

Out & About with Lori Sunflower

Feelings about the housing situation in Crestone?



Kevin Crum

I think the housing situation could definitely improve. I spent 7 months commuting from Saguache while working in Crestone, which was really difficult working 50 hours a week, on top of driving. I'm here to contribute to the community as best I can and try to prove my worth to everyone and that was difficult when I had to commute so far. I was very lucky to finally find a home and I've grown to really like the community. As far as solutions to the housing situation, I spoke with a couple people who are building earthships, and it takes a lot of work to build those. I believe incoming people who want to live in Crestone can prove that they want to live here by helping others build these earthships. I was talking with one guy who's building one now who offered me a place on his property if I helped him build his earthship house, and I can build my own, smaller earthship on his property as well, and that would be a win-win for both of us. Another option would be more apartments. There's an unfinished vacant building in town if somebody in the community has a heart of gold and wants to put that together.



Daya Scheide

We definitely have a housing shortage, and it's getting worse. Rents are going up and options becoming fewer. My family has moved a number of times in Crestone, lived in lots of different places. Some of those moves were personal choices and some weren't. Two rentals sold, landlords have decided they wanted to try to make more money with AirBnB, etc. It's been tricky and difficult, but

it's just one experience. It's our experience. I'm pretty dedicated to Crestone. I've been teaching and working at the Charter School for 6 years, and have given a lot of my energy and love to this community. I don't see easy solutions to this housing crisis. You can't force a homeowner to keep rents down. There's a deeper issue. A lot of us come to Crestone for this thing called community, and it's more difficult here than in other places because it's so intimate. For a healthier community, each individual needs to decide on some level to break out of the paradigm of "What's in it for me?" It'd be great if people would gradually look for ways to give back, especially to those who want to enrich this community but need affordable housing to do it. I'd like to see a structure identifying good renters to alleviate homeowners' fears of getting burned by tenants. There are people here who are reliable, making their rent payments, and who are going to take care of your home and it would be great if there were a "recommended list" of those people.



Diane Dunlap

There's more demand for housing in the Baca than availability, and I don't anticipate that lessening. Housing is at a premium. I think cannabis has a lot to do with this. It certainly increased real estate values in Denver. I know the Baca has provisions for 2nd living spaces, and as many of us who can are doing this. New homes continue being built, but I don't know there's any solution other than to keep building. I've had multiple rental homes here for 15 years. I lease them for at least a year and usually the house is left much worse. It takes a month to repaint and fix everything before I can re-rent it. Every once in a while, I get a good long-term renter who leaves the house in good shape, but most people rent because they can't afford to own, and may not have experience being a homeowner. They do a lot of damage. And pets, of course, become a bigger issue over time as well. There's mixed attitudes in Crestone/Baca about development. The whole reason for lot consolidation is to conserve green space. People in the Baca don't like to see houses out their windows, and Crestone is mixed about whether the Baca should even

be here! (laughing) But if the Baca wasn't here, Crestone would be a ghost town. People are mixed. Half don't want any more people moving in, they don't want publicity, they don't like it when we're on Fox News in Denver for any reason. There's a 50-50 divide on whether we even want more people to know about us, let alone move here.



Cheryl Rowe

There's not enough of it. Either rentals nor properties for sale, so suddenly we've gone from a housing glut to a housing shortage, and probably rental properties have always been a bit of a shortage. It's incredible to me that Salida has been designated the first tiny house community. I think Crestone should have been. If somebody out there had or could get some development money, there's POA-owned property around Elk Park and elsewhere which I think could be subdivided for people to bring their own tiny houses or buy/rent one already onsite. I think the land was originally allocated as property for commercial building. Perhaps it could be re-designated as residential sites for tiny homes. My experience as being a landlord has been pretty positive. You have to be careful anywhere, and you have to know what you're doing if you're going to be a landlord, which I've been for 30 years. Our rental properties have primarily been in Denver, and now we have rental property in Crestone, too. We've certainly seen the market change a lot because I never thought I would own property in Crestone!



Jim Starry

If you look at zoning, lot use, POA restrictions, the cost of creating units exceeds your ability to rent them affordably. The code for building structures is designed in a way that you waste money in heating costs just to keep warm! I just submitted a request to the POA to build 5 houses insulated in a way where you can heat the place with a candle and air condition it by opening a

window! The tenant doesn't have to pay \$300-\$400/month utility costs on top of paying \$500 rent. Most cannot pay \$1000/month in Crestone, even if mom, dad and the kids all work! The cost structure is established in a way that low income housing cannot be created. If the POA allows me to build 5 small houses, they'll be insulated and dimensioned in a way that people can inhabit with joy, and that's what a house is. That's what Crestone is: the joy of building a structure you love living in. We've got too many people and not enough housing. It's not rocket science! As a landlord, I recently spent \$25,000 as a result of a bad tenant who destroyed my solar collector, stole my inverter, trashed my house, and his dog destroyed \$4,000 worth of carpets. Everybody's talking about the housing situation. The difference is by creating those 5 houses we can let 5 more people make the choice to be in affordable housing. I'm only 79 years of age and I'm tired of trying to overcome the system!



Mitzi Kohls

Very low availability and very high prices which are not reasonable for this area. I've lived here 4 years, moving an average of every 4 months. My policy is not to rent properties for sale, but my last landlord purchased other homes, so moved me into another which ended up on the market. It's easier to find rentals on the market, but hard for tenants, because you can't be relaxed or feel at home. You're always on edge. You can't be totally unpacked. So, it's difficult, and I'm saying this as a good, responsible tenant. I've also run into homeowners saying, "Well, no, I've been burned by tenants before," so they won't rent. Having pets is also limiting. It was funny, my last landlord initially told me she didn't want me renting from her because of my dog, but when she found out her son has the same breed, it was OK. And I understand some pets do cause damage, so paying the deposit is reasonable, but this town is very animal-oriented, so it's hard to have that as a stipulation. The lack of availability is increased by homeowners using AirBnB to make more money, and I am seriously thinking of moving out of the area because of the difficulties finding long term housing, which would mean commuting since most of my clients are in Crestone. But I will live elsewhere if I have to, as much as I'd hate to do that.

If you have feedback or suggestions for future topics, please email peacelovilove@gmail.com. In addition to being the Staff Photographer for The Crestone Eagle since 2012, Lori Nagel is a freelance photographer, graphic designer & web designer. www.sunflowerstudios.us.com.