

Colorado's governor tours Habitat for Humanity's new development in Eagle

Polis asks questions of Habitat for Humanity team, expresses support for new modular style of housing

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Gov. Jared Polis tours the Third Street site of the modular homes being built by Habitat for Humanity Monday in Eagle.

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Gov. Jared Polis stopped in Eagle on Monday to tour Habitat for Humanity's 16-unit Third Street development, which saw the first homes placed on their foundations earlier this month. The Third Street homes are created using modular construction built offsite at the Fading West factory in Buena Vista before being transported to Third Street.

The process of bringing the 16 units to fruition involved collaboration between Habitat for Humanity, the state of Colorado, Eagle County, the Eagle County School District, and the town of Eagle.

"This project really took the state, the county, the town, and the school district to all come together with Habitat to make this happen. It's just awesome that (Polis) came to see it," said Elyse Howard, director of development for Habitat for Humanity Vail Valley.

All 16 units will be deed-restricted, with 12 going to school district employees, and four going to workers with other jobs in Eagle County.

The homeowners have already been selected, and have committed to doing the hundreds of hours of labor that is required for a Habitat home.

Habitat assessed potential applicants on their need for affordable, safe housing, their ability to cover the reduced mortgage, meaning in this case earning between 35% and 100% of the area median income, and their willingness to partner in the sweat equity piece.

Jan. 29 was, Howard believes, the first time Polis has visited a Habitat for Humanity Vail Valley project site. He visited the Fading West factory in 2022, but the Third Street homes were not yet on the line.



Gov. Jared Polis talks with the future homeowner, Tim Moffet, who works for the **Eagle County** School District while getting a tour of Moffet's future home Monday in Eagle. Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

Polis asked several questions of the Habitat for Humanity team and met the owner of the home he visited. Tim Moffet works as a school-to-work alliance coordinator for the **Eagle County** School District.

Polis asked about homeownership, and how it would work if Moffet were to sell the home or make an amount of money above 100% area median income, or sublet. Owners of the Third Street units will be able to benefit from the appreciation of equity over time, but the homes will remain affordable, Polis learned. They can continue to live in the home if they earn above the area median income cap, but Habitat for Humanity homes are not usually eligible to be subleased.

Polis also asked if there was a bus stop near the homes. He was told that there was and that the homeowners could take advantage of the county's new transit authority, the Eagle Valley Transportation Authority.

"Which we're so excited about, by the way," Polis said.

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Moffet told Polis that he and his future neighbors have begun to form a community, before even living together.

"We all know each other, already," Moffet said.

"What percent are Hispanic, of the 16 (homeowning families)?" Polis asked. He was impressed by what he heard: half or more. "Because I know that's one thing the school district is trying to do, is to have more Hispanic teachers and administrators, just to better reflect the students," Polis said.

"It's exciting to see," Polis said. "There'll be some more housing that people can afford, and the community needs — the valley needs — people that can be teachers and law enforcement officers and construction workers, and people need a place to live, and this is going to be a place where 16 families are going to be able to permanently live."

As for how the Third Street development fits into his broader plans to build housing, Polis said, "it's a piece of what we need."

"We need more housing now. Sixteen units doesn't change the world for everybody, but it definitely makes a big difference for those 16 families, who can now afford to be part of living here in **Eagle County**," Polis said.

The Third Street project was made possible, in part, by state-level work, Polis said, and he will continue to work toward further legislation, though he did not clarify exactly what that legislation might look like, or how it would specifically aid mountain communities.

“Part of the funding (for Third Street) comes from the state, and so we’re looking at additional tax credits, we’re looking at additional reforms that reduce the cost of home construction to help make more housing in both mountain communities and in the Denver metro area,” Polis said. “I can’t wait until these open in July.”



Gov. Jared Polis (right) takes a selfie with Kristin Williams (lower left), John Welaj (top left), and future homeowner Tim Moffet (second from right) after touring a home being built at Third Street.
Chris Dillmann/Vail Daily

Having the governor at Third Street, Howard said, means a lot to the Habitat for Humanity crew.

“I think it’s exciting for the governor to visit, too, because it’s hard — things that work in the (Denver) metro area don’t always work in our mountain communities, and vice versa, and so it’s awesome that he’s willing to take the time and pop over here and see what works — a mountain town solution. And I think that this can be replicated in other places,” Howard said.

“I think we’ve really grown our relationship with the governor’s office and with the state, as they have prioritized housing,” said Kristin Williams, president of the Habitat for Humanity Vail Valley board of directors.

The 16 units at Third Street are part of 24 units total that Habitat for Humanity has under construction right now.

“From our perspective, there’s such a need in the community,” Howard said. “For those 24 homes, we had 170 applications. The need is so great, and we’re just trying to go faster. How do we go faster?”

Trying modular construction was a creative way to move faster, Howard said.

“I think it does go faster. It was a heavy lift, financially, and that’s where those partnerships come in, from **Eagle County**, from the state, from the school district, who donated the land, and from town of Eagle, who helped us with a grant for the infrastructure, and so it really takes all of these pieces to come together, and I think Habitat is well suited in our community to bring the pieces together,” Howard said.

Reflecting on the tour of the site, Howard said she sees Habitat for Humanity playing an important role in keeping people within **Eagle County**.

“It’s really important for everybody in our community to think really hard about what kind of community we want in three years, in five years, in 10 years, because if we want to retain our critical workforce, we need homeownership,” Howard said.

“Little by little, we’re retaining community, and not losing these incredible human beings to the outside world, because they can’t own a home,” Williams said.