



# Workforce Housing Initiative

HOUSING FOR A MORE AFFORDABLE & INCLUSIVE BEND

## FALL 2024 UPDATE

## THE PROBLEM

As Bend has rapidly grown, our housing needs have not kept pace leaving a gap in attainable housing for our workforce. Over 90% of employers list housing as an obstacle in attracting and retaining talent. The Chamber’s Workforce Housing Initiative aims to breakdown barriers to building housing for people who want to work and live in Bend.

When the initiative was launched in 2021, we understood it to be a multi-year, multi-faceted project with demonstrable results over the years. Over the past year, the Bend Chamber continued to build upon the prior successes and move the needle towards progress on creating more workforce housing.

## OUR SOLUTIONS

**The Bend Chamber Workforce Housing Initiative is rooted in data and comprised of three components:**

### Education

Leveraging our social media channels—the Bend Chamber launched a successful campaign to communicate the need for mid-market housing.

### Advocacy

Bringing together key partners—the Bend Chamber led a public/private consortium of local leaders to advocate for housing production legislation during the 2023 and 2024 sessions, and is forming a housing agenda for the 2025 legislative session.

### Investment

The Bend Chamber funded a **pilot housing development** for mid-market housing with RootedHomes that is successful and scaling in 2024. This pilot, includes six homes for households earning less than 80% annual median income (AMI) and one home for a household earning up to 120% AMI.

## 2023-2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Housing Scarcity and Population Shifts:** The Bend Chamber’s employer survey gained significant coverage in the **local news**. It demonstrated a measurable outcome of how high housing costs impact essential employees, businesses, and the local economy. Our award-winning, sustained social media campaign continues to engage the community on how the lack of mid-market housing impacts Bend.
- **Galvanizing Central Oregon’s Voice on Housing:** Our regional policy agenda resulted in a unified public/private voice that influenced the creation of a **state housing production committee** and the development of policy concepts for the 2024 session, including **Oregon Governor Tina Kotek’s housing legislation** with \$376 million in housing investment across the state. Additionally, the Bend Chamber’s advocacy on mid-market housing in the City of Bend has influenced the development of a new mid-market housing program.
- **Investing in Outcomes:** The Bend Chamber’s investment in the RootedHomes Poplar community was a successful proof of concept. **This project** was highly received by the media, businesses, and elected leaders, resulting in **50 additional mid-market, deed-restricted homes** under construction in Bend this year. Our **ADU Guide** contributed to the construction of nearly **130 new units** in the past two years.
- **Executing Phase 2:** The Bend Chamber has implemented Phase 2 of our Workforce Housing Initiative. This phase utilizes our regional voice to advocate for housing production policies. Additionally, we are excited to launch a short-term, low-interest loan to assist with land acquisition, pre-development and construction costs, a significant barrier to building mid-market homes.

## Bend Chamber Workforce Housing Revolving Loan Fund



Mayor Melanie Kebler speaks at the site of the first project utilizing the new fund.

We want to make homeownership possible for more of Bend's workforce—one home at a time, utilizing a revolving fund that adds housing inventory over time. One of the biggest hurdles to building affordable homes in Bend is the high cost of land and investment needs to make it shovel ready.

What if there was a way to lower these costs so homes could be sold below market? And what if those homes were only available to people with moderate incomes who work in Bend? The Bend Chamber is excited to expand our workforce housing initiative to help tackle this problem.

The Workforce Housing Revolving Loan is a short-term, low-interest loan for vetted partners and builders to be used for land acquisition and other development costs for mid-market homes in the city of Bend. They can be a variety of types, including duplexes, cottages and single family dwellings. **All homes must be deed-restricted and sold to locally employed households with an 80%-120% area median income (AMI).** An advisory board comprised of the BendNEXT Foundation Board of Directors will review project applications in an advisory capacity.

This new fund is an ongoing mechanism to offset land, permitting and construction costs in a market burdened by high costs in land, construction and lending. This loan will lower the cost to build and enable middle-class employees in Bend a pathway to home ownership in the community where they work.

In partnership with **Mid Oregon Credit Union, Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity**, and local builders **Hiatus Homes**, and **Cascade Precision Homes**, the first project utilizing this new loan product is located in SE Bend and will be ready for occupancy in early winter. The new home will be permanently affordable, and deed restricted to households earning up to 120% of AMI.



Bend Chamber President and CEO, Katy Brooks and Carly Colgan, CEO with Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity, share information at the project site in SE Bend.



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