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ASHEVILLE HOUSING CRISIS

It is no secret that Asheville has really high housing costs, but unfortunately there is no easy solution. Our city has the highest cost of living in the entire state, but income in the Asheville area is well below the national average. The national housing ACT recommends that households pay no more than 30% of their income on housing (Burgess), but most people in the city are spending more than that. As with most economic issues, our housing crisis comes down to supply and demand. People who are moving in are inflating the price of real estate. Demand is through the roof but there's not enough supply to meet it. In my opinion, Asheville should try to create less demand for housing in our area. People who have lived here for many years are struggling with high housing costs that have been created by high demand and low supply, and city planners should focus on distributing more resources to the greater population instead of supporting big business, realtors, hotels and home builders.

People enjoy living in Asheville because it has a nice culture, places to eat, and the mountains! Asheville has always been popular for its scenic beauty, but our city has become a hot destination spot in the last 15 years. How? The TDA. All promotion for the city is done by a quasi government agency called the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (TDA), which promotes Asheville as a nice place to visit and a good place to live. The TDA does

promotions in magazines, online articles, billboards, and direct mailings. They do a lot of promotions to big cities like San Francisco and all over the country (Wainscott). How they get money and where they spend money is from a tax on hotels and homestays like VRBO and AIRBnB (Wainscott). 6% of every dollar made from hotels and homestays goes to the TDA. All of the tax money they get accumulates to around 30 million dollars. How they spend these funds is they put 75% to marketing the city in magazines, online articles and other forms of advertising they can use. The other 25% goes to things that would bring people into the city, for example soccer fields that would bring people into the city because of tournaments and festivals (Wainscott). One reason why I think we're giving too much money to this agency is because Asheville is like a rocket ship - you need a lot of gas to get off the ground, but then you're just cruising. Asheville already has good momentum of being a destination spot people want to visit. I think this marketing money could be spent much more effectively if it went toward services for the city instead of the spending budget on advertising.

Why there is so much demand in the area is because people around the country now know Asheville as a good place to visit, and those that visit sometimes relish the city so much that they decide to move here. Nearly 10 million people travel to Asheville every year (Zatkulak)! There is good food, arts, and scenic beauty. AAA storage world is feeling the effects of everybody wanting to come here. Their facility is being overrun with U- HAUL moving trucks from other states. They had to turn down over a dozen trucks and tell them they had to drop off the trucks in Weaverville or Hendersonville . According to the census, almost 93,000 people lived in Asheville in 2019 and more than 260,000 across Buncombe County. By 2030, the state projects that number will rise to nearly 297,000 (Bollinger).

The excessive demand for housing in Asheville may be a political oversight issue. The mayor and city council should try to work with the TDA to ease up on the advertising of the city because the over-promotion is starting to negatively affect the people who live here. It is becoming too expensive. If you have ever wondered why there's another hotel being built right after one got finished, it's because there's so many tourists always flooding the city and the TDA is partially to blame, all this money can be used so much better and benefit the city so much better if it was spent differently. They get around 30 million dollars a year and decide that 22.5 million should go to marketing the city. And for the housing crisis it's putting gas on the fire.

So how could we spend this money differently? I would propose they continue to spend money on promoting tourism. Just 50% of the check will go to that and then 25% can go to improving services to the homeless. The cost of living being so high in Asheville is that some people can't afford to stay in their home. Some of these services could include new homeless shelters, food for all, and career opportunities/ jobs. And the other 25% can go to housing subsidies to help people in need and that may be having a hard time. And when the cost of living is so high and income under national income is well below national average 7.5 million dollars can go a very far way and help a lot more people out opposed to helping a couple of rich hotel business owners. While this might be a difficult process (because in this type of situation elected government officials always rather benefit those who contribute to their election funds than benefit the many people who struggle to pay the rent), it could be done.

Some may say we have a housing crisis because there’s a lack of supply. I also think that. However, there's only so much space in the city limits where you can build and each new building or house is taking up more and more of that space. There are also people who probably think my ideas are anti-development because I want there to be less marketing for the city. But

the city already has enough tourists and enough people know about it that we can ease up on the marketing and use it for things that have a greater positive impact.

Pricing for everything in this world depends on the principle of supply and demand and unfortunately the demand has gone up in our area so much that people who have long stayed here are having a hard time staying here. State employees are having an especially hard time because quite frankly they don't get paid nearly enough to go by the 30% income to housing rule. What really makes Asheville so great is the people who have been living here for a long time and unfortunately those people are getting pushed out. This is called gentrification. So in conclusion this is a big problem with no easy solution and the solution will not come anytime soon. "Gentrification, at its deepest level, is really about reorienting the purpose of cities away from being spaces that provide for the poor and middle classes and toward being spaces that generate capital for the rich (Moskowitz)."

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