



Silverthorne hires housing consultant

The lack of a clear affordable housing strategy concerns Town Council

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SILVERTHORNE — Finding itself with nearly a half-million dollars in tax revenues earmarked for affordable housing and no definite plan on how to spend it, the Silverthorne town council decided recently to hire a Boulder consulting company to provide a strategic housing plan.

The study, to be compiled by RCC Associates — the same firm hired by the Summit Combined Housing Authority (SCHA) in 2007 to assess housing needs countywide — is intended to give the town a clear three- to five-year roadmap for how to allocate monies for affordable housing, town manager Kevin Batchelder said.

“A year’s gone by (since the beginning of the earmarked sales tax and impact fee collection), and we’ve collected a lot of money,” he said. “Without knowing what our implementation plan is, it’s hard to decide what programs we want to participate in.”

Possible options for the town’s affordable housing strategy include “buy-down” programs, down-payment assistance, and construction partnerships with developers.

The 2007 study commissioned by SCHA divided the county into regions — rather than municipalities — for the purpose of needs assessment, and Silverthorne as a town might have its own specific affordable housing requirements, Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Long said.

“We don’t have the same need in Silverthorne as they do in the Upper Blue,” she said.

Community development director Mark Leidal told the council his department could use guidance in establishing affordable housing priorities.

“I’ve had at least a dozen developers come in and say, ‘So you want housing — what do you want?’” he said.

The proposal for the \$20,000 study raised questions from some councilmembers, despite garnering unanimous approval.

“I’m a little sceptical about another study,” Councilmember Kevin McDonald said. “We’ve spent money on studies and a big thing thuds on your desk.”

While endorsing the expense, Councilmember Vince Lanuza echoed McDonald’s reservations.

“A number of us share Kevin’s concern,” he said. “But I say go ahead with it.”

Long, who serves as Silverthorne’s representative on the SCHA, said she thinks the RRC agreement will give the town what it needs to move forward as quickly as possible.

“We’re looking for a work plan instead of more studies,” she said.

The agreement calls for RRC to begin work immediately with an anticipated completion date sometime this summer.

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