



# COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 | SUMMARY

July 14th, 6:30-8:00PM via ZOOM Virtual Meeting

The objective of the first San Rafael Housing Element Update community workshop was to provide an overview of the housing element process, present the input gathered to date and discuss potential housing opportunity sites. The meeting was designed to gather input from meeting participants on key housing considerations and concerns, and discuss opportunity sites presented through an interactive feedback exercise with workshop participants. Feedback received will inform the content of future outreach events and will guide the preparation of the Housing Element Update.

The community workshop was held via Zoom on Thursday, July 14, 2022 from 6:30-8:00 pm and was facilitated by City staff and the consultant team. Approximately 25 members of the public attended. The meeting agenda is outlined below:

## Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Presentation
  - a. Project context, timeline, overview of what has been completed to date
3. Activities
  - a. Polling Questions
  - b. Small Group Breakout Discussion
  - c. Report Back
4. Next Steps

## Attendance

### **City of San Rafael, Housing Element Team**

- **Alexis Captanian**, Housing Analyst
- **Barry Miller**, Consulting Project Manager
- **Liz Darby**, Engagement Consultant

### **City of San Rafael, support team**

- **Leslie Mendez**, Planning Manager
- **Jeff Ballantine**, Senior Planner
- **Renee Nickenig**, Assistant Planner
- **Walter Gonzalez**, City Manager's Office
- **Luis Rodriguez**, Assistant Planner

### **Consultant Team**

- **Plan to Place** - Dave Javid, Paul Kronser, Rachael Sharkland

## **Workshop Summary**

Dave Javid, with Plan to Place, opened the meeting to participants and opened up the interpretation channels for those requiring interpretation in Spanish or Vietnamese. Next, Mayor Kate Colin welcomed participants and provided a brief overview of the meeting's purpose and introduced the project team in the meeting. Following Mayor Colin's welcome, Dave provided an overview of how the meeting was going to be facilitated along with the agenda. Before beginning the presentation, Dave conducted a live demographic poll with the meeting participants.

The following is a summary of the results from the demographic poll from the 25 participants:

### **Demographic Live Poll (full results from the poll are in the Appendix)**

- 1. Where do you live? (select one)**
  - 80% live in San Rafael
  - 10% live in Marin County but not San Rafael
  - 10% live outside of Marin County
  
- 2. Where do you work? (select one)**
  - 36% work in San Rafael (including remote work)
  - 18% do not in San Rafael, but in Marin County
  - 18% work outside Marin County
  - 27% do not work (retired, unemployed, unable to work, student, etc.)
  
- 3. If you work in San Rafael, how long is your commute? (select one)?**
  - 100% travel less than 20 minutes.
  
- 4. Which of the following describes why you decided to attend tonight's workshop? (select all that apply)?**
  - 40% want to know more about the Housing Element Update process
  - 7% want to know more about obtaining housing in San Rafael
  - 33% want to support more housing development in San Rafael
  - 20% are concerned about more housing development in San Rafael
  
- 5. What is your current housing situation?**
  - 50% own a home
  - 33% rent a home
  - 17% live with family/friends (I do not own or rent)
  
- 6. What type of housing do you live in?**
  - 58% live in a house
  - 42% live in an apartment
  
- 7. With which race/ethnicity do you self-identify? (Check all that apply)?**
  - 25% Hispanic/Latino
  - 58% White
  - 17% prefer not to say



## 8. Which bracket best describes your household income?

- 10% Below \$45,000
- 10% \$68,000-\$100,000
- 40% \$100,000-\$150,000
- 20% \$150,000+
- 20% prefer not to say

After the poll closed, Barry Miller, Consulting Project Manager, presented an overview of the Housing Element process which included background, contents, purpose and general timeline. The presentation also included specific background information on the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and how much housing the City has to plan for based on regional allocations and demand. Following the introduction to RHNA Barry identified how the City can plan for the 3,220 required housing units with opportunity sites throughout the City that in total have a potential capacity of over 5,000 units.

Barry then provided a breakdown of initial findings and considerations for approved projects that would help meet the housing need, followed by an opportunity for any clarifying questions from meeting participants.

### **Small Group Breakout Discussion**

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to gathering input from meeting participants through facilitated small group discussions. Prior to breaking into small groups, Dave gave an overview of the breakout room logistics and then opened the rooms into which participants were randomly assigned. A facilitator and notetaker from the project team were assigned to each breakout room.

