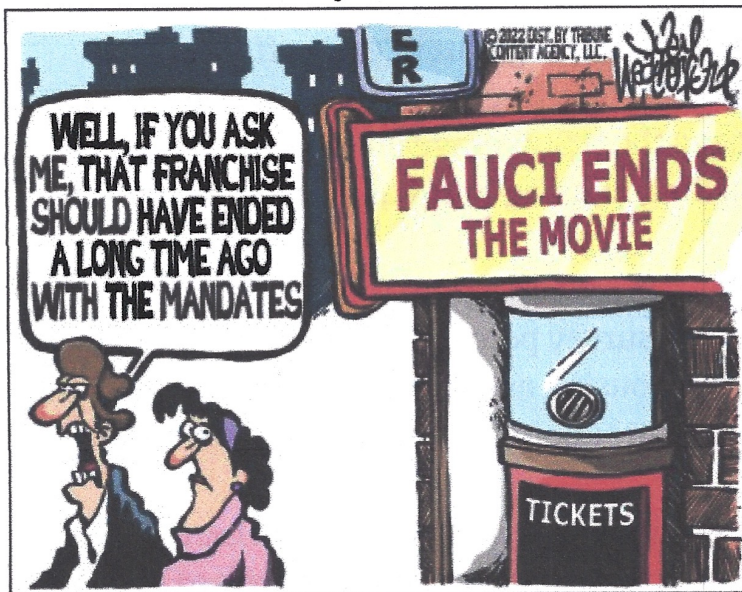


Survey sheds light on housing affordability

The Colorado Springs Gazette · 30 Nov 2022 · A11 · BJ Scott is co-founder of the Affordable Housing Collaborative and a longtime health care expert across the Pikes Peak region.

The Affordable Housing Collaborative endorsed the passage of Proposition 123, which passed by a 52.6% to 47.4% statewide margin. It dedicates 0.1% of state income tax revenue, in years where state revenues exceed the TABOR limit, for affordable housing programs, including aid to develop more housing and assistance for certain renters and home buyers.



In the wake of its passage, the collaborative would like to share some results from affordable housing questions included in the sixth annual ASKCOS survey powered by Elevated Insights. 1,220 El Paso County residents responded between Sept. 6 and Sept. 29 to a 10-minute self-administered web-based survey of those living in the greater Colorado Springs area (El Paso County).

When asked about their satisfaction with cost of living/housing, 72% expressed dissatisfaction. This response was remarkably higher than the 30% who were dissatisfied in 2017. Add to that, 55% say a move is probable or possible within the next 5 years. A desire for more affordable housing/cost of living is the top reason for considering or planning a move from the region. This has an impact on the region's workforce availability.

To gauge the types of housing respondents would be interested in, a variety of housing types were pictured in the survey. Overall interest varied by subgroups but younger residents aged 18-39 years old, residents with annual incomes under \$100,000, residents living in more central and western districts of greater COS, and nonwhite residents expressed interest in a wide variety of housing options such as bungalows, cottage courts, townhomes, and duplexes. This points to a need for zoning that allows for more density.

When asked about the impact of high/ rising housing costs, two-thirds said they have experienced challenges in the past year. Most significantly impacted were residents under 40, nonwhite residents and residents earning under \$100,000/year. For several years, there has been a focus on attracting young people to our region and we've been successful. Now, can we keep them here?

Underscoring the fact that housing affordability is an economic development issue, more than 3 in 4 residents feel the cost of housing in greater COS is affecting the community's ability to grow the economy and/or attract employees. While El Paso County's average income is about 3% above the U.S. average income, average home prices are 40% above the U.S. average making housing affordability a challenge for the workforce.

Though the need for more housing (rental and home ownership) is needed for residents at all income levels, implications of this survey point to the need for continued and expanded efforts to increase affordable housing and that more targeted structures and designs of new housing options be produced for younger, nonwhite and lower-income residents.

Anecdotal comments from the survey underline the data: "We've lived here 10 years and have started contemplating moving out of state just to be able to afford a home." And, "Young people (ages 18-30) cannot afford to live here ... young adults don't have the opportunity live on their own."

I and my fellow collaborative co-founders — David Lord, Mary Stegner, Lee Patke and Randy Scott — have been educating the community since 2018 about the shortage of affordable housing for low and medium income level residents. There is no silver bullet to address our crisis, and it won't be solved overnight. However, Proposition 123's passage means that millions of dollars will be put to use to address the challenge by creating a steady stream of funds our region can access long term. Over 46% of county voters helped pass Proposition 123. Their voices in the ASKCOS survey help us understand residents' attitudes behind the "yes" votes.