



For Immediate Release

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Mountain Migration Report Released

Are COVID Impacts on Housing and Services Here to Stay?

The Mountain Migration Report: Are COVID Impacts on Housing & Services Here to Stay, is a study of the recent influx of people residing in mountain communities, a trend that coincides with a boom in remote work and the COVID pandemic. The survey seeks to quantify what appeared to be unusually full occupancy for many communities throughout the year, and asks, was it indeed a trend, and if so, who were the migrants? It studies the demographics and long-term intent of migrants and how their influx is shaping these places. The focus group portions of the study seeks input on the trend from the real estate and property management professionals. The report concludes that the in-migration is occurring, and that there are significant long-term implications for communities which ought to be addressed.

The report is a joint effort of Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) and Colorado Association of Ski Towns (CAST). The project was scoped with the help of the consultants, Wendy Sullivan of WSW consulting and Melanie Rees in September of 2020. Following a grant award for the project to NWCCOG from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) in December, the project launched in late January, assembling a working group from across the study area to provide input on the survey questions and implementation plan. The survey opened the first week of March and was open through the month, eventually receiving over 5,000 responses from a diverse group across the 6-county survey area. Focus groups of realtors and another of property managers were led by the consultant team who also relied upon an extensive network of title company professionals for data. The report is available as a PDF at both www.nwccog.org and www.coskitowns.com/reports.

Each of the communities in the study was already grappling with a lack of workforce and workforce housing. The Mountain Migration trend magnified those and other issues. Some of the key findings include:

* Many newcomers are working although often times their employers are not within the county. The average household income for newcomers is much higher than households whose employment is generated within the county.

* Rental availability is low while rents have skyrocketed. Fewer tools exist for communities to address the impacts to the rental market than the affordable ownership market.

* Newcomers utilize and value services similarly to long-term residents, but higher occupancy has implications for infrastructure, schools, and community organizations.

* Full-time resident workers whose employment is generated locally are losing ground in their ability to rent or own housing.

* Higher occupancy has direct impacts to quality of life such as crowding throughout the community and in the back country.

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.