

# Steamboat moves on affordable housing

by Maggie Berglund, WCC organizer

On January 24, the Steamboat Springs City Council will have the first reading of a new ordinance that will generate more affordable housing for the city. This reading signals the culmination of months of work by the Community Alliance of the Yampa Valley, a community group of Western Colorado Congress.

The ordinance is an inclusionary zoning ordinance and will require all new residential developments in the city to include 15% deed-restricted, permanently affordable housing for working residents.

In Colorado, Telluride, Aspen, Summit County, Eagle County, and Boulder also have inclusionary zoning ordinances or a similar provision. Adoption of the ordinance in Steamboat Springs is expected to happen on February 7, when the City Council will have the second reading of the ordinance.

In January 2005, the Community Alliance

hosted Mick Ireland as the speaker at their annual meeting. Ireland, a Pitkin County Commissioner, presented staggering statistics on the changes in communities throughout Colorado.

Our communities are losing their working class populations, young people, families, and children. Steamboat Springs is known for its friendly, real town, family atmosphere. The visitors that drive the economy come to Steamboat Springs for this atmosphere.

However, Ireland's presentation made it clear that the population which creates this sense of community is disappearing. He explained that the most important factor in keeping the workforce, families, and children in the community was ensuring they had places to live. His presentation galvanized the community's understanding and declaration of the need for workforce housing in the city.

The Community Alliance responded by mak-

ing Workforce Housing a campaign issue. In August members hosted "Maintaining our Community through Workforce Housing: What's in the Toolbox," a panel discussion on the tools available to develop workforce housing.

The event was attended by members, developers, activists, city councilors, candidates in the upcoming city council race, county commissioners, county planning staff and commissioners, and city staff.

Meanwhile, the Community Alliance's Growth Done Right Committee had developed a strategy and message. They were attending all the local decision making meetings that involved new developments, or community plan revisions. They carried the message, "We need housing for our workforce. New developments generate the need for more workers, where will they live? What will Steamboat be if the locals no longer live here?"

Momentum built from all this activity and before the fall elections, the city council had directed staff to begin writing an inclusionary zoning ordinance.

However, the ordinance is not a done deal, yet. The planning commission reviewed the plan on January 5, and the Housing Authority reviewed it on January 12. Both of these entities will make recommendations to the City Council at the first reading of the ordinance.

City Council must have two readings of the ordinance and they can make changes before the final adoption. Many details need to be discussed and decided by the community and our elected decision makers before adoption, but the City Council has shown their commitment to the issue and Community Alliance will be there to support them and provide input on the ordinance.