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Q&A: The symbiotic relationship between workforce housing and economic development

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Rob Millar

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As Maricopa County continues to rapidly grow local housing officials see a systemic need for more attainable housing. One Arizona builder in Scottsdale --- Greenlight Communities -- contends its latest project is the next chapter of affordable, quality housing for the middle class of the Valley of the Sun.

But what does that mean from an economic development perspective and how does that kind of housing stock benefit the greater community?

To better understand the myriad facets of how housing and economic development are intertwined, Independent Newsmedia reached out to Scottsdale Economic Development Director Rob Millar to better understand that symbiotic relationship.

This is what he had to say:

•What exactly is workforce housing and what kind of role does it play in the economic development of a community? How about here in Scottsdale?

Workforce housing describes housing aimed at providing affordable options for identified employment sectors such as public safety, teachers or nurses. In economic development, attracting or retaining companies often involves access to available labor and associated housing. Workforce housing can also be described as affordable housing, but workforce

<https://www.yourvalley.net/estrella-independent/stories/qa-the-symbiotic-relationship-between-workforce-housing-and-economic-development,163405>

housing is specifically geared at addressing real or perceived housing shortages for key employment types. The City of Scottsdale has various housing types and price point ranges that make locating in our community an affordable place for perspective employees to live and work.

•How do companies of all varieties evaluate the places where they may locate or expand into? Does workforce housing play a role there? If so, what is it?

Companies evaluate potential markets on a variety of factors including access to and cost of labor and real estate. Drive-time analysis for businesses located in central to northern Scottsdale indicate an average employee drive-time commute of 25 minutes. Businesses that are looking at expanding or relocating to Scottsdale from other more dense markets consider 25 minute average drive times to be an advantageous recruitment tool. Scottsdale does not have a workforce housing strategy due to the availability of market rate housing options.

•Why is it important for quality dwellings to exist for a companies workforce or a community's first responders perhaps?

Communities seek to attract and retain companies whose employees will live and work in the same community in an effort to decrease commute times, support the existing tax base and provide diverse employment options.

•Who lives in workforce housing and why are they an essential part of the American economy?

I do not believe there is a standard for who lives in workforce housing, but communities that have an established workforce housing program will define targeted employment sectors they are seeking to address in identified employment centers.

Keywords

[Scottsdale Economic Development Department](#), [City of Scottsdale](#), [Phoenix Housing Market](#)