

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Contact: [Jack O'Brien](#), Office of the Governor

## **Governor Gianforte Launches Housing Task Force**

*Governor charges task force with providing recommendations to make housing more affordable and attainable for Montanans*

HELENA, Mont. – Governor Greg Gianforte today launched a housing task force to provide recommendations to make housing more affordable and attainable for Montanans.

“Owning a home is part of the American dream, but for more than a decade, it’s become harder and harder for Montanans to afford to own or rent a home,” Gov. Gianforte said. “Burdensome, restrictive, and unnecessary regulations have left Montana with a longstanding shortage of housing that continues to drive up the prices Montanans pay for their home.”

“It’s critical we increase Montanans’ access to affordable, attainable housing, which is why today I launched a housing task force to get to the bottom of the problem and provide solutions to get us out of it,” Gov. Gianforte continued.

The governor created the task force through an executive order. The governor charged the task force with providing recommendations the legislature could consider and the governor could sign into law to make housing more affordable and attainable. Gov. Gianforte also charged the task force with developing recommendations state agencies can implement administratively as well as recommendations and best practices local jurisdictions can enact.

Gov. Gianforte appointed Chris Dorrington, director of the Department of Environmental Quality, to chair the task force.

“In traveling the state, one consistent message I hear is about the significant housing challenges facing Montanans,” Dir. Dorrington said. “I am honored the governor has asked me to step forward to lead a great team in developing awareness and common-sense recommendations to address these challenges.”

State agency leaders, legislators, local officials, association representatives, economists, researchers, stakeholders, and advocates make up the task force. Members include:

**Chris Dorrington**, task force chair and director of the Department of Environmental Quality

**Senator Ellie Boldman** (D, Missoula)  
**Senator Greg Hertz** (R, Polson)  
**Representative Danny Tenenbaum** (D, Missoula)  
**Representative Sue Vinton** (R, Billings)

**Patrick Barkey, Ph.D.**, director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana

**Terry Brockie**, CEO of Island Mountain Development Group

**Ross Butcher**, commissioner of Fergus County

**Kendall Cotton**, president and CEO of the Frontier Institute

**Nathan Dugan**, president and co-founder of Shelter WF

**Mark Egge**, affordable housing advocate, data scientist, and former member of the Bozeman Planning Board

**Laurie Esau**, commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry

**Jaclyn Giop**, president of the Montana Water Well Drillers Association

**Eugene Graf**, owner of E.G. Construction

**Emily Hamilton, Ph.D.**, senior research fellow and director of the Urbanity Project at the Mercatus Center

**Adam Hertz**, secretary of the Montana Board of Housing

**Amanda Kaster**, director of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

**Bob Kelly**, mayor of Great Falls

**Jacob Kuntz**, executive director of the Helena Area Habitat for Humanity

**Bill Leininger**, president of the Montana Association of Realtors

**Todd O’Hair**, president and CEO of the Montana Chamber of Commerce

**Scott Osterman**, director of the Department of Commerce

**Nicole Rolf**, senior director of governmental affairs at the Montana Farm Bureau Federation

**Mike Smith**, market president of Glacier Bank

**Valerie Stacey**, environmental health specialist with Lewis and Clark County

**Don Sterhan**, steering committee member of the Montana Housing Coalition; president and CEO of Mountain Plains Equity Group

“I’m grateful to each member of the housing task force, from the bipartisan group of legislators to stakeholders to experts to advocates for reform. I know each of them will bring a strong voice and unique perspective to the task force. I look forward to what they will accomplish,” Gov. Gianforte concluded.

The first meeting of the task force is scheduled for Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

Between 2010 and 2020, Montana’s population grew by 9.6 percent, outpacing the state’s housing unit growth of 6.6 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Driven by increased consumer demand, rising inflation, and national supply chain breakdowns, the cost of building a new home has soared, with private residential construction costs skyrocketing 18.4 percent nationally between March 2021 and March 2022, according to the Census Bureau.

Regulations at every level of government drive up the price of newly built homes. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) estimated in 2021 that the average cost of regulation in the price of a new home soared by 44 percent in the last decade, from \$65,224 in 2011 to \$93,870 in 2021. NAHB also reported that government-imposed regulations account for 23.8 percent of the final price of a new single-family home built for sale.

The rental vacancy rate in Montana, a key measure of whether housing supply is meeting demand, fell from 5.7 percent in 2010 to 4.4 percent in 2020, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

The full text of the governor's executive order establishing the housing task force may be found [here](#).

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