



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

September 8, 2021

TO: Affordable Housing Committee

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SUBJECT: Discussion of Housing Element progress including the site selection process and options. Items to be discussed include the development of a sites inventory, a map of potential multi-family housing options for duplexes and quadplexes dependent upon zoning updates, ways to implement the “Missing Middle” housing approach, how the Town can ensure compliance with AB 686 (Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing), and an update on outreach and engagement efforts.

BACKGROUND

The Affordable Housing Committee last met on July 13 and discussed sites inventory strategies, the Safety Element update, and AB 686 compliance.

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

Climate Action Committee
Open Space Committee
Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Committee
Age Friendly Fairfax
Tree Committee
Planning Commission
Planning Commission Housing Element sub-committee
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://fairfaxespeaks.com/> website.

Staff and the consultants met with the Planning Commission on August 12th to discuss how hazards, evacuation routes, and zoning will play a part in the Housing Element Update. The Association of Bay Area Government’s Housing Element Site Selection (HESS) tool was also shown, which will further help identify constraints and improve the site selection analysis.

Staff and the consultants also met with the RESJ Committee on August 5th to confirm current public outreach strategies for typically underrepresented stakeholders and garner feedback and suggestions on ways to improve this targeted outreach.

DISCUSSION

This meeting focuses on the discussion of potential suitable sites including but not limited to:

- Draft sites inventory table
- Preliminary map of multi-family housing options for duplexes and quadplexes
- “Missing Middle” Housing Approach
- Update on Outreach and Engagement

The site selection process is evolving as more data and feedback are received. This is a check-in and request for direction on the materials and approaches discussed today. Initial guidance from this Committee has been to approach all properties as potential sites, that essentially all sites are on the table until they’re no longer in consideration.

Draft Multi-Family Inventory (Attachment A)

Attachment A is a draft inventory of 14 potential sites that could add units to comply with the RHNA allocation. The table includes the address, zoning, and the estimated range of additional units for each site.

Staff and the consultants are looking for Committee feedback on these potential sites. The current selection includes sites with hazards and environmental constraints. Some of these, flooding for example, could be mitigated through existing municipal code sections.

Expansion of Housing Options Map (Attachment B)

The pink and orange sites show current single-family zones where preliminary analysis indicates they meet certain minimum qualification criteria (grade, minimum lot size, vehicular access) to potentially update the zoning to allow for duplexes. The teal and green sites represent locations within the current RD-5.5-7 zone that allow duplexes where we could potentially update the zoning based on similar criteria as the single family residential to duplex rezoning, to allow for quadplexes. Please note that some hazards are incorporated into this map, but it does not include flood plain zones at this time.

Staff and the consultants are looking for a discussion and feedback on the opportunities and challenges related to these potential zoning changes.

“Missing Middle” Housing Approach

The Missing Middle concept refers to the issue many municipalities across the country face with their existing housing stock. There are single-family housing neighborhoods and larger-scale multi-family districts, which typically cater to higher-income residents or lower-income residents respectively. However, there is a lack of housing options for

middle-income residents. This can be remedied by adding units that have the look and feel of smaller-scale buildings, but allow for multiple units within the structure.

The Missing Middle housing approach focuses on incorporating house-scale buildings with multiple units in walkable neighborhoods or areas near transit. These housing options can include side-by-side duplexes, stacked duplexes, quadplexes, courtyard cottages, Eco Villages, townhouses and more.

Incorporating zoning and policy changes to allow for and incentivize these Missing Middle housing options can have aesthetic benefits to neighborhoods as they create a smoother transition between existing single-family areas and multi-family areas. They also provide options for many people, for example singles and empty nesters.

Update on 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 consultants and staff are about to embark on a higher-profile public engagement effort, including the incorporation of the Balancing Act tool—a highly interactive online public preference survey tool which staff anticipates being available in the near future.

A public banner was erected over Sir Francis Drake on August 24th and will stay up until September 14th. The banner directs people to the fairfaxspeaks.com website to ask questions and learn about the Housing Element Update process. The banner will also be erected for a second period of time later in the year. Bookmarks at the library and coasters at local businesses have also been distributed to raise awareness about the fairfaxspeaks.com website. In an effort to reach stakeholders that are typically not engaged in planning outreach efforts, Staff and consultants also visited a local food pantry and hosted a table at the Farmer’s Market to get in-person feedback and survey responses. Flyers will also be translated into Spanish and distributed to local employers that have Spanish-speaking employees.

Staff has also been working to direct residents to the fairfaxspeaks.com website through traditional public communication vehicles such as the Town website, the Town newsletter, and other electronic media. Staff will continue to focus on improving this engagement in the future.

This is intended to be an iterative process—feedback from Committees, Commissions and the public will continue to be encouraged as the drafts are developed.

CONCLUSION

The efforts for the Housing (and Safety and Land Use) Elements Update that are described in this report are currently in the process of garnering feedback and working on initial identification and analysis of potential sites. Staff anticipates that the September 22 Joint Town Council-Planning Commission workshop on housing site options will include a more targeted discussion of potential sites as well as examining related zoning and policy changes that would incentivize adding additional units. This will be an important step in creating the first draft of the Housing (and Safety and Land Use) Elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide direction to the consultants and staff on:

1. Additional factors that should be included in the suitability analysis of potential multi-family housing sites
2. Comments on the duplexes and quadplexes housing options
3. Comments on how to best incorporate the “Missing Middle” housing approach into the Housing Element Update
4. Comments on ways to ensure compliance with AB 686
5. Recommendations on the du-, tri- or quad-plex housing option
6. Questions

Attachment A: Table of Potential RHNA Housing Sites 08-27-21

Attachment B: Expansion of Housing Options Map