

Washoe County studying need for workforce housing in North Lake Tahoe

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INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev.- As part of an effort to study the need for workforce housing in Incline Village and Crystal Bay, Washoe County and the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce have asked local stakeholders to fill out an online survey.

This is one of many methods an outside firm, Praxis Consulting, will use to determine if there is a need for workforce housing on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe, said Eric Young, Washoe County planner.

Workforce housing differs from affordable housing, according to county definition. Workforce housing is available to people in the workforce making up to 120 percent of the area medium income.

Affordable housing is for people who earn 80 percent or less of the area medium income.

Young said the need for the study became apparent when the county was considering different projects piecemeal, instead of considering the larger situation in Incline Village and Crystal Bay.

“We’re taking two steps back from the affordable housing discussion,” Young said. “We’re saying let’s take a deep breath and put some real time and quality information into finding out what the real needs of the local business community and workforce are.”

The online survey was sent to many business owners and large employers in the area, Young said.

The discussion about workforce housing was prompted in part by anecdotal evidence that some business development in Incline and Crystal Bay is impacted negatively by a lack of a stable workforce, Young said.

“There is a sense there is a great benefit to having your local workforce, your public employees and service employees, live locally,” he said.

The study and assessment will help determine how much of the workforce lives in Incline Village and what needs employers have when it comes to staffing, he said. “Some people have commuted to Incline for 20 years, but we are studying if those are the majority or the minority,” he said.

The online survey includes questions like:

- What is the size of your year-round workforce in Incline Village/Crystal Bay?
- If your workforce in Incline Village/Crystal Bay changes by season, what is its approximate size by season?
- On a scale of 1 to 5, with “1” being a “high priority” and “5” being a “low priority,” how would you rank workforce housing among the many competing needs in this community?
- What do you see as the greatest housing need or problem in the Incline Village/Crystal Bay area?
- Does the cost or availability of housing in Incline Village/Crystal Bay have an impact on your business?

Once the survey is completed, Praxis will continue to analyze the dynamics of housing in the community, Young said. Once the report on the research is ready, possibly in March, the county will organize community discussions about the research to determine possibly policy responses, he said.

“Right now we’re just trying to establish what the need really is,” he said.

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