Feedback was recorded in three breakout rooms on a virtual spreadsheet that participants could view, in response to the discussion prompts below. The summary provides a high level overview of themes that emerged from the small group discussions.

### **Small Group Discussion Prompts**

The following discussion prompts were used to facilitate the discussion with meeting participants in the small groups.

1. What do you think are the most critical housing issues in San Rafael and why? Have you faced housing challenges in San Rafael?
2. Do you have any questions/concerns about the sites?
3. What other things should the City be thinking about when it comes to housing?
4. Do you have any suggestions for how San Rafael might solicit additional feedback on the Housing Element Update and encourage participation?

### **Key Takeaways from Small Group Discussion**



The following are key takeaways from the discussions in each of the breakout rooms, categorized by Discussion Prompt:

**1. What do you think are the most critical housing issues in San Rafael and why?**

**Have you faced housing challenges in San Rafael?**

- Create safe, sustainable, affordable housing with enough green spaces for families to enjoy.
- Take into account how emergency services such as fire and police can accommodate the additional housing.
- The lack of affordable housing is destroying the ability to run a business.
- There is overcrowding in the Canal due to lack of affordable housing elsewhere and we don't have affordable places to put people.
- Creating developments with market/moderate rate housing (Northgate Mall) will keep the same problem of lack of affordable housing.
- City should look into more rent control ordinances of apartments to help existing tenants/residents stay.
- Apartments and lower income housing stock are in poor condition due to the number of people living in them caused by the costs being so high.
- Difficulty finding affordable housing due to the need for 3 months rent and can be challenging for those with less than perfect credit.

**2. Do you have any questions/concerns about the sites?**

- The Canal is cut off effectively from the City whereas on one side there is a bike and smart train.
- There should be a safe way to walk, bike, take public transit safely from the Canal to downtown.
- San Rafael is essentially built out and the Housing Element is about extracting the maximum amount of feasible units on a few left sites.
- On-site open spaces should be taken into consideration and potential for shared open spaces as we build in higher density environments. .
- Consider the impact 1800-2000 new homes would have on resources and services including schools
- Maximize the probability so we can use everything the City has available to make these realistic sites.
- Consider having a large buffer in terms of how state housing legislation and CEQA streamlining may view those identified sites in future housing planning.
- These new housing sites need to consider the low income population, especially in the vicinity to Northgate Mall.

**3. What other things should the City be thinking about when it comes to housing?**



- Segregation and affordability are the main problems.
- Consider the impact ADU's would have on parking during evening and weekend hours, especially on quiet streets.
- Allow for shared parking between institutional, commercial, residential uses
- Build smarter, using sustainable materials and consider the water needed with additional units.
- Locate dense housing along mass transit corridors
- Take into account the physical and social infrastructure to support the new housing quota over the next few years.
- Revisit the approval and regulatory process for developments such as affordable housing so they can go through more quickly and reduce costs on affordable housing developers.
- Add more rental housing opportunities for those who can't afford to purchase a home.
- Find ways to enforce and monitor the number of people living in apartment units.

**4. OUTREACH - Do you have any suggestions for how San Rafael might solicit additional feedback on the Housing Element Update and encourage participation?**

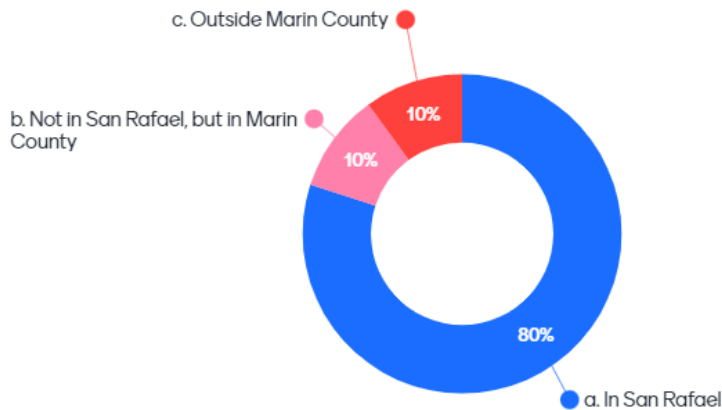
- Use outreach methods such as flyers and notices.
- More communication with community and other groups the City works with on a regular basis.
- Keep the material simple and easy to understand.
- Meet the community in places where people are such as churches, big stores, clinic waiting rooms and places like Cardenas.



