



**MAD RIVER VALLEY**  
HOUSING COALITION



**MAD RIVER VALLEY**  
PLANNING DISTRICT

**12/11/20**

**Dear Fayston, Waitsfield & Warren Selectboards:**

Thank you for your participation at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual MRV Town Leadership Meeting on 11/19/20. The event provided an opportunity for selectboard members from Fayston, Waitsfield & Warren to engage in a dialogue dedicated to the local challenge of affordable housing in the Mad River Valley, identify common ground, and highlight meaningful next steps.

11/19/20 MRV Town Leadership Meeting materials

- [Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Meeting Brochure](#)
- [Video Recording \(via MRVTV\)](#)

The 11/19/20 meeting culminated in an agreement to further explore four action items:

1. Municipal contribution toward a MRV Housing Coalition “Housing Coordinator” position;
2. Development of a MRV Housing Trust Fund;
3. Valley-wide approach to Short Term Rentals; and,
4. Multi-town support for the Irasville growth center.

MRV Housing Coalition & MRV Planning District staff have prepared this document for the purpose of laying out next steps for each of the four items. Included are descriptions, necessary context, and strategy for progressing these items to action. We greatly appreciate your willingness to consider these next steps. Please feel free to reach out with any and all questions, comments, and ideas.

**ACTION ITEM 1: Municipal Contribution toward a MRV Housing Coalition “Housing Coordinator” Position**

The Mad River Valley Housing Coalition ([MRVHC](#)) has depended on the dedication and passion of its volunteers for the past 3 decades. As a volunteer-based organization, the effectiveness of its work has varied throughout the years. In 2019, the MRVHC Board of Directors (BOD) took steps to reorganize the coalition by electing a new BOD and undertaking a mission and visioning process. With generous financial support from the MRV Community Fund, the MRVHC BOD was able to hire its first consultant in January of 2020 in an effort to take the plans and approaches talked about at monthly meetings

and turn them into action. In 2020, the MRVHC met and exceeded all of the following goals.

#### MRVHC goals for 2020:

- Identify impediments to housing
  - *(worked with state and local organizations to create a list of impediments to housing in the MRV)*
- Develop a strategic plan
  - *(created a Mission and Vision Document & Strategic Plan)*
- Community outreach and education
  - *(made several housing presentations to local organizations and churches, Put on the "Housing Talk Series")*
- Forge partnerships with both local and statewide housing organizations
  - *(worked with Downstreet, VSHA, VNRC, Homeshare VT, Habitat for Humanity, MRVPCD, MRVCF and others)*
- Create pilot programs to encourage incremental change
  - *(ADU Program)*
- Assist towns in creation or revision of by-laws to promote affordable housing
  - *(worked with Waitsfield and Warren PCs on by-law revisions)*
- Host tri-town dialogue around large scale housing affordability actions
  - *(did not host, but participated in and helped organize)*

Seed funding for the Housing Coordinator position was for 1 year, expiring in early 2021. The MRVHC hoped to prove the effectiveness of the position prior to asking for more funding, and feels confident this position has had a major impact on the organization's ability to effect change. In order to fund another year of this position, the MRVHC needs to raise \$24,000. The MRVHC asks the towns to lead the way in demonstrating their commitment to the MRV's housing challenge by allocating \$4,000 each to help fund this position. The MRVHC is confident a municipal commitment would enable us to leverage the funds to raise an additional \$12,000 match from Vermont Foundations. The contribution from the towns will support the goals listed below.

#### MRVHC goals for 2021:

- Expand the MRV ADU Program to create 5 new long-term affordable rental ADUs each year
- Work with related MRV organizations and committees to create a Home Weatherization program for low-middle income families
- Engage with the community to re-examine impediments to housing
- Research strategies for structuring, funding, implementing and managing a Housing Trust Fund. Create a report for the three MRV Towns outlining findings and recommendations
- Assist MRVPCD in developing a Valley-wide approach to Short Term Rentals;
- Continue to support the 3 Town Planning Commissions in their efforts to promote strategic density and affordability in housing
- Community education and inclusion in on-going dialogue regarding potential solutions

