

Housing Open Mic – Answers to Your Questions

Responses to questions raised before and during the June 2, 2026, conversation

Thank you to everyone who joined our June 2 Open Mic on **Housing as Critical Infrastructure** – and especially to those who sent questions in advance or asked them during the session. We weren't able to address every question live, so we've gathered them here with our responses.

PART 1: NOT REACHED LIVE

Questions We Didn't Get To During the Event

Q1 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“Small desirable communities have seen rental prices climb, partly from a rise in short-term rentals, in rural communities with few professional opportunities. What's a good solution?”

– An economic development professional, Wind River region

RESPONSE

This is a real and growing tension in Wyoming's amenity and gateway communities, and there's no single fix – but the most durable levers are local. Short-term rental (STR) policy (licensing, caps in certain zones, or primary-residence requirements) is set by the city and county governments, and several Wyoming communities are actively testing approaches.

Research from [WBC's Pathways to Prosperity housing study](#) specifically flagged Teton, Lincoln, and Park counties as places where wealthy in-migrants are driving prices up faster than local wages can keep up. The most effective response pairs local STR policy with the addition of an attainable year-round housing supply. The [Wyoming Zoning Toolkit](#) is a practical starting point for communities ready to update local codes that are part of what's blocking that supply.

Q2 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What development models from other states could be considered for Wyoming?”

– A tourism and economic development professional, Laramie

RESPONSE

Rather than import a model wholesale, the more useful question is which gap a given tool is built to close. Within Wyoming, five communities – Sheridan, Shoshoni, Greybull, Rolling Hills, and Burlington – are tackling housing as their primary economic barrier through [WBC's Assessment to Action](#) program. 83% of all A2A teams are still working their problem 12+ months later. Those are the peer conversations worth having before looking out of state.

[Albany County's housing trust fund](#) is the Wyoming model most often cited for a more formal funding structure. At the local regulatory level, the [Wyoming Zoning Toolkit](#) is the most practical starting point. And [WyoNAHRO](#) is forming specifically to share cross-community learning on what's working.

Q3 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What’s the connection between student housing instability and long-term workforce outcomes for Wyoming?”

– A university researcher, UW

RESPONSE

It’s a direct line. When students training for the exact occupations Wyoming is short on can’t find stable, affordable housing, some leave before they ever enter the workforce, and others form their early-career roots in another state. Housing instability during training is one of the quiet accelerants of the outmigration problem: two of three young Wyomingites already leave, and the inability to afford a place to live while studying or starting out makes staying here harder than it should be.

This is where housing connects to the work of the WBC and partners like the [Wyoming Department of Workforce Services](#) – apprenticeships, workforce training, and the broader question of whether Wyoming is building a future worth staying for. We’d value continuing this conversation with the University.

Q4 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What federal funding sources is the State exploring?”

– An economic development professional, Wind River region

RESPONSE

Several were referenced during the event. CDBG ([Community Development Block Grant](#)) funds – administered by WCDA – can support community infrastructure and housing-related needs. The Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) also administers federal affordable-housing programs and serves as a bond pass-through.

WBC’s [broadband programs](#) (Connect Wyoming and BEAD) also bring significant federal infrastructure dollars into communities. We encourage you to start with [WCDA](#) for housing-specific federal tools and to reach out to your [WBC Regional Director](#) for help navigating which source fits your project.

Q5 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What can we do with the tax base to help communities fund critical infrastructure?”

– A city official, Kemmerer

RESPONSE

Research from [WBC’s Pathways to Prosperity housing study](#) specifically identified insufficient investment in water infrastructure as one of the two most binding constraints on housing development statewide – alongside restrictive local zoning. The infrastructure funding gap isn’t just a local budget problem; it’s a documented structural barrier blocking the private market from responding to demand that already exists.

WBC’s [Building Resilient Communities](#) (BRC) program exists precisely because local tax bases often can’t carry these costs alone. Roughly a third of Open Mic participants named state investment to unlock private capital as their community’s most-needed tool. This is a question we’re carrying directly into our work with the legislature.

