



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

August 12, 2021

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Ben Berto, Director of Planning and Building Services
Ande Flower, Project Lead, EMC Planning Group

SUBJECT: Discussion of Housing Element site selection process and options. Items to be discussed include hazards, evacuation, zoning, Association of Bay Area Governments Housing Element Site Section (HESS) tool, and outreach and engagement efforts and strategies, including demonstration of an interactive public preference site selection tool scheduled to go online in the near future.

BACKGROUND

Your Commission has been alternating between the Housing Element Update and Objective Design and Development Standards (ODDS) for Fairfax. The first draft ODDS toolkit was reviewed by the Planning Commission on May 27, and subsequently at a meeting on a more Fairfax-specific ODDS toolkit on July 29. These two meetings were interspersed with a Planning Commission discussion on the Housing Element and ODDS on June 17. This meeting is focused on the Housing Element.

Staff/the consultants have met with the following Town groups or affiliated agencies:

Affordable Housing Committee
Climate Action Committee
Open Space Committee.
Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee
Age Friendly Fairfax
Tree Committee
Planning Commission Housing Element subcommittee
Marin Municipal Water District
Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority chief
Chamber of Commerce president

These early meetings introduced the Housing Element process to members of those committees, pointed out areas for committee involvement and feedback, and requested everyone in those groups and those with whom they communicate to visit, register, and participate in the <https://fairfaxspeaks.com/> website.

AGENDA ITEM 1

DISCUSSION

This meeting focusses on the process for identifying the general characteristic of potentially suitable sites, including but not limited to:

- Zoning
- Regional government input
- Evacuation
- Infrastructure adequacy
- Environmental constraints

The site selection process is evolving as more data and feedback, including from the above groups and critically your Commission, are received. This is a check-in and request for direction on topics which staff will discuss.