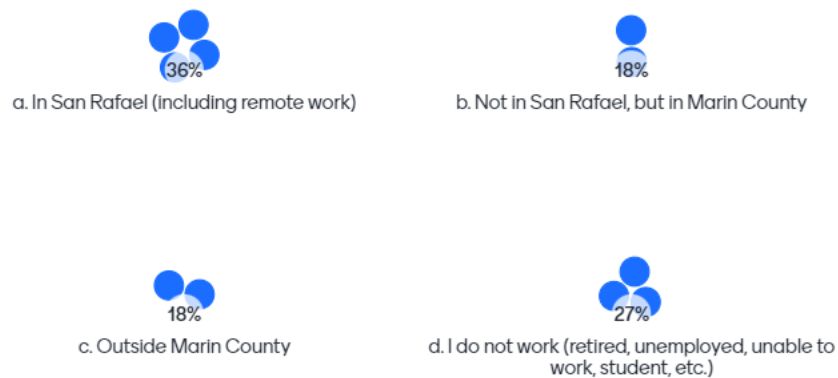
## APPENDIX

### In Meeting Live Poll Results:

## 1. Where do you live? (select one)

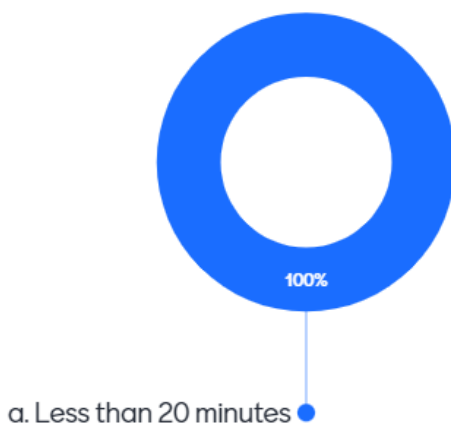


## 2. Where do you work? (select one)

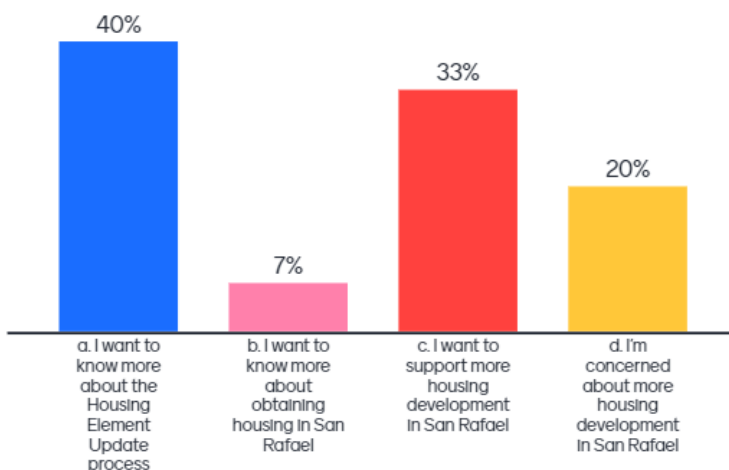




### 3. If you work in San Rafael, how long is your commute? (select one)



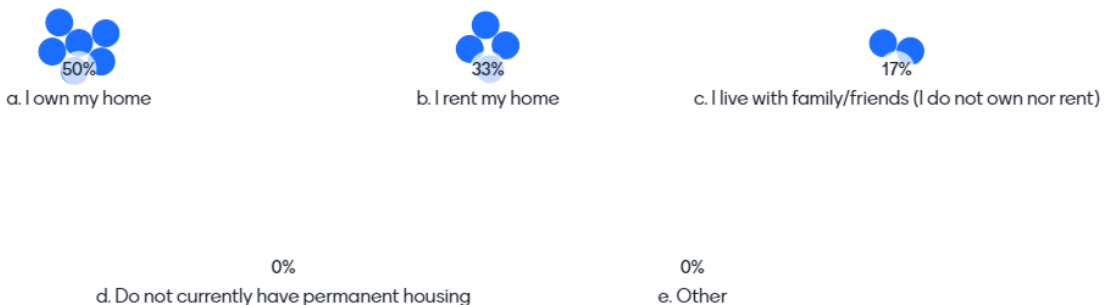
### 4. Which of the following describes why you decided to attend tonight's workshop? (select all that apply)?