Q6 ACKNOWLEDGED LIVE – FULLER RESPONSE HERE

“The very first question that should be asked is why the private sector is not responding to what you describe as strong market signals that a shortage exists.”

– A Wyoming resident

RESPONSE

This is the right challenge to put on the table, and there’s solid research behind the answer. [WBC’s Pathways to Prosperity housing study](#) measured the supply elasticity of Wyoming’s housing market: how much new construction responds when prices rise. The answer: less than almost anywhere else in the country. Of the 50 largest homebuilders operating in the Mountain West, only one operates in Wyoming – and that one is a nonprofit. That’s not because demand is absent. It’s because, in many communities, the deal doesn’t pencil.

Construction costs are high in a rural state; infrastructure often isn’t there to make sites buildable; and local zoning, despite Wyoming’s low-regulation reputation, often restricts density in ways that block supply. WBC’s role isn’t to replace the private market – it’s to remove the specific barriers that keep the private market from doing what the demand signals say it should.

PART 2: ANSWERED LIVE

Questions Addressed During the Event

These questions were answered live by Josh and the panel. The full discussion is in the recording at wbc.pub/TOT_Events.

Q7 ANSWERED LIVE

“How can the average leader advocate for housing development?”

– A tourism and economic development professional, Laramie

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE

Start by reframing housing as economic infrastructure in your own community – in conversations with your council, your employers, and your neighbors. Show up at local decision points and at the state level. Specific, local stories about jobs and workers move decision-makers more than statistics. The [Housing Toolkit](#) on the WBC website offers a variety of helpful resources. (Note: WBC is making updates to this page so check back often for more information.)

Q8 ANSWERED LIVE

“How can rural business leaders advocate for growth in small towns?”

– A tourism and economic development professional, Laramie

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE

Connect growth to the workers and families your business needs, and partner regionally – small towns are stronger advocating together than competing against each other. [WBC’s regional team](#) is a direct resource.

Q9 ANSWERED LIVE

“How does specialized materials delivery cost impact a rural state like Wyoming?”

– A tourism and economic development professional, Laramie

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE

It raises the cost of every project and is one reason private development doesn't always pencil in Wyoming – distance, freight, and a thin local contractor base all add cost that doesn't show up the same way in denser states.

Q10 ANSWERED LIVE

“Local zoning and master plans are almost impossible to get around – how do we get local governments to change their thinking?”

– A volunteer zoning administrator, Byron

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE

Local barriers were named repeatedly as the first thing to address. Change usually starts with local champions making the economic case and peer examples from communities that have streamlined their own processes. WBC can help connect communities.

Q11 ANSWERED LIVE

“What is WBC's role in solving this, and what partnership opportunities exist?”

– Habitat for Humanity of the Eastern Bighorns, Sheridan

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE

WBC's role is to remove barriers to help businesses succeed and communities grow their capacity. Because businesses can't hire workers who have nowhere to live, housing infrastructure is squarely part of that work. Partnership opportunities include WBC's [community infrastructure programs](#), the [regional team](#), [WCDA](#), [WyoNAHRO](#), and [Wyoming Neighbors for Housing](#).

Q12 ANSWERED LIVE

“Why don't we talk about bonds for infrastructure and building?”

– A property owner and producer, Byron

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE

[WCDA](#) is the entity with authority to issue bonds for housing development in Wyoming and also serves as a bond pass-through agency. The Governor's office holds roughly \$1.2 billion in tax-exempt bond volume cap available for all authorized bond programs.

PART 3: FROM REGISTRANT SUBMISSIONS

Additional Questions Submitted Before the Event

These questions were submitted by registrants when they signed up. Many go deeper than what the live format allowed. We've provided full responses to each below.

Q13 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“How can WBC assist a city with a major infrastructure need – specifically water – to accommodate a new business planning to bring 40+ jobs? I want to build dormitories for my flight school in Rawlins, but the city can't afford the water infrastructure.”

