



**LET'S HOUSE  
SAN RAFAEL**

San Rafael 2023-2031 Housing Element Working Group  
Meeting #1  
January 20, 2022  
**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Attendance**

Members Present: *Omar Carrera, Don Dickenson, Andrew Hening, Linda Jackson, Cesar Lagleva, Amy Likover, Diana Lopez, Rina Lopez, Tom Monahan, Jon Previtali, Daniel Rhine, Joanne Webster*

Members Absent: *Lorenzo Jones (excused)*

Staff Present: *Alexis Captanian, Alicia Giudice, Barry Miller, Jacob Noonan*

**(1/2) WELCOME/ RECORDING OF MEMBERS PRESENT AND ABSENT**

The meeting was called to order at 4.00 PM. Roll call was taken. Members (and staff) introduced themselves.

**(3) ACCEPTANCE OF PRIOR MEETING SUMMARIES**

The summary of the “Meet and Greet” event on December 14, 2021 was accepted. (Motion: Likover, second: Jackson)

**(4) INITIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no initial comments.

**(5) DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**A. Primer on Goals, Policies, and Objectives**

Barry Miller provided an overview of the terms used in the Housing Element, explaining the distinction between goals, policies, and objectives.

**B. Opening Ice Breaker: What’s Working and What’s Not**

Barry Miller provided an overview of the Evaluation of the 2015 Housing Element, which had been provided to members prior to the meeting. The Committee then was asked to respond to the following questions:

- What program(s) in the Housing Element are working well?
- What program(s) in the Housing Element are not working and why?
- What program(s) should be added?

A discussion of these questions followed and the following comments were made:

- Two threads are missing from the element -

- environmental justice (where structures are built)
- don't know about the words community and neighborhood. Are they close to a freeway, is there a sense of community, can kids walk to school, ride their bike
- What's not working: In-Lieu fee and how it has been used needs improvement. The fee doesn't generate enough funding to create a permanent funding stream. We need to look at creating a permanent funding stream. What is working: What works: combining the DRB and PC.
- What works well: the ADU program. What doesn't work well: recent changes to the inclusionary ordinance, reducing the requirement by too much. What we should add: a program encouraging more energy efficient housing.
- What works well: the effort to end homelessness effort, it has been tremendous. What needs more work: housing for special needs and supportive housing. Also, please change "senior" to "older adult" throughout the document.
- What's not working: Supportive services for homeless residents (too many homeless residents have died)—there is room for improvement around homeless services. What's working well - community collaboration (public/private partnerships) Eden housing at Vivalon, and Homeward Bound. What I'd like to add: A program to create precise plans in other areas - specifically precise plans that streamline development of affordable and mixed income housing in neighborhoods through precise plans.
- What's not working: Predictability in the planning/building process. City should be proactive (rather than reactive) on new housing laws (e.g. density bonus law and concessions). What we should add: Look at housing overlays (to provide incentives for housing) - lay out bonuses and concession in areas of the city.
- What's not working: housing policies have historically be discriminatory against BIPOC. The change to inclusionary housing requirements are a concern. There should be regular reports on this to see if the effect that the city was aiming for actually happened or if it is just reducing affordability in new construction. What's working: An increased commitment to inclusivity and equity, and we should continue to focus on this.
- What is working - mobile home park rent stabilization. What is not working is that only 2% of SR residents benefit from this, and the rest of our renters do not. What is working: Housing conditions and maintenance inspections: 48% of MFR rentals are inspected, is the public aware of the program? What isn't working: What about the rest of the units? Do residents get results of the inspections? Can staff provide more information.

Staff responded with more information and noted that the City was on a 5-year inspection cycle. Inspectors notify each tenant and the inspector provides a list of corrections to made. A committee member noted that she has lived in her building for 10 years and not seen an inspection occur during that time.

