



City of Leavenworth

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Dear Community Members,

As we embrace the New Year, I hope you are faring well and have managed to stay cozy during the recent cold snaps. The weather has been hinting at spring, but let's hope winter lingers a bit longer for our winter enthusiasts, especially those training for the annual Winter Special Olympics!

As your Mayor, I am committed to ensuring that Leavenworth remains a vibrant, working community. This commitment, a cornerstone of my platform, requires us to address the challenges posed by our housing market, which is under pressure due to our town's desirability and natural beauty.

To maintain Leavenworth as a home for people of diverse incomes, family structures, and backgrounds, we need a two-pronged approach. Firstly, we must consider a broader range of housing options, including smaller units on smaller lots. Given the economics of land and construction costs, we need to think beyond traditional single-family zoned lots and consider options like cottage housing, townhomes, condos, and tiny homes.

However, diversifying our housing options alone won't ensure our community remains open to all. The demand to own property in Leavenworth exceeds our housing supply, driving up prices beyond what our local workforce can afford. Therefore, we must also establish dedicated funding streams to secure land and housing units for our workforce - a crucial factor to the success of our small, desirable community.

There is encouraging news on this front. In the current legislative session, there are two items that give me **hope!** The first is a budget proviso directing WSU's Municipal Research Department to study the impacts of tourism on housing throughout the state. This study will examine policies nationwide that support workforce housing in tourism-dependent communities and identify strategies we could adopt here in Leavenworth.

The second item is Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5334, a bill that would allow local jurisdictions to impose an additional excise tax on short-term rentals, generating funds for housing. This bill represents a significant step towards our goal to fund local housing strategies.

I often hear residents asking, "How can I help address our housing crisis?" Supporting ESSB 5334 is one way you can make a significant impact. In Leavenworth, we have strategically limited the placement of Short-Term Rentals (STRs) to our commercial zones and a select number of Bed & Breakfasts in residential areas. Passing bill ESSB 5334 could generate instrumental funds to address not only our City's housing needs, but for Chelan County as well, should they choose to adopt it.

With the support of Senator Brad Hawkins, this bill passed the Senate last session. However, it did not get a hearing in the House. Since it passed one chamber last session, it does not have to go through the full committee process again. This crucial bill now awaits a scheduled hearing in the House Local Government committee, where Representative Keith Goehner is the ranking Republican member.

If, like me, you believe that we cannot begin to address our housing crisis without an adequate funding source, I urge you to take action by doing one or more of the following by the end of the business day on Tuesday, February 13, 2024:

- 1) Email Representatives Keith Goehner (keith.goehner@leg.wa.gov) and/or Mike Steele (mike.steele@leg.wa.gov) to express your support for this crucial source of funding for local housing.
- 2) Visit the website for this bill ([ESSB 5334](#)), where you can:
 - a. [Testify](#). Sign-up to testify at the committee hearing scheduled for Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 8:00 AM. *I plan to attend in-person.*
 - b. [Submit Testimony](#). Provide written comment(s) via the online form. Your comments will be available to legislative members and staff of the committee and will be included in the legislative record for bill and meeting archival purposes but will not be used as part of testimony summary materials on the bill report.
 - c. [Comment](#). Send your comments and your position on this bill directly to members in your legislative district via the online submission form.

Your voice matters! By taking a few minutes to share your opinion, *together* we can send a strong message that we are committed to preserving Leavenworth as a dynamic, working community.

Thank you for your continued support and active engagement in our community's future. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Respectfully,

Carl Florea
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