– An aviation business operator, Rawlins

RESPONSE

This is exactly the kind of situation WBC's community infrastructure programs are designed for – a real business, a real growth opportunity, and a specific infrastructure gap standing between the two. The primary tool to explore is the [Building Resilient Communities](#) (BRC) grant and loan program, which can fund critical, publicly owned infrastructure like water systems when the need is tied to a documented economic development impact.

In addition, CDBG funds – which [WCDA](#) administers – can support community infrastructure tied to economic development. The infrastructure and the housing are one economic development project, not two. Reach out to [WBC's regional team](#) directly to walk through which tools fit your situation and timeline.

Q14 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“We’ve faced challenge after challenge for six years, bringing housing solutions to Sheridan. How can WBC help galvanize understanding in local municipalities and streamline the challenges for developers so that time and interest carry isn’t lost?”

– A housing developer, Sheridan

RESPONSE

Six years is a long time to carry interest costs while waiting for a municipality to move, and this frustration came up throughout the Open Mic in different forms. WBC's role is most useful in two ways: helping communities understand the economic cost of delay in real numbers (jobs, tax revenue, workers lost), and connecting developers with tools and peers that have helped similar projects get unstuck.

The [Wyoming Zoning Toolkit](#) was developed specifically to help communities identify and remove the code barriers slowing housing development. WBC's regional team can also facilitate direct conversations with municipal decision-makers – sometimes the most useful thing we can do is be in the room with a developer and a planning commission at the same time. Reach out to your [WBC Regional Director](#) to start that conversation.

Q15 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“My understanding is that WBC is working with Thayne on housing. I’m not sure any residents are aware of what’s being offered. As a resident, how can I help move this forward?”

– An economic development director, Lincoln County

RESPONSE

You're putting your finger on something important. Community engagement is not automatic, and even good work can stall if the people most affected don't know it's happening or don't feel they have a role in it. The most useful thing you can do is exactly what you're doing: ask the question, and then help bridge the gap between what WBC is doing and what the community knows about.

Practically: ask your [WBC Regional Director](#) for a plain-language update on where the Thayne housing work stands and what the next decision points are. Then help identify the right local people to be in the room – employers, the town council, young residents,

and local lenders. Community projects that lack local champions rarely finish. We welcome your involvement.

Q16 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“We loved the housing work proposed under the BRC Grant for Cheyenne. Seeing SLIB shut it down was disappointing. What can we do to support this kind of work in the future?”

– Jason Mincer, Executive Director, Wyoming Neighbors for Housing

RESPONSE

We were disappointed too – and the honest answer is that the case for housing as economic infrastructure wasn’t made compellingly enough at that table. That’s part of what the June 2 conversation was designed to address: building a body of testimony, data, and community voice that makes it harder to say no the next time.

[Wyoming Neighbors for Housing](#) is doing exactly the right work. The most direct path forward is to keep showing up: at SLIB meetings, at legislative hearings, and in conversations with local elected officials. Specific, local stories – “I can’t hire a nurse because she can’t find a place to live” – are more powerful than statistics in those conversations.

Q17 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“Would love more information about ideas from around the state that might help, especially Housing Trust Funds and nonprofit partnerships.”

– A community leader, Thermopolis

RESPONSE

Housing Trust Funds are one of the most flexible and durable tools a community can build – Laramie and Sheridan’s efforts are examples. The basic structure: a dedicated local fund (seeded by a combination of municipal dollars, employer contributions, and philanthropic capital) that can make flexible loans or grants to housing projects the private market won’t touch. The fund recycles as loans are repaid, meaning one appropriation supports multiple projects over time.

On the nonprofit side, Habitat for Humanity affiliates across Wyoming are active partners – and A2A communities like Greybull have been actively negotiating Habitat partnerships. [Wyoming Neighbors for Housing](#) and [WyoNAHRO](#) are building the statewide network for this kind of cross-community learning. Reach out to [WBC’s regional team](#) – we can connect you with communities that have been down this road.

Q18 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What can be done with housing for workers, and what’s the potential for growing apprenticeship and training programs to keep our youth and young adults in the state?”

– A community organizer, Cody

RESPONSE

These two things are more connected than they might look. The reason young people leave Wyoming isn’t just wages or housing costs in isolation – it’s the combination.

