twenty years of living here, I've only seen the divide between rich and poor grow, which is very disconcerting. I raised my children in town, but now that they are old enough to buy homes of their own, they are being priced out of the Park City market. Rather than sit on the sidelines and criticize, I decided to see if I could help devise some workable solutions.

PCMC: Rhoda, you've dedicated nearly your entire career to affordable housing.

Rhoda Stauffer, PCMC Affordable Housing Manager:

Yes, I've been working in the field for 30 years and have been a housing specialist for PCMC since 2008.

PCMC: Why did you decide to establish the Blue Ribbon Commission on Housing?

Stauffer: There's a great deal of housing expertise in the community, and I knew our elected officials would listen to the commission members differently than they do to staff or hired experts, precisely because they are voices from the community.

PCMC: Now that you've wrapped up the commission, please describe your vision.

Stewart: I would like to see a sustainable

affordable housing program with as much energy and community support as there is for open space. It's amazing to see how much open space we've preserved—and continue to preserve—as well as how much residents are willing to pay to do so. We need the same approach for housing because this is going to cost us all something in some way, and the problem can't be solved by the private sector. As a community, we can be hypocritical—we support the abstract idea of affordable housing as long as it's not in our

own neighborhood. We need to strengthen the link in people's minds between providing affordable housing and preserving our quality of life. Once this town empties of residents and becomes only a second-home community, we'll all suffer.

Butolph: Open space differs from affordable housing in a key way: everyone has access to open space, regardless of income. But housing can be perceived as being for "someone else." Oftentimes, it's seen as "charity" for people who couldn't otherwise live in "my" neighborhood. We need to get past this and realize that having affordable homes on the block won't impinge on one's property values, but will actually help ensure the future of the community and, in turn, everyone's investments. Tourists fall in love



with the town of Park City, but you can't have a town without residents. This goes back to what our fellow commission member, Tom Horton, emphasized throughout the process: the importance of education.

Stewart: The issue of who qualifies for affordable housing is one reason to create a citizen-advisory committee akin to the Citizens Open Space Advisory Committee. COSAC spends a great deal of time identifying properties and running them through an evaluation matrix based on specific criteria. This lends the process an important level of credibility and objectivity that can only be provided by dedicated resources who can put in the time and energy needed.

Stauffer: And having residents on the committee means that you or your neighbor could be one of the members. This would increase trust in the process, but would also make it harder for you to blame the process if you did not like the outcome.

Butolph: It's harder to tell your neighbor that you don't want them to live next door than it is to tell the city you don't want their newest housing project next door

Stewart: People's objections to a project usually just come down to one thing: compatibility with the neighborhood. If we maintain realistic expectations and transparency throughout the process, I think we'll be successful.

PCMC: What would you recommend as next steps?

Butolph: The BRHC produced a comprehensive set of recommendations, which the city should use as a springboard to keep aggressively moving forward. Establishing a community-based commission in the vein of COSAC—with a small, focused charter to start—can help hold everyone's feet to the fire.



Stewart: The standing commission could also dig into the weeds and let Council focus on the broader policy. Of course, the other piece is dedicating additional man-hours. City staff only has so much bandwidth.

Stauffer: And let's not let perfect be the enemy of the good: small wins can do so much to build momentum and galvanize public

support along the way.

Butolph: The commission can also change the perception of affordable housing initiatives from "something being done to my neighborhood" to an "active community project" that Park City is taking on to preserve our town. I want to break the cycle that we've been in for so long: we identify a parcel and attempt to build deed-restricted units on it, only to back down in the face of community opposition. While at Mountainlands, I saw the organization put together a community, as opposed to a development: people were out literally

building their neighborhood. No one likes to feel like things are being “done to them.” We should start by asking the community what they want.

PCMC: Aside from NIMBYism and the need for education, what are some other big challenges?

Stewart: We’ve touched upon it briefly, but the issue of who would qualify can be a stumbling block. We need to clearly identify whom we are serving, how much it will cost, and where we will build it.

PCMC: Given these challenges, are you optimistic we can develop workable solutions?

Stewart: I have some optimism because I think a lot of folks who’ve lived here for 30 years are realizing that their kids will never be able to own a house in their own hometown. I would hate to raise my young kids in a neighborhood of second homes, and I think framing the problem in personal terms can galvanize support. I’m also optimistic because we already have some identified funding sources, including redevelopment area revenues. We can put real money toward it.

PCMC: Rhoda, what about you?

Stauffer: The problem can no longer be solved through the market, but the city has committed to making it happen with its own

resources, which makes me optimistic.

PCMC: Nicole, what makes you optimistic?

Butolph: I’m optimistic that the current Council has the background and passion to understand and tackle the problem, and—as champions of underserved populations—they see how housing fits into the larger picture of overcoming chronic poverty.

PCMC: Through what lens would you have people view the problem?

Butolph: I would bring it back to the community.

We need to have kids in Old Town; we need to have teenagers, families, the elderly, young adults. You need people to have a community; you need a community in town to have a town.

Stewart: We need to stop the middle class from being hollowed out, and providing workable housing solutions is a key part of this.

Thank you to all of the members of the Blue Ribbon Housing Commission (names appear in alphabetical order):

Community Members: Nicole Butolph, Tom Horton, Ron Hunt, Meg Ryan, Mark Sletten, Mike Stewart, Glenn Wright

PCMC Staff Members: Anne Laurent, Elizabeth Quinn Fregulia, Phyllis McDonough Robinson, Rhoda Stauffer

