



May 18, 2020

San Rafael City Council
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San Rafael, CA 94901

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RE: Annual Progress Report on Housing

Dear Mayor Phillips and Council Members:

Sustainable San Rafael appreciates the annual reporting on the City's progress in approving new housing. The Housing Element of the General Plan assures San Rafael residents and businesses—and the State—that we have enough sites already zoned to accommodate the slow growth in population that is expected. It also includes a thorough examination of how to make housing more economically feasible here. We measure what is important, and new housing, especially affordable housing, is important for the future prosperity of San Rafael.

The numbers in the Progress Report clearly show that San Rafael faces a crisis of housing affordability. Just halfway through the current cycle:

- Only 25% of the City's housing need has been met when measured by the number of building permits issued.
- While planning approvals indicate that 50% of the housing need has been met, there are very few units approved for the housing needed most, that is, units affordable to lower income residents.

Looking ahead, we foresee that the housing needs of San Rafael will only be larger than ever. The California Housing Project's *Marin County's Housing Emergency Update (2019)* identified the county's affordable housing need to be 9,495. With nearly a quarter of the county's population, San Rafael would have an estimated need for almost 2,400 affordable units.

Great challenges face San Rafael to resolve our housing shortage, while also adapting to changing retail and office patterns, transportation and climate impacts. The Council and Community Development staff had a comprehensive discussion this year about streamlining review of housing to lower costs and increase consistency. These policy revisions should have the highest priority, especially in these fiscally constrained times. It's essential that they be completed as soon as possible, along with advancing new funding sources like the Housing Alliance for the Bay Area, so that next year's housing element will show many more units planned, approved, and under construction.

We ask that you accept the Annual Progress Report on Housing, and direct staff to implement housing policy changes with all due speed.

Sincerely,

Kiki La Porta, SSR Housing Task Force