Addressing both at the same time is what makes a community a place where young people actually stay.

On housing for workers: the most effective approaches start with employer engagement – what are workers earning, what can they realistically afford, and what would it take to get housing that pencils at that price point? [WBC's Assessment to Action](#) (A2A) program has helped communities tackle exactly this kind of workforce-housing connection. The [Wyoming Business Alliance](#) is also focused on workforce issues, and the [Wyoming Department of Workforce Services](#) offers apprenticeship and training opportunities. Reach out to your [WBC Regional Director](#) to connect with the right people on these fronts.

Q19 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What steps can be taken to determine whether man camps built for data center construction workers could be repurposed as low-cost housing after the camp is no longer needed?”

– A candidate for Laramie County Commissioner

RESPONSE

This is a genuinely creative question. Man camps are typically designed for temporary use – dense, utilitarian, and built to minimum standards for short-term occupancy. Converting them to permanent workforce housing usually requires significant retrofitting for insulation, plumbing, and unit size.

That said, the underlying instinct is exactly right: large-scale construction projects represent a one-time opportunity to negotiate infrastructure and housing outcomes before the shovel goes in the ground, not after. The most effective lever is in the permitting and development agreement phase, where local governments can negotiate with data center developers about what happens to site infrastructure after construction ends. The time to have that conversation is now. WBC can help communities think through those negotiating points before an agreement is signed.

Q20 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“How can we make housing affordable and readily available without becoming as densely populated as places like Utah?”

– A business owner, Pinedale

RESPONSE

This is a question we hear a lot in Wyoming, and it's worth taking seriously. The short answer: Wyoming's housing shortage doesn't require Utah-level density to solve. Utah's density is driven by a very different population trajectory – Wyoming's challenge is a supply problem in specific communities where demand exists.

What actually helps: allowing more housing types in more places – duplexes, accessory dwelling units, small apartment buildings – rather than requiring every unit to be a large single-family home on a large lot. This 'missing middle' housing can meaningfully expand supply without dramatically changing the character of a community. The [Wyoming Zoning Toolkit](#) is a practical resource for communities that want to thread this needle. Being intentional about prioritizing infill and existing-infrastructure areas

over sprawl is how communities stay true to their character while making room for the workers they need.

Q21 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“Looking to create a task force in Gillette similar to what Laramie created – and would like to be included on housing opportunities such as this event.”

– A real estate professional, Gillette

RESPONSE

Great news: WBC is actively working to connect with Gillette community leaders on exactly this. If you haven't already been contacted or connected, please reach out to our [Northeast Regional Director](#).

On building a housing task force: Laramie's model started with a diverse group who agreed the problem was economic, not just social – employers, the local economic development organization, the University, young residents, developers, and local elected officials. They set a shared problem statement, defined their timeline, and started chipping away at specific local barriers. [WBC's Assessment to Action](#) (A2A) program provides a facilitated framework for exactly this kind of work. Several Wyoming communities have already used it to tackle housing – Sheridan, Shoshoni, and Greybull among them. Reach out to your [WBC Regional Director](#) to learn more.

Q22 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What is currently available for people looking to buy an affordable home? How do we protect the rights of homeowners and renters while helping new homeowners get into the market?”

– An early childhood educator and a community banker

RESPONSE

For homebuyers, [WCDA](#) is the primary state resource. They offer below-market mortgage programs, down payment assistance, and first-time homebuyer programs for Wyomingites who are ready to buy but need help with the initial financial hurdle.

On renter and homeowner protections, these policies sit primarily at the local and state legislative level. The most effective advocacy shows decision-makers that unstable renters and locked-out first-time buyers are an economic problem – when your workforce can't find stable housing, your businesses can't hire. [Wyoming Neighbors for Housing](#) is the right organization to connect with if you're interested in advocating on the policy side.

Q23 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“Do we have any data from other states showing the impact of man camps on local housing? Are workers who don't want to stay in man camps renting in the area and creating a housing crunch?”

