



## From the Director's Desk

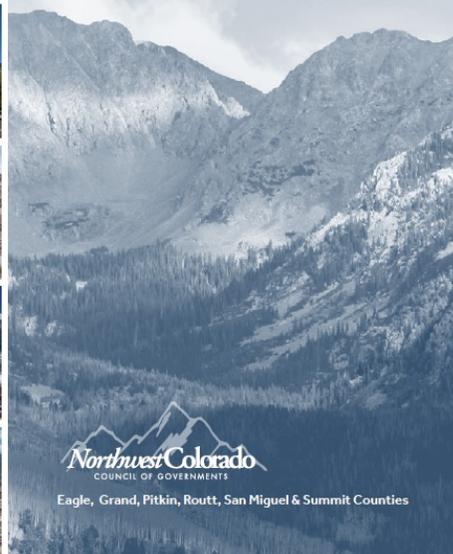
in collaboration with Margaret Bowes, Executive Director of CAST

# A Mountain Migration tipping point?



### The Mountain Migration Report

2021 | Are COVID Impacts on Housing & Services Here to Stay?



Since the COVID-19 pandemic escalated in March of 2020, national media reported an outflow of residents flocking from cities to high quality-of-life places such as the mountain resort communities covered in this report. Residents of these communities observed that their communities were busier— and consistently so, breaking the typical patterns of high and low visitation. But was the in-migration real? And what did we know about the people coming to these places who appeared more like residents than visitors? Was it only a COVID driven wave that would recede? How would it impact known community challenges such as work force retention, affordable housing, rental stock, and that mountain community holy grail that is quality-of-life? A desire for a better understanding of the answers to these and many other questions being asked led to this [Mountain Migration report](#).

We listened to our membership through 2020, there was a sense among those reflecting already that the COVID Mountain Migration experiment might prove instructive, providing a glimpse ahead for those who drive policy. That

idea was the origin of this report. To get it done, Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) sought a partnership with Colorado Association of Ski Towns (CAST) to scope and fund this report. That partnership led to a grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), and funding from a recovery grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to match dues from NWCCOG and CAST membership. NWCCOG is deeply appreciative of these partners, the many contributors listed in the Acknowledgements page and the amazing communities that we are honored to serve.

The findings of this report should help local leaders better understand current trends and motivate them to address evolving community needs. While the data was gathered from six Colorado mountain resort counties, the results should provide widespread insights for other high amenity places throughout the Mountain West. In Colorado, most solutions are local, but many of the impacts outlined in this report can only be addressed through regional and state -level cooperation, and in some cases structural changes to policy, practice, and law.

Many public and private sector professionals have spent their careers on these issues, many of the communities studied have been “doing housing” for decades, and many are innovating in the housing sector right now, though, few are putting all options on the table. There is always that sticky matter of political courage and public resistance to change.

We hope this report be a wakeup call for local leaders, a renewed call to action for those already involved in tackling community challenges, and a reference point for those seeking to understand the trends so they can have a positive impact on the places they live. The consequences are real.

Will some communities reach a tipping point of unfillable jobs that are necessary to sustain their reputations and quality of life? Will some communities be fully commoditized and lose their soul? The report notes that no place yet has “built their way out” of the issue. Is that possible? Does that mean that a community “couldn’t?” There are many approaches to the issue. We recommend looking at each of them again.

NWCCOG and CAST will be hosting a panel discussion for members on the report on June 30<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm hosted by Jason Blevins from The Colorado Sun. Watch your inbox for that invitation to the members of both organizations.

*Jon Stavney*

Executive Director NWCCOG

*Margaret Bowes*

Executive Director CAST

*(This FDD is excerpted from the Introduction to the report written by Jon and Margaret.)*

## News from around the region

### Housing Crisis – Emergency?

The recent increased pressure on the housing market is causing some communities to consider declaring it an Emergency. Frisco did, as has Crested Butte. Whether housing shortage qualifies for a federal or state disaster declaration like a natural disaster is unlikely, but these places are saying, “This Time is Different.” Looking at a problem as a crisis rather than just an endemic dead-horse issue changes the discussion. Both are certainly getting attention through the action even if it is largely symbolic.

Earlier this month the Crested Butte Community Development Director indicated that the lack of housing is contributing to the downward spiral of fewer workers, causing fewer jobs filled, causing businesses to struggle to stay open – which will eventually cause lower sales taxes, fewer services – the list goes on. Yes, it is an emergency. The town council granted emergency powers to the town manager which included the ability to bypass certain regulations (their own regulations). The Colorado Sun [article](#) details this and other actions Crested Butte is taking to fight the challenge head-on.



Closer to home, Hunter Mortenson Mayor of Frisco, who is a panelist on the Mountain Migration panel, has generated much discussion as well. Mortenson, who grew up in Frisco, has stopped short of declaring an Emergency for the time being but told a reporter from [9News](#) he wants to “put housing at the forefront of every discussion we have as a town.” The article goes on to outline a just a few of the innovative ways businesses in Frisco continue to chip away at the problem. From a [CBS4 interview](#), Mortenson voiced concern not just for Frisco, but for Summit County as a whole, when he said, “If we suffer up here in any of our mountain towns, our recreation economy is going to suffer and that’s going to go back down to Denver and the Capital and their budgeting in the future, so I’m really trying to draw those connections and show that it’s not just an emergency for us.” The approach may be changing the discussion.