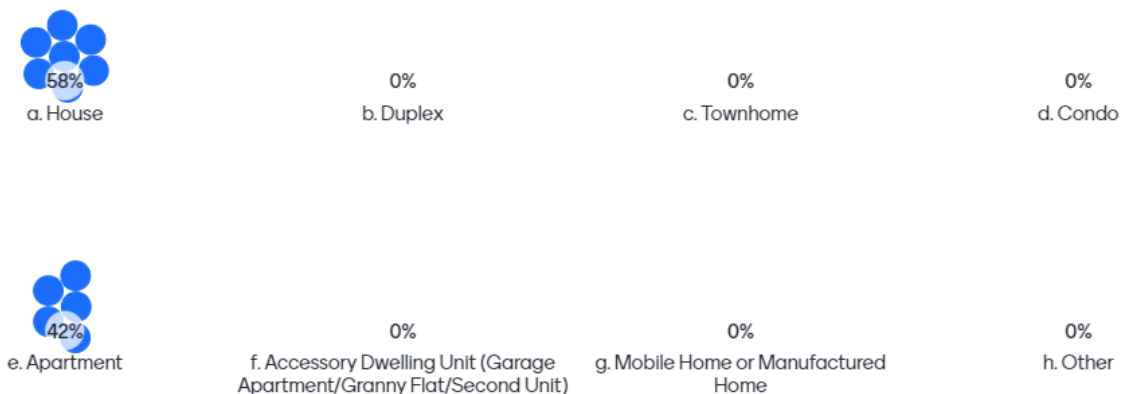


## 5. What is your current housing situation? (select one)

Mentimeter



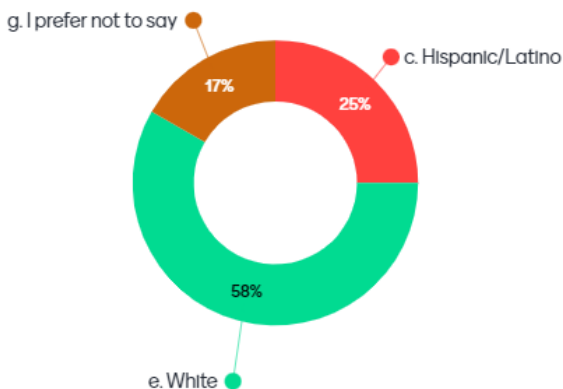
## 6. What type of housing do you live in? (select one)







## 7. With which race/ethnicity do you self-identify? (Check all that apply)

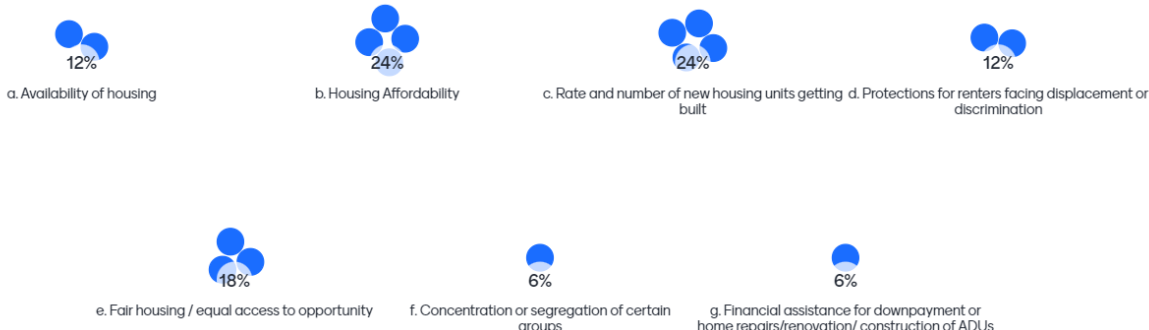


## 8. Which bracket best describes your household income?





What do you think are the most critical housing issues in San Rafael? (Choose all that apply)



## Transcript of Public Comments Received through Zoom Chat

- Potential for mixed-income-cultur diveristy
- I'm hoping SR will let us know in this meeting what has been done since the last (2015) housing element cycle
  - *Response: Alexis, do we have any data on this? AC: I can report on the number of units built at each income level (from Annual Progress Report). Barry can speak to how many sites identified were actually built on...Thanks, sounds good*
  - *Response: We have this data but I dont have it at my fingertips We also have a detailed spreadsheet that shows the progress made in implementing each program.*
  - *Response: See table on page 3 of annual progress report to Council this year: <https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2022/03/6.b-Annual-Progress-Report-Housing-Policy-Update.pdf>*
  - *Thank you, Leslie, and great question, Meike. I also recommend Attachment 2 in that document (starting page 9) which describes some policies in addition to the units built*

## Breakout Room Comments

The following are both chat and verbal comments taken from each of the rooms during the breakout session:

### Room 1 (Main Room):

Safe, affordable housing; enough green spaces for families to enjoy. I am focused on development being humanely designed, so they can live comfortably, with adequate greenspace. Design that gives people dignity and allows people to enjoy outdoors. Walking distance to school and affordable food



shopping.

