



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

October 21, 2021

TO: Planning Commission

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

SUBJECT: Housing Element status update

BACKGROUND

The Town has been working on the Housing and Safety Element updates in response to the State of California mandated process called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The Town is currently nearing the end of its 5th RHNA cycle, and has been working since April on the 6th Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), which will take effect in 2023 and run to 2031.

The Planning Commission conducted a joint workshop with the Town Council on September 22. At that time, staff and EMC Planning Group presented the work undertaken to date including unveiling the preliminary list and map of housing opportunity sites. Council and Commission comments and direction were requested on the preliminary housing opportunity sites and the following topical areas:

- Update on Public Outreach and Engagement
- Compliance with AB686 (Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing)
- Evacuation & Safety Concerns re: Fires/Floods
- "Missing Middle" Housing Approach
- Introduction to Balancing Act Tool

DISCUSSION

The community involvement process is an iterative one and staff/consultants are working to incorporate key feedback from the 9/22 meeting into our engagement tools on the Fairfax Speaks website as well as through other channels and strategies. Fairfax Speaks visits and registrations increased after each public event where visiting the Fairfax Speaks site was encouraged, including after the 9/22 Council meeting and mentions in the Weekly Town Newsletter.

The next major engagement strategy will be postcards mailed to all Fairfax residents with two key purposes: to promote the upcoming 11/20 Virtual Community Workshop, and to encourage

engagement with new features on the Fairfax Speaks site. Prior to the mailing the website will be updated so that residents can engage in neighborhood forums as well as learn about each housing opportunity site through a dedicated project page. The polls and survey located on the website will also be refreshed to continue to gather key data and feedback related to the Housing Element Update process.

At the recent joint Council and Planning Commission meeting, staff and the consultants heard that people want:

- more meaningful engagement in determining which sites to include with this housing element update
- more welcoming “in-roads” to those who are new to learning about this process
- Increased sites inclusion for consideration as part of the housing sites inventory

We also know that pursuant to AB 686 we need a better understanding about the migration and development patterns that have taken place in Fairfax.

Following are next steps for addressing these goals:

Preparation for the "phase 2" website outreach tools:

- Archive and report out prior outreach via email reply to registrants
- Create and send Newsletter with photos from map, upcoming events
- New survey, and Q&A to provide responses to Council meeting comments and questions
- Reorganize to improve clarity, functionality, and engagement
- Multiple approaches to gather "Fairfax story" history of migration and development patterns

Preparation for November 20 Community Workshop:

- New web-pages focused on each of the inventory sites (map, description, Google street view)
- Clarity about why each site has been selected to be included with the draft sites inventory

Forums for open dialogue among community:

- Postcard invitations (to also advertise 11/20 Workshop) to be sent out asap
- No registration required to see discussion groups
- Forums will be designed as ideas boards with ability to comment and show emoji icons
- Weekly prompts for discussion among forum
- Ability to register for 11/20 workshop within a neighborhood group Zoom room

Staff and/or consultants will schedule and attend the next Planning Commission Sub-Committee meeting and the next Affordable Housing Committee meeting to continue to garner key feedback and provide updates regarding the opportunity sites, Balancing Act tool, other engagement efforts, and the Safety Element update.

The upcoming November 20th Virtual Community Workshop will be the next major opportunity to provide feedback on the Housing Element and will include tutorials on how to participate in the Balancing Act tool online. Breakout rooms will be organized by the same neighborhood groups that community members will have already been becoming familiar with through the Fairfax Speaks forums.

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