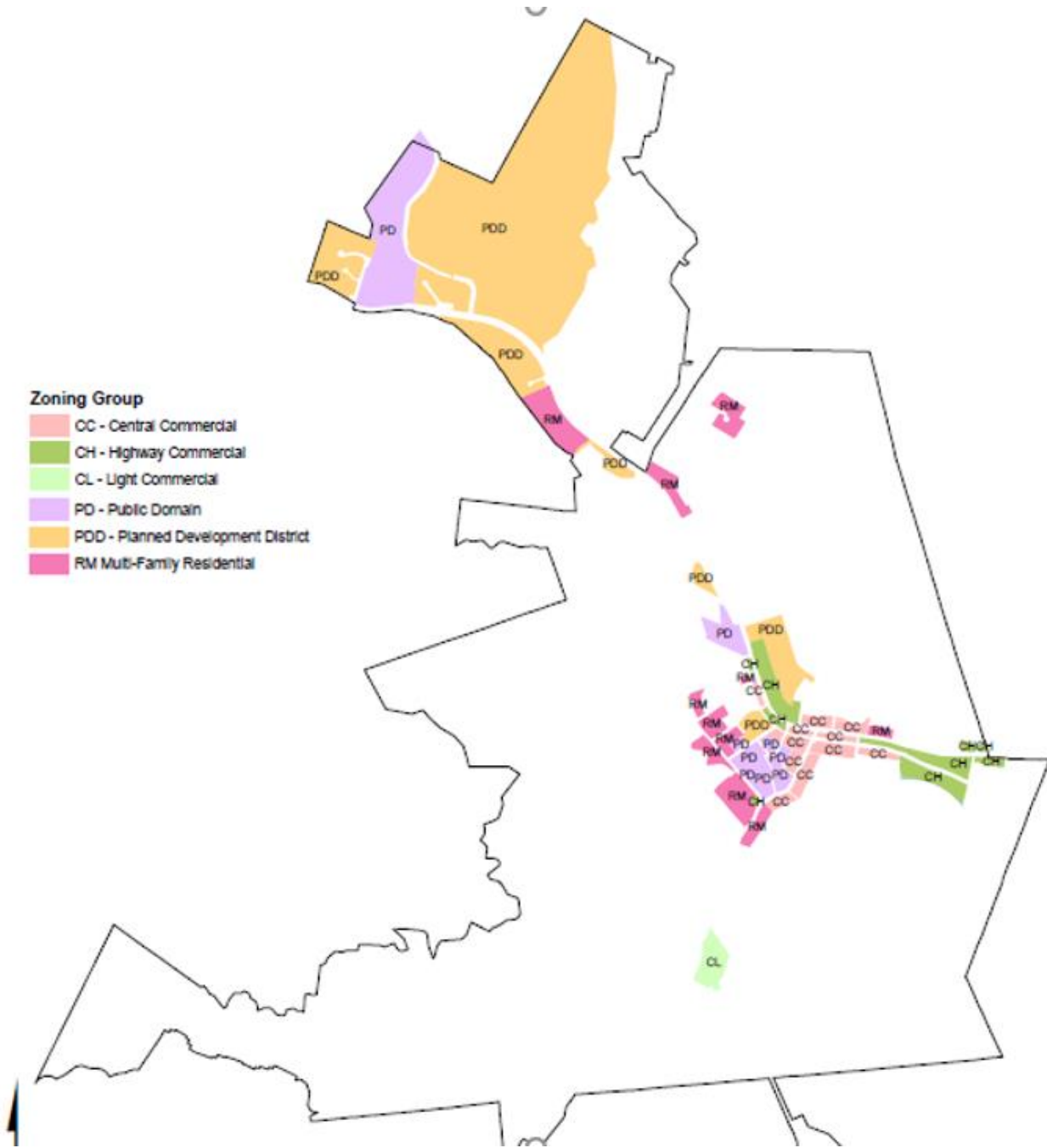
Zoning

As can be seen in the Attachment A diagram, there are a wide range of zoning districts that potentially allow multifamily zoning. These include:

RM	Multifamily residential
CH	Highway Commercial
CC	Central Commercial
PDD	Planned Development District
CL	Limited Commercial
PD	Public Domain
RD-5.5-7	Residential Zone High Density

The diagram includes the properties in Fairfax with these zoning designations, with the exception of the RD-5.5-7 zone (staff anticipates having a map that includes the RD-5.5-7 zone prior to the meeting).

As will be noted in the powerpoint presentation, the consultant's/staff's focus has been on putting every available site on the table, and then evaluating factors that would eliminate certain sites from consideration.



Other tools used in evaluating potential multi-family sites include:

[HESS \(Housing Element Site Section\) tool](#). The Housing Element Site Selection (HESS) Tool is a web-based mapping tool developed by ABAG and MTC to guide Bay Area local jurisdictions in identifying potential sites for new housing that align with state Housing Element

requirements and support regional and local priorities, including equity, growth, and climate goals. The attached HESS diagram represents a multi-variate analysis that considers multiple factors in creating the composite diagram.

Staff expressed concern in the Town's appeal of the draft RHNA numbers that the HESS tool didn't factor in CalFire's High Fire Risk Severity Zone (only the Extremely High Fire Risk Zone is factored). While this decision may be beyond the Town's ability to influence (numerous at-risk communities like Greenville have/had similar concerns), ABAG has indicated some willingness to consider further factors such as evacuation capability.

Evacuation

Staff and the Town's GIS specialist have been working on diagrammatic assessments of the Town's evacuation risk. Attachment B shows work to date on streets in Fairfax and the immediate vicinity and the number of structures on those roads. These will be used to calculate areas that are at higher risk with respect to evacuation safety. Staff intends to continue this analysis to incorporate roads with other constraints such as acute curves and intersections and narrowness.

Environmental constraints

As Marin suffers through its second year of unprecedented low rainfall, water agencies are ratcheting up restrictions on water use. These are currently temporary, but bear watching, particularly with respect to the upcoming winter's precipitation and any implications for longer-term restrictions.

Housing options

Constraints will be factored into consideration of various housing options. For example, consideration is being given to expanding lower-intensity multi-family housing options such as quadplexes. This is work in progress, and something best expressed in the live powerpoint at the meeting, but this analysis will evaluate at the RD-5.5-7 zoning district (which currently allows duplexes) to determine to what extent quadplexes can be safely and seamlessly integrated into certain portions of that district. Factors such as lot size, slope, road access, and age of existing structures on properties will be incorporated into this analysis.

Outreach and Engagement

In addition to the extensive community group-oriented engagement, the Housing Element process features the strong online platform the <https://fairfaxspeaks.com/> mentioned earlier. The Housing consultants and staff are about to embark on higher-profile public engagement efforts. Some of that will be demonstrated tonight – Balancing Act is a very interactive online public preference survey tool, and staff anticipates having integrated into fairfaxspeaks in the near future.

Staff/the consultants also will be using a variety of promotional media to raise the public profile of the Housing Element. A banner will be erected over Sir Francis Drake for two periods of time, directing people to fairfaxspeaks.com with Housing Element questions and answers. Other efforts include items like bookmarks at the library and coasters at local businesses serving refreshments. Part of this effort is directed at reaching groups that typically are not

engaged in planning efforts – tomorrow (Saturday) for example, staff/consultants will asking food pantry participants about housing-related questions. We will also have flyers translated into Spanish to be posted in businesses that have such workers.

Staff also acknowledges we need to put additional effort into traditional public communication vehicles such as the Town website, the Town newsletter, and other electronic media, and will be renewing these efforts as well.

CONCLUSION

The Housing (and Safety and Land Use) Elements work effort is shifting into site analysis. While as described in this report these are currently still general, staff anticipates that by the September 22 scheduled date of the joint Town Council-Planning Commission workshop on housing site options, this will be more focused on particular sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide direction to the consultants and staff on:

1. Factors that should be included in the suitability analysis of multi-family housing site.
2. Reactions to the online public preference tool.
3. Recommendations for the public outreach and engagement strategy.
4. Comments on the quadplex housing option
5. Questions

Attachment A (HESS) Housing Element Site Suitability tool
Attachment B Fairfax One Way Out diagram