Safety aspect, including wildfire and other emergencies, importance of considering traffic, placement, and accessibility. Also fire and water, and schools, being able to support the addition. Taking into account in-lieu fees that developers can pay not to build low income housing?

I work i housing industry as an architect, and I have completely given up on hiring a young employee at our San Rafael office, employees are all over the age of 50, the only way I can hire someone below age of 50 would be to have an office elsewhere. No way around it, all about affordability, the lack of affordable housing is destroying ability to run a business. It is a crisis and will destroy our City, because the only folks that can live here are very wealthy and can own a home, like myself. From a design perspective, and in order to integrate these principles, take advantage of underutilized downtown, will also provide more activity and activate our downtown. All about affordability so we have appropriate and sustainable development.

Lived here for 28 years, question: City actively identify locations that have been identified for other development, eg. Aegis facility? If this site were to be developed into housing, school nearby and access to downtown. Is there a process to get these sites included in the inventory, to actively review such sites? We need to have thoughtfully designed housing. Green space, walkability, shoppability. And use materials that are more environmentally friendly. We are the tree City, and I see we are cutting down trees. We should enhance green space.

Are designated sites on the map just sites or are there projects here?

Former Gym on Downtown 4th Street and Bowling alley? If we can provide sites away from the canal that are lower income, and certainly less than \$90k a year. We need to consider lower like \$60-70k. We are crowding the canal. Put people in a position for ownership. Make it easier for folks to build ADUs, to live and work here.

Former Gym on Downtown 4th Street and Bowling alley?

The canal is cutoff effectively from the City. On one side there is a bike and smart train, but most folks are driving to downtown san rafael. There should be a safe way to walk, bike, take public transit safely from the Canal to downtown.

Useful to realize San Rafael is virtually built-out; most sites are developed. So really this is all about extract maximum utility, maximum amount of units on few sites we have left that are practical to develop. I am an architect and can assure you that the creativity we bring to all of these projects is capable of producing quality place to live. What we see today is 3-5 story, can be boxy, but are economical, and sustainable product, and can provide balconies and livable units. Have to be realistic about this. On-site open space requirements are a problem when it comes to getting the units we need; so we should rely on shared open space in our community than relying on open spaces on development sites.

I wouldn't agree we are near capacity, with height and density we can achieve more. Segregation and affordability are the main problems, and a lot to be said for heightening in my neighborhood in North San Rafael.

ADU is a creative idea, have the people doing the HE considered the implications for parking? My quiet street has turned into a parking nightmare because City is not enforcing health and safety and so there is overrenting. I see with the ADUs you are compounding the problem. What about using non-used parking spots at mall or schools during evening and offering permits so that the streets can be quiet?



Creative idea of sharing parking between institutional, commercial, residential. What I am getting at is a housing type that includes families and single folks because then it is a community; every neighborhood in San Rafael that are too many cars and so it isn't safe to walk, bike, drive. Shoehorning in folks isn't good for safety. There are cars in almost every family, truth of matter.

Re: Parking issues, I agree, there are multiple dwellings in each home. I've been a renter for 20 years, I am a school teacher, and I have noticed warming, more than other locations in the Valley. As we get denser can we work as a town and pay attention to living roofs or some different ways of building that help cool the area? Amys is a great example by the highway, love going by that roof. Building smarter and using sustainable materials.

Question about resources; formulas for how much water and how many more cars additional units would generate? We are in a drought and we don't have enough water to continue as we are, and similar with cars.

There continues to be an impression that there's an unresolvable conflict between traffic and parking and increased density, fact of matter, been proven if you build a dense urban environment, it creates economic possibility of supporting mass transit. Smart train doesn't look very smart because there are only a couple places along line that have density to support mass transit. We being honest with ourselves we have to think about the future being more dense. Only way its going to work. Conflict between density, diversity, economic vitality, there is not a way to sustain using our cars to do everything. if we properly locate density in downtown, its a virtuous cycle that begins, no parking so alternative is to use mass transit.

**Room 2:**

World's population has tripled during my lifetime, and we need more housing. With that said, we don't need huge mansions - worldwide problem.

