



STEAMBOAT SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Whistler Park Development Fact Sheet
August 2024

Steamboat Springs School District (SSSD) teachers and support staff are pillars of our community. They help shape and nurture the future of the Yampa Valley by turning our students into confident and resourceful learners who are “bigger than the Boat.” However, our teachers’ ability to live and work in the Yampa Valley is challenging due to rising rents and soaring housing prices. Solutions to the affordable housing crisis are critically needed to help retain our teachers. The District is engaging with the community to develop solutions for all stakeholders.

How long has SSSD been working on the affordable housing issue?

SSSD has discussed potential solutions to the affordable housing crisis for years. Previous iterations of our Board of Education have asked the District to explore different options to help alleviate the housing crisis.

In 2022, we surveyed our teachers and staff to better understand our District’s needs. One of the questions asked was, “I will leave employment with the Steamboat Springs School District due to lack of affordable housing.” That survey revealed that 41.6% of our teachers and staff were likely to leave employment with the District due to a lack of affordable housing.

The topic has also been discussed publicly at Board of Education meetings throughout the last couple of years.

- **May 6, 2024** - Potential Land Swap with City of Steamboat Springs - Discussion - Superintendent Dr. Celine Wicks and Director of Finance and Operations Stephanie Juneau
- **October 9, 2023** - Steamboat Springs Housing Update - Brad Calvert, Principal Planner for the City of Steamboat Springs
- **May 22, 2023**: Affordable Housing Update- Lara Craig (during a BOE workshop)
- **March 20, 2023**: Approval of Consideration of developing a Housing Needs and Opportunity Analysis Study and the Creation of a Housing Master Plan - Purpose: To consider moving forward with a housing study
- **March 6, 2023**: SSSD Employee Housing Needs and Opportunities Discussion- Alissa Merage & Lara Craig
- **February 6, 2023**: Affordable Housing for Staff Discussion (during a BOE workshop)



According to a 2022 SSSD staff survey, 41.6% of our teachers and staff were likely to leave employment with the District due to a lack of affordable housing.

What is SSSD planning to do with Whistler Park?

Plans have yet to be solidified for the development of the land owned by the District, commonly known as Whistler Park. We are in the preliminary stages of exploring various options for the land, including the possibility of workforce housing to help attract and retain teachers. We are committed to considering all possible options, including selling the land or exploring land swaps. We are in ongoing discussions with the City and other stakeholders to find a solution that balances the District's needs with the interests of the greater community.

Here are three possible scenarios:

- **Scenario 1:** The District develops the land to provide affordable housing for teachers while preserving a portion of the existing green space.
- **Scenario 2:** The District conducts a "land swap" with the City, building affordable housing in a different location.
- **Scenario 3:** The District sells the land and uses the proceeds to acquire affordable housing in a different location.



Before any development on the property owned by the SSSD can proceed, the area must be re-zoned from single-family lots to a higher density. Several adjacent properties to Whistler are zoned at a higher density.



COLORADO
Department of Local Affairs

To support these efforts, we applied for and were granted a Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grant, offering technical assistance in developing a Request for Proposal (RFP). Throughout this process, we've been collaborating with the City of Steamboat Springs, Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation, and Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club. With the guidance of DOLA, we're now working on pursuing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with these potential partners.

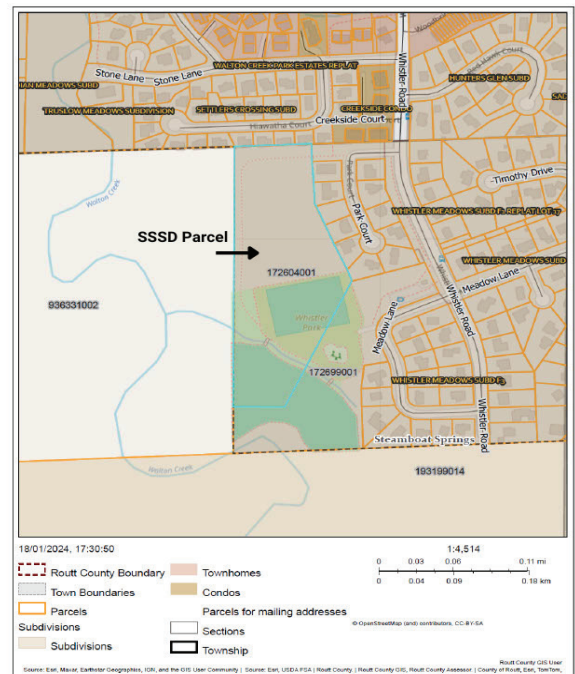
How long has SSSD owned land in Whistler Park?

SSSD acquired the land near Whistler Park in 1980 to develop a school or other facility that would benefit the District. To be good neighbors, in 1997, the District agreed with the City to use the land as a park instead of sitting vacant. The land currently hosts numerous sporting events, is a place for community gatherings, and serves as a park for our four-legged friends.

The District owns nine acres of Whistler Park, which is only part of the plot. The City and water district own the other portions of the park.

Additionally, the District does not need or intend to develop the entire parcel of land. We understand the importance of keeping the community's character and value open green space for our kids and dogs.

COUNTY PARCEL MAP



WHISTLER PARK PROPERTY

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Is providing housing to teachers a common practice?

We are the one last resort communities in Colorado that does not supply housing or is working toward supplying affordable housing for teachers. Aspen, Eagle, the Roaring Fork Valley, and Telluride are all examples of ski and mountain resort communities that offer affordable housing for teachers. Affordable housing is pivotal to staying competitive with other mountain community school districts, achieving high teacher retention, keeping school and staff morale high, and providing the best opportunities for thriving students.



How does the community benefit from affordable housing for teachers?

We have had outstanding, qualified candidates reject job offers because they could not find affordable housing. Our teachers are often forced to live outside city limits in neighboring communities such as Hayden, Stagecoach, Craig, Clark, Oak Creek, and recently as far as Maybell and Walden. This results in longer commutes and takes away from work/life balance. The wintertime can create hazardous road conditions for these commuters. Additionally, our teachers are frequently forced to relocate. This creates instability in their personal lives, often making it challenging to bring their best selves to work.

We want our teachers to bring their best selves to work and live in the same communities as they serve. Kids love seeing their teachers walking down the street or at the ski hill. We must devise solutions to alleviate the housing shortage and affordability issues.

SSSD prioritizes supporting the hiring and retention of highly qualified teachers. Increasing teacher retention leads to better student outcomes and achievement, saves the school district on recruitment efforts, and helps to improve school culture and teacher morale. An experienced educator can be a role model and mentor for new teachers. For students, the disappearance of a beloved teacher can be discouraging. It also helps to ensure that our school district remains a top-ten district in Colorado.