Many agree emergency declarations are normally reserved for acts of God, such as disease or flood, while an emergency declaration would be mostly symbolic, but it would have the same goal declarations for natural disasters do — raising awareness – only without the Federal funds.

In an email exchange with NWCCOG asking if Housing shortage qualifies as a Declared Emergency, Birch Barron, Director of Emergency Management for Eagle County said that he certainly understands that housing is an “emergency” in many senses of the word. He cautions that a symbolic gesture aimed at

mobilizing the community and government needed to be considered. He suggests expectations need to be clear from the start, so staff doesn't waste time spinning their wheels on poorly defined goals.



Photo Credit - Thy Vo, Colorado Sun

## Colorado cities can now require developers to build affordable housing

On May 28, 2021, Governor Jared Polis signed HB 1117 which enables local governments to require developers to include below-market rate units in new or redeveloped rental projects, negating a 20-year-old precedent that has blocked Colorado municipalities from requiring developers to build affordable units. The [Colorado Sun article](#) quoted Polis as saying, "Communities are strongest when people who work in a community can live in the community, and that's something that sadly we have been losing." This bill

gives local governments more control when working with developers on new projects. While most municipalities are excited about the new options, some opponents believe the bill will have negative impacts – forcing developers to shift cost increases to their tenants resulting in increased rents.

Supporters argue changes in zoning and regulatory relief will offset any negative impacts. When the legislature gets involved in local issues, the results are often mixed. As hot a topic as housing is, expect more activity next year from the legislature.

## Just barely summer and fire restrictions take effect.

All across the region fire restrictions are being put into place – and it's just barely summer. Higher than normal heat, low moisture, and influx of hikers and other recreationists have got officials concerned. In this article from The [Denver Channel 7](#) website, one official was quoted as saying, "With the level of fire danger we are seeing, one spark could quickly spread into a dangerous wildfire threatening lives, property and natural resources." Most have moved to Stage One restrictions – check with your community to see what that means for you.

Along with fire restriction many counties are encouraging homeowners to create defensible space around their homes which includes removing slash and laddering trees to mitigate danger. [Summit County](#) instituted a free chipping program years ago for disposal of branches, logs, and small trees. They have excellent participation rates from private landowners, no small part because of how well they post and promote the service. The chipping program has certain rules and a schedule which began in June and will end in August. To find more information [click here](#). Looks like it's going to be a hot, dry summer – let's all commit to making it a safe one. That again looks to mean no campfires.



## "I think you're on mute..." Vintage Impacts the Community

This may be the most uttered phrase in the past year. Remote meetings have allowed the Vintage staff to extend their impact. Below is a list of how Vintage employees have leveraged this opportunity.

We've all been on Zoom overload for the gazillions of meetings we're taking remotely and the staff at Vintage is no different! You may have thought that we've been busy working with our older adults and caregivers (we have) but we've also found time to join more zoom calls as members of local and state committees. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but we're doing some pretty neat stuff around here and want you to know about it.



Ceci recently joined the FIRC Community Advisory Committee and helps make recommendations and provide key information on the issues the community of Summit County faces. As a member of this committee, she provides feedback to FIRC from older adults in the community and assist staff in determining important programs and activities for older adults in Summit County.

Jannah has started a new group of regional SHIP Medicare Coordinators to share best practices and brainstorm solutions. The group consists of 12-14 Coordinators from rural regions across Colorado and they're supporting each other to grow their individual SHIP programs by sharing tips, resource, flyers, trainings, processes and providing moral support.

Tina sits on the Eagle County Community Provider Collaborative to discuss transportation needs in Eagle and possible partnerships with the RSVP grant. Members include Vail Health, Visiting Angels, CCM Health, Castle Peak, Home Care & Hospice of the Valley, Eagle County Healthy Aging, and others. This group focuses on the needs of aging individuals in Eagle County and the gaps and barriers they face. It has been a successful group focused on a very complex and fractured health care system from an older adult lens. Tina also is part of the Summit County ESF6 group that looks at emergency preparedness and evacuation support within Summit County for those with access and functional needs (which includes the older adult population).

Erin is the Chair for the Colorado Association for Area Agencies on Aging (c4a), working to provide leadership, advocacy and a voice for the aging network in Colorado. She also sits on the Summit County Combined Housing Authority Advisory Committee and is the Chair for the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC).

Amanda was elected to the Statewide Dental Advisory Committee for the Colorado Senior Dental Plan which provides oversight and guidance for the administration of the Health Care Policy and Financing Senior Dental Plan. Through effective advocacy work, she encouraged the program to cover two new dental procedures allowing for low-cost, pain-free options for dental care treatment. She is also co-leads the PeerPlace Data and Assessment workgroup, which consists of statewide AAA staff and State Unit on Aging staff, to develop new client assessment forms, improve statewide database system, and cultivate improved collection of statewide client data.

**We've Launched!**  
**Our new website is up and running -- check it out. Get to know us better.**  
[NWCCOG.ORG](http://NWCCOG.ORG)

**Next Council Meeting - Thursday, July 8, 2021**

***Full Council and EDD Board Meeting***

Location: Zoom Conference Call, On-Site Location TBD

Time: Council 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Time: EDD Board 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Primary Agenda Items: Approval of 2022 dues; discussion re: Annual Planning Meeting Agenda