– A workforce programs administrator, Wyoming Workforce Services

RESPONSE

The data is limited, but the anecdotal evidence from Wyoming and similar states is consistent. Some percentage of workers assigned to man camps do choose to rent in nearby communities – for privacy, proximity to services, or family. When that percentage

is significant relative to a small town's rental supply, it can create real pressure on rents for long-term residents.

The oil and gas boom in Wyoming in the late 2000s produced evidence of this dynamic near major extraction sites. The emerging data center construction wave is likely to create similar patterns in communities with thin rental markets. WBC is tracking this closely, and [Wyoming Workforce Services](#) is a key partner in understanding the labor supply side. We'd welcome a direct conversation about what you're seeing in the field.

Q24 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“What comes first: Housing, Water and Sewer, Heat and Power, Broadband, Roads and Bridges – or is it talent, a business-friendly environment, industry, and jobs?”

– A technology CEO, Laramie

RESPONSE

Neither comes first – and that's actually the heart of the problem. Communities that wait for jobs before building housing infrastructure, or wait for housing before attracting employers, tend to wait indefinitely. The private market can't respond to demand it can't see, and workers won't relocate to communities where there's nowhere to live.

Wyoming's [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) identifies housing as one of five core barriers alongside workforce, capital, infrastructure, and diversification – precisely because it has to move in parallel with the rest, not after. The most useful framing isn't 'what comes first' but 'what's the specific binding constraint in this community right now' – and then going after that one thing.

Q25 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“Running for a legislative seat and want to be more informed as a candidate about Wyoming's housing challenge and WBC's role.”

– Legislative candidates from Wright and Laramie

RESPONSE

We're glad you're asking – and the fact that candidates are showing up to this conversation is exactly the kind of legislative engagement housing solutions need. A couple of things every Wyoming legislative candidate should understand: First, *it's an economic problem, not a social services problem* – the cost shows up in businesses that can't fill jobs. Second, the two biggest barriers [research identifies](#) are local zoning restrictions and insufficient infrastructure investment, both of which the state can directly influence. WBC welcomes the opportunity to brief any candidate directly. Reach out to amy.quick@wyo.gov to schedule a conversation with our team.

Q26 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“How would you advise counties on pursuing affordable housing?”

– A candidate for county treasurer

RESPONSE

Counties occupy an interesting position in Wyoming's housing landscape – they have land use authority in unincorporated areas where affordable land often exists, but typically have limited resources to fund housing development directly. The most useful

starting points: understand what your zoning codes actually allow (and inadvertently prohibit), identify whether water and sewer infrastructure is the binding constraint, and build relationships with developers and nonprofits who can move if the regulatory path is clear.

[CDBG](#) funds are available for county-level infrastructure tied to economic development and housing – WCDA administers these for Wyoming. Counties can also be powerful advocates at the SLIB level for community infrastructure investments. [WBC's regional directors](#) work directly with county governments and can help you understand what tools are available and what other counties are doing.

Q27 NOT ANSWERED LIVE

“How does the Wyoming Business Council identify and select beneficiaries of State of Wyoming economic development funding through its operations?”

– A consultant, Laramie

RESPONSE

WBC's programs each have their own eligibility criteria, application processes, and review structures. For community infrastructure grants like BRC, WBC staff review applications based on documented economic impact, community readiness, and alignment with state priorities; the WBC Board of Directors advances a recommendation at public meetings and final funding decisions are made by the [State Loan and Investment Board](#) (SLIB). For business financing tools, decisions are based on creditworthiness, economic impact, and whether WBC participation is necessary to make a viable deal happen.

The full program catalog – including criteria, timelines, and contact information – is available at wyomingbusiness.org. If you have a specific program or situation in mind, our team is the best starting point: the application process works best when a WBC staff member has been involved early in the conversation, before the formal application is submitted. Contact your [WBC Regional Director](#) with any questions and to get started.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Several of these questions are bigger than any one answer – and that's the point. Watch the full housing conversation at wbc.pub/TOT_Events, share your input at wbc.pub/wbcmmission26, and stay connected through the Team of Thousands newsletter at wbc.pub/TOT_Newsletter.