- Identify land parcels that are suitable for affordable housing
- Create visuals that demonstrate infill type of housing in certain areas within the MRV
- Establish guidelines for public/private partnerships – identifying types of permanent affordable ownership structures
- Continue to collaborate with local partners (*MRVPD, MRVCF and other non-profits*) and State organizations (*VSHA, VNRC, CVOEO, VHFA, VLT, Efficiency VT, Downstreet, CVH4H*)

## **ACTION ITEM 2: Explore structure and management options for MRV Housing Trust Fund with end goal of creating HTF in 2021**

### **Suggested steps and roles:**

1) MRVHC develops strategy: White Paper/Recommendations created by MRVHC staff person

- Reach out to Housing Trust Funds within VT to understand their structure, management and use.
- Reach out to national HTF organizations to understand best practices and recommended limitations on use of funds.
- Research potential funding options and create list of recommended funding methods.
- Devise several potential management options.
- Engage with community to determine greatest funding needs.
- Create list of recommended uses for funds and basic structure for disseminating funds.

2) MRVHC staff person works with selectboards to determine most desirable management option

3) MRVHC continues dialogue with community and receives feedback on funding options and uses of fund

4) MRVHC uses community input to recommend a list of ways HTF can be used. Select Boards review/edit/approve unified list.

5) Selectboards receive community feedback collected by MRVHC and determine best funding structure

6) Municipalities make decision to implement HTF

## **ACTION ITEM 3: Valley-wide approach to Short Term Rentals**

Short-term rentals have become an important element of the MRV housing market with the rise in popularity of online platforms such as Airbnb and HomeAway/VRBO. As defined by the State of Vermont, a short-term rental (STR) refers to “a furnished home, condominium, or other dwelling rented to the transient, traveling, or vacationing public for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days and for more than 14 days per calendar year.”

The MRV Planning District has undertaken research and analysis of local STRs over the years, including a partnership with Middlebury College in 2016 in developing a lodging inventory, and incorporation of a STR section in the [2017 MRV Housing Study](#) (pg. 17-23) as well as the [2020 MRV Housing Demand & Market Analysis](#) (pg. 36-37).

This research has increased our understanding of STRs and their associated impacts. As of October 2019, there were a combined total of 523 listings in Warren, Waitsfield, and Fayston. Available data suggests that the number of listings has increased by roughly a factor of 3X since early 2016. Associated impacts raised in the MRV community range from public safety, impact on community character, loss of rental housing stock, parking, noise, trash, etc.

MRVDP is dedicating a considerable amount of its resources through the winter of 2020 to the continuation of these efforts. MRVDP staff are undertaking a MRV Short Term Rental Project that explores the legal opportunities for municipalities, identifies pertinent case studies, and includes a draft proposal of what a STR program could look like within the MRV. The project will explore STR inventorying, tracking, registration, licensing, and associated impacts. It will summarize opportunities enabled by the passage of Act 179 by the VT Legislature this past October, which enables municipalities to regulate short-term rentals. It will summarize dialogue with similar communities that have undertaken similar efforts. Last, this effort will present options for a coordinated approach to alleviating the impacts of STRs, which will include both valley-wide steps as well as town-specific approaches. MRVDP staff look forward to direct collaboration with the three Zoning Administrators through the development of this effort.

#### **ACTION ITEM 4: Multi-town support for the Irasville growth center**

Nearly 200,000 square feet of mixed-use space, over 80 residential dwellings, and several recreation facilities have been constructed in Irasville since it was first designated by Waitsfield as its growth center in the 1970s.

The Waitsfield Planning Commission is in the beginning stages of taking a fresh look as to how Irasville's evolving compact and walkable mixed-use village can best serve the commercial, cultural and housing needs of the Mad River Valley. While located within Waitsfield, Irasville plays an important role for residents across the MRV. It was mentioned at the 2020 Tri-Town Selectboard Meeting that the responsibility, and associated burden, of serving as "the MRV's downtown" sits squarely on the shoulders of the Town of Waitsfield. Further, the question was raised as to what potential role could neighboring municipalities provide in support of Waitsfield's efforts.

The Waitsfield Planning Commission is in the final stages of a wetlands analysis that will identify and map wetlands and other important natural resources. Come Spring 2021, the PC is looking to utilize this natural resource info to inform a new master

planning effort for mixed use infill. MRVPD staff are excited to support the PC in this effort, which will include exploring avenues for multi-town collaboration. This is likely to be a multi-year effort, with various opportunities for insight, support, and vision.