

Moab City

Moab City is a unique community with a significant portion of its economy centered on tourism. The tourism economy creates unique problems related to the characteristics of the workforce living in the community and ever escalating land values and the cost of construction. Moab has developable land available but it is very expensive. Moab is a small community with the current population of 4,807. It has a very lively, young population that thrives on the outdoor lifestyle. It is expected to grow slowly to about 5,000 by 2010, slightly over 1% per year. The issue facing Moab is how to affordably house the service, retail and public employment sectors of the workforce. Motel and retail employees are under paid and are often minorities. They are critical to the success of the economy, however. Public employees including police officers and schoolteachers are also currently at a disadvantage due to lower wages and the lack of housing affordable to them. One of the biggest issues is the high percentage of mobile homes in the community simply due to the cost and the historical acceptance of this type of housing in the community under current zoning. In 2006 almost half (32 of 66 permits) of all building permits were issued for the siting of mobile homes in the city. People want to own their own homes and mobile homes are the only alternative available to them.

It is timely that Moab be considered as one of the pilot communities in the Utah Workforce Housing Initiative in that Moab is actively working with a partner agency the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) to prepare an aggressive plan to provide workforce housing. However, they need some additional assistance in preparing this plan. There are motivated landowners, business owners and local elected officials to not only prepare a plan but to implement it with scarce public dollars leveraged with private funding to make projects work. The need to prepare a plan and then to capitalize on the willingness of all parties is critical at this juncture. There is also a very active community advocacy group dealing with a relatively significant homeless population also looking for housing answers in the area.

There are many communities in the State of Utah of a similar size to Moab that face many of the same housing situations. It is fully expected that the products and solutions formulated in Moab will be very transferable to other communities.