

# HOUSING ISSUES



Enterprise photo by Jason Bacaj  
Joe Winters of JWI Contracting readyies a home foundation for framing, Monday morning in the Northern Lights subdivision.

## Report shows housing problem at near-crisis level as local home prices, rents rise faster than incomes

**By Jason Bacaj**  
*Enterprise Staff Writer*

Challenges in Park County’s housing market have reverberated across the community, with businesses struggling to find workers in part because those workers can’t find affordable housing.

Putting firm facts and figures on how the housing market has changed throughout the pandemic has been a challenge in itself, but a new report from the Park County Community Foundation and Human Resource Development Council of District IX pins down recent changes.

The 2021 Park County Housing Needs Assessment found that single-family median home sales prices increased by 50.4% from pre-pandemic to this summer — from

\$282,753 in December 2019 to \$425,250 this past June — and average rent jumped 21% in the past year.

The report notes an influx of new and part-time residents driven by the rise in remote work and locals looking to take advantage of low interest rates as key factors pushing prices up.

This year, 70% of renter households in Park County are unable to afford the average market rent, the report found. The average renter in Park County makes \$12.79 per hour and can sustainably pay \$665 in rent each month.

But the report found that the current average rent is closer to \$1,565.

“As shocking as the data is, history shows that Park County always finds a way to come together to support our friends, family and neighbors,” PCCF Executive Director Gavin Clark said in a release announcing the report.

The report is intended to help local community leaders make more informed decisions around the housing market, Tracy Menuetz, HRDC associate director and community

development director, said in a release announcing the report. Funding for the needs assessment came from AMB West Philanthropies and the city of Livingston, through COVID-19 Recovery Act funds.

Among the challenges to adding more affordable housing options in Park County are the availability of land and construction costs, the report states. Plus, there are state regulations that prevent local governments from rent control, luxury, second home and real estate transfer taxes.

Local home builders participating in the report said that building a 1,500 square foot single-family home would cost \$285,000 — not including the price of the land or added infrastructure.

The report forecasted that over the next five years the cost of homes and rent in the county will rise faster than incomes, meaning that Park County will continue to lose lower-income renters and homeowners and exacerbate the challenges in securing housing for the seasonal workers who help power the local tourism economy.

## Grandparents await hugs and spouses reunite as US borders open

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The U.S. fully reopened its borders with Mexico and Canada on Monday and lifted restrictions on travel that covered most of Europe, setting the stage for emotional reunions nearly two years in the making and providing a boost for the travel industry decimated by the pandemic.

The restrictions, among the most severe in U.S. history, kept families apart, including spouses who have not been able to hug in months, grandparents whose grandchildren doubled in age since they last saw them, and uncles and aunts who have not met nieces and nephews who are now toddlers.

Lines moved quickly Monday morning at San Diego’s border with Mexico, the busiest crossing in the United States, despite the added checks for vaccinations required to enter the country.

Octavio Alvarez, 43, zipped through in less than 15 minutes, coming to the United States for the first time since

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AP  
Natalia Abrahao is lifted up by her fiancé Mark Ogertsehnig as they greet one another at Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark, N.J., Monday.

## County to ask city to annex street

**By Jason Bacaj**  
*Enterprise Staff Writer*

The Park County Commission meets Tuesday morning to consider asking the city of Livingston to annex a portion of Fleshman Creek Road and renew the lease for Rocky Mountain RV Park and Lodging in Gardiner.

The section of road in question runs from the Livingston city limits to Meredith Ranch Road and city land along the Bozeman Connector Trail.

The previous five-year lease for Rocky Mountain RV Park runs until the end of 2021. The lease allows for the installation and improvement of a dog walking area, installing fencing and an easement along the eastern boundary of the property, documents show.

In other business, commissioners will consider:

- Leasing the north half of terminal building No. 10 at Mission Field Airport to Yellowstone Air Service.
- Requesting information from the Montana State University Extension about the timeline for filling the MSU Extension community development and economic development positions.
- Approving a contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services that reimburses Park County for public health emergency preparedness services, which includes funding for positions within the county health department.
- Approving another contract with DPHHS to reimburse the county for expenses related to COVID immunization services.

## New flags fly over Livingston City Hall

**By John Carroll**  
*Enterprise Staff Writer*

New flagpoles were erected at Livingston City Hall last week, culminating the city administration’s official move from the City/County Complex to their new digs at 220 E. Park St.

The three aluminum flagpoles display the U.S. flag, the Montana state flag and the national POW/MIA flag. The U.S. flag in the middle flies at 40 feet, the other two flags fly at 35 feet.

All of the flags have lights on them and will fly day and night, according to Livingston city attorney Courtney Lawellin.

About a dozen city officials call the new 8,000-square-foot headquarters home, including the city manager, the city attorney, the city finance director, city building and planning, and human resources.

“We plan on having an open house soon,” said Lawellin. “Plans are still being made.”

It is now law that the POW/MIA flag be flown along with the U.S. flag on certain governmental buildings throughout Montana. There are 53 POW/MIA U.S. military personnel from Montana, according to the Montana POW/MIA Awareness Association.



These servicemen were lost in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War.

The American flag is flown at half staff when the nation is mourning on certain tragic days such as Pearl Harbor and Sept. 11, said Lawellin. On Memorial Day, the flag is flown at half-staff from sunrise until noon only, then raised briskly to the top of the staff until sunset, in honor of the nation’s battle heroes.

The president of the United States may also order the U.S. flag to be flown at half-staff to mark the death of other officials, former officials, or foreign dignitaries. In addition to these occasions, the president may order half-staff display of the flag after other tragic events.

The last time the U.S. flag was displayed at half staff was after the Oct. 18 death of former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell.

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