

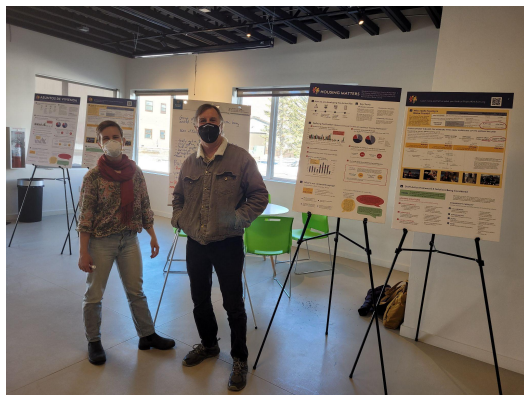


February 28, 2022

From: Kristin McMahon, Communications Supervisor for The Hunger Coalition, 788-0121

Re: Press Release

The Hunger Coalition Joins Forces With Ketchum Housing Action Plan



(February 28, 2022) — The Hunger Coalition has partnered with Ketchum’s Housing Action Plan to help address the affordable housing crisis and resulting hunger crisis in Blaine County. In 2021, The Hunger Coalition provided food for 1 in 4 local people; 2,330 were new to the organization. **Over half of new families reported housing insecurity, compromising their ability to buy food.**

On Feb. 17, Carissa Connelly, housing strategist for the City of Ketchum attended a food distribution at Bloom Community Food Center to get a better idea of the community’s housing needs.

That day, Connelly spoke with dozens of people who shared their struggles with housing. She spoke with people living in trailers, couchsurfing, or crowding three generations into a single-family home.

Hunger Coalition participants are living in poverty or are Asset Limited-Income Constrained-Employed (ALICE) households. ALICE households can be making the area median income of \$75,000 for a family of four, and still living paycheck to paycheck in poverty-like conditions in Blaine County because of the cost of living. In 2018 and pre-pandemic, 41% of Blaine County households were ALICE, and an additional 11% were below the federal poverty level of \$26,500 for a family of four. In housing-speak, this means Hunger Coalition participants are low- and middle-income households, many of whom are forced to choose between paying rent and eating. That is, if they have a roof over their head.

Stories of Housing Insecurity

Jenni Rangel, participant resource coordinator for The Hunger Coalition, and Connelly recorded stories from local people who shared their housing experience.

One family lives in a 2-bedroom house with 6 adults. Rangel elaborated, “The adults in the household are single and employed through construction. The two-bedroom and one-bathroom house is being rented at \$3,000 per month. Having 6 people in the home is the only way they could afford rent in the valley. Rent does not include utilities.”

A comment came from an individual who returned from working on the river to find their rent doubled. “Now living in my car, it’s one-on-one survival. [The community] should look at prioritizing people here for housing, even seasonal.”

Another shared that their rent increased by \$1,000. They could no longer afford it and needed to move ASAP. Rangel explained, “The home is composed of two adults and two children, one a newborn. The husband works in construction and is the only one able to work at the moment. Rent increased by \$1,000 to \$2,500. Aside from hospital bills, utilities and fuel, they are no longer able to afford their home and have to move out soon.”

Connelly believes a step in the right direction is to see each other and work together.

“During my time at The Hunger Coalition, I spoke with seniors on a fixed income, an outdoor guide, teachers including one who retired early due to a disability, tradespeople and professionals, all experiencing housing insecurity,” Connelly said. “The conversations confirmed what the data says; low and middle income households desperately need housing support. There are professionals experiencing homelessness, people foundational to our economy working three jobs and still low-income, and people who are low-income because they are unable to work. I have faith that we can actually do something, but we need to come together.”

The Hunger Coalition is partnering with the City of Ketchum to help develop solutions to the affordable housing crisis and meanwhile address a root cause of hunger.

Kristin McMahon, communications supervisor for The Hunger Coalition said, “A challenge in our tourist economy is a disconnect between the second homeowners and year-round locals. So long as the runs are groomed and rooms are clean, it’s hard for a part-time population to really see the struggle of our teachers, housekeepers, first-responders, waitstaff, lift operators, fishing guides, landscapers, childcare and hospitality workers. The lifeblood of our community is being driven out of the Valley and we need to reckon with this crisis before it’s too late.”

City of Ketchum Develops Housing Action Plan

In response to the housing crisis, the City of Ketchum is developing a Housing Action Plan in collaboration with a Housing Task Force comprised of a cross-section of community members. Actions being analyzed include rental assistance, incentives for converting to long-term rentals, preserving existing affordable housing, homeownership assistance, new housing development, and zoning changes. To ensure adequate funding for these actions, the City Council is considering putting the Local Option Tax (LOT) on the May ballot.

Get involved by attending the March 7 City Council meeting on the Local Option Tax. Visit ProjectKetchum.org/Housing-Matters/ to see trends, updates, engagement opportunities, and data sources. Please let us know what you think!

The Hunger Coalition builds a healthy community through access to good food and addresses the root causes of food insecurity in collaboration with key partners.

The City of Ketchum was founded in 1880 during the mining boom and is now regarded as one of the most popular destinations for winter and summer visitors due to its world-class recreation, restaurants, art galleries and shopping. Ketchum is home to more than 10,000 full- and part-time residents. For more information about the City of Ketchum, visit www.ketchumidaho.org.