Live in Bay Pt. Lagoons - we are adjacent to canal and I have never faced housing challenges, and overcrowding in canal is due to lack of affordable housing and we don't have affordable places to put people.

San Rafael/Marin Co doesn't need more housing, but more AFFORDABLE housing. 2010-2020 numbers were outnumbered by RHNA goals and since Covid, Marin has lost housing - in current development projects (Northgate Mall) they are still 90% market rate moderate rate housing and building more houses will keep the same problem of lack of affordable housing.

live in downtown SR - housing cost is so high for what you get and would like to echo comments on more housing at all income brackets. One of the more affordable places to live at a young professional. More housing at all leaves would help with affordability. Segregation that goes on in the housing market today.

Land owner wanted to remove rent control and court ruling ruled in favor of us and we have rent control on land rent and only reason we are here in SR is due to the rent control of land. If City could look into more rent control ordinances of apartments that would be helpful. 2. Between 2010 and 2022 more units were built but we only increased a lesser amount in population. Overall issue of leaving everything up to private markets and we won't generate numbers we need now. England they have council housing, townships build housing for their residents. Towns and Cities should push the state government to start state BANK where towns/cities could tap into a money fund to build housing, and rent could be set appropriate to amount of income people make. If we rely on private markets and



developers, you'll never get the numbers you need to house the people.

Speak on behalf of Miller St. School district - school is excited about this process and want to bring impact on school infrastructure in the conversation. Site Inventory has to be managed by district and potential of 1800-2000 new homes in the district and the impact it would have. Northgate and larger projects and keeping some thought of impacts on schools as we move forward in the process.

Site map concern - sites that are realistic vs. aspirational. A lot of sites don't have data to support sites that are actually developable and feasible.

Response: We have so many units that are already in the pipeline and there are sites we wouldn't have guested would allow for units. We have metrics to use to determine or make a best guess and in some cases we are talking to property owners. Many of which are aware they can build housing on that site. Ongoing/constant communication with property owners and a rolling list that will change over time.

Affordable units, what income level is that? 91k / yr for income?

Response (Barry): If it's for sale units we're looking at moderate income level and homes that are discounted but still high in price. For rental, 91k and we have a 30% below moderate that gives subsidies, we don't see extremely low income units coming out of that process.

Could we develop our own units and bypass private development?

Response: Bond measures could fund these projects at the County level. Still in non-profit sector for affordable.

Thank you Barry for the work and detailed site inventory. Amazing work to identify these sites. Making sure these are realistic sites. As the City moves forward, maximizing the probability so we can use every thing we have to make these realistic sites.

Just to respond to Jerry's points: As a Brit, I know well the British "council housing" issue.

Unfortunately, there is a massive stigma issue involved with that housing - if you live in a council house you are deemed "poor." Also, politically, there is a massive difference. The UK is considered to be a socialist country whereas the US is considered capitalist. Politically, the council housing idea will be difficult.

David Smith (Direct Message)

Just to clarify in the notes - I meant to say that Marin (and California) have lost population, not housing since Covid

Are there any downsides to having such a large buffer in terms of how state housing legislation and CEQA streamlining may view those identified sites in future housing element planning processes, ie 2031-2039? Just wondering if there are any downsides to such a large buffer?

Response: Thanks Kate--the large buffer is mostly due to the large number of above moderate income units in the "pipeline"--the buffer for lower income is smaller

How the City plans for the physical and social infrastructure to support the new housing quota over the next years. Northgate town center planning process and community members are wondering how City of San Rafael will support 900 units in the next 10 years with resources and planning for a large development.

Response: 20 year time frame to 8 year timeframe for facilities and EIR for northgate need to answer that question and how they will be mitigated. Those will become conditions of approval when they move forward.

Cumbersome of approval and regulatory process for developments such as affordable housing so it can go through more quickly and reduce costs on affordable housing developer.



Does EIR include all the other projects in the same area that are occurring at the same time? Half RHNA goals going on in the same area at the same time, and would make disruptions at the same time. Does the EIR report take into account all these cumulative impacts?

Response: It does and some of those projects came in after the GP was adopted.

Cumulative impact to Miller Creek school district and hope that those schools would be brought into that conversation.

Thanks for that comment. I read up on UK housing and it has been built from a long time ago. US had a building program in the past and around 1970 it was ended. All we have now is the voucher program that just takes tax payers numbers and past to the renter and past it to the landlord. So I hope we can get back to building housing again.

UK council housing