- What's not working: Program H12d (current shelter zoning) – emergency shelters are only allowed by right in a the industrial area and this should be broadened to more areas of the city. What's working: Program H12c (fee waivers)—they are working well at the front end to get projects off the ground - we should expand this. What we could do better - report back on what we have done.

Provide a more proactive way to educate tenants and landlords on their rights and the City's programs.

- What's not working well – I'm concerned about the recent reduction in the inclusionary housing requirement from 20% to 10%. We have never had a challenge to provide market rate housing, we have struggled to achieve affordable housing. What has the potential to work well: ADUs to disperse housing in a way that blends with neighborhoods. We should explore whether folks are taking advantage of the new laws to build home offices and guest quarters, or are they are actually working to produce more affordable housing? What's missing: the Element should include more reference to sustainability, environmental resources, and avoiding environmental hazards
- What works: Program H1 (housing program review). What is not working: Program H9c (housing opps for people with disabilities)--there seems to be confusion about disability means. We should define this (are we referring to developmental disabilities?). Also, Program H3a / H3b - neighborhood meetings and outreach. We need to expand our relations and connections to include ALL residents, make sure our participation is authentic, and improve our connections with residents, leaders, and businesses in all geographic areas.
- What is working: The recent 10% inclusionary change is very helpful to help projects pencil out, in light of higher construction and development costs.
- The Chamber of Commerce supported the change to 10% because of high costs and slow construction. This is something that should be evaluated and reevaluated over time to see if its achieving its intended purpose (staff noted that the effects of this change were being tracked and would be reported out to Council on a regular basis).
- I also concur the earlier comments that development costs are soaring, and further agree that we need to track the effects of the changes to our inclusionary requirement. It is also important to focus local dollars on local projects. This is necessary to ensure full financing and make affordable projects more viable.

An opportunity for public comment was provided, and the following additional comments were made:

- The City should have moved to 15% inclusionary rather than 10%. In-lieu fees need to be higher, and we should make sure that the 10% that is required is provided on site.
- Disappointed that the ADU ordinance did not prohibit ADUs on narrow streets and in fire-prone areas. Also, if the City is committing to sustainability, then it should not allow mature trees to be taken down for new housing.

### **C. New Housing Goals for San Rafael**

The Working Group reviewed the two existing goals in the San Rafael Housing Element, as well as goals from other Housing Elements that had been provided by staff. Group members were asked to comment on potential new goals for San Rafael and the following comments were made:

- In their earlier comments, many of the Working Group members spoke about strengthening the housing element around sustainability—we should keep that in mind as we formulate new goals.

- Goals should focus on things that are “Attainable” as well
- Better collaboration with housing developers (more public/private partners); goal of diversifying the neighborhoods: bring BIPOC into historically white neighborhoods through new housing/homeownership; break the cycle of poverty in segregated areas.
- Can staff provide the data from the Othering and Belonging Institute? (Staff noted that this would be provided as part of the “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing” analysis)
- Surprised that the existing Element only had 2 goals. We need 5-7 goals that are more well rounded to cover all the interests and issues at stake. Look at the San Leandro example: (increase supply and ownership, healthy environment in all housing, calling out specific populations, goals for homelessness services, commit to housing consistent with RHNA)
- Some of the examples given by staff read like laundry lists so perhaps we don’t have that many but more than what we have. We should add something about energy efficiency / climate change. Sustainable housing (in this context, this means: amount of energy used, water used wisely). Requirements phased in so it is affordable over time.
- Can we model our goals on the Santa Monica example? It touches on most of the major issues and the wording works well for San Rafael.
- A city that is not segregated, racial, ethnically, economically, and that is connected (transit oriented ) throughout the community
- Look at sustainability in how the building is built as well as the systems and operations. Larger, denser housing is more sustainable from an energy and resources perspective. *(another committee member added that larger, denser housing may not reflect the character of San Rafael)*. Having more people near transit who are not auto dependent is going to be more sustainable. Also, predictability and ease in process is imperative to the developer (by-right processes, streamlined processes are key). Use the word “predictability” in one of the goals.
- Need a goal of racial integration in existing neighborhoods. Poverty and inequity is a policy choice. We need to show how BIPOC communities benefit from housing.
- Sustainability is also about how many miles someone needs to drive to reach a high quality job. Building cities that are more walkable, more pedestrian oriented, with mass transit. Our goals should center on equity.
- Equitable housing for all. We should increase supply of housing for all people over the term of this Element. People are moving away from San Rafael and we need to focus on fairness for BIPOC, seniors, others - so that everyone has a place and everyone can continue to live here. Sustainability - how will we resolve power outages and environmental events that cause loss of energy for vulnerable populations.
- We should recognize housing as a human right. This was first mentioned in the 1930s by FDR, and recently by the current administration. This may sound loaded, but perhaps we can include that we are striving toward that.

- I support all of the inclusivity and diversity comments. But how does the group see this working on a practical level? As a developer, I cannot select by race or ethnicity - how do we implement these equity goals in a real world context?
- When it comes to housing, this is a structural issues. The financing and banking institutions are the gateway to breaking past patterns and need to be involved as stakeholders in effecting real change.
- Inclusionary requirement is a key to bringing equity as well
- I envision a world where the permitting of development is more predictable and land is zoned for a mix of multi-family as well as single family. Multi-family is less expensive to build and creates opportunities for a wider range of households to get into homeownership, including lower income households and people of color.
- I agree with the broad concepts around equity --- If I were a woman of color with children I want to know that I have options in all neighborhoods of this city. At the same time, we need to be careful as we streamline our processes because another one of our goals is to maintain San Rafael's character. We don't need to sacrifice the community for the sake of streamlining our permitting. Regarding financing, we should find more affordable options. If families want to be homeowners, we should figure out ways to make that possible.
- City of San Leandro has a goal to maximize programs that benefit residents of the city. There are not enough policies and protections right now to help folks to stay in their housing. This means loans, legal advocacy, and investing in education, and our capacity to support people. Every community should be contributing to this (equity needs to be a regional effort).
- If we increase overall supply, we will create more opportunities for people of color to live here. So many projects end up being "under built" because of public opposition. Part of this discussion is changing the political will so that we can achieve a community where we can all live, workers, kids, older folks etc. This means more multi-family housing.
- Fruitvale neighborhood in Oakland is a good case study for partnerships between the City and non-profits to develop housing. The crisis is huge and needs to be addressed intentionally through public/private partnerships.
- Appreciates all the panelists comments and agree with a vast majority of the comments.
- One of the benefits of doing Precise Plans/ Area Plans is to address the earlier comment about safeguarding the neighborhoods. The Downtown plan is very prescriptive with respect to design standards.

An opportunity for public comment was provided, and the following additional comments were made:

- With respect to increasing generational wealth and home ownership rates, the new Habitat project in Novato provides an excellent example. I echo the earlier comments around conserving community character and aesthetics. We can improve access to housing without sacrificing the qualities we value.
- Youth in Arts and Y-Plan will be engaging elementary school kids at Laurel Dell in the SR Housing Element. Their work will parallel the work the Working Group is doing, and they are looking for

ways that the youth can add value to this process. The students are looking at the Canal area and seeking aspirational solutions to address the housing challenge.

**(6) MEMBER AND STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Jacob Noonan and Alexis Captanian provided an update on a Resident Survey to be launched in February 2022. *Concern was voiced about a survey that could drive policy unless it is administered in a scientific manner to avoid redundant answers* (second sentence added per comment on 2/17/22)

Barry Miller indicated the dates of upcoming meetings.

A Committee member suggested a potential field trip to the Habitat project in Novato, and a coordinated effort to work with the Laurel Dell students.

**(7) PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY #2**

Because public comments were taken following agenda Item 5(B) and 5(C), there were no further comments offered at this point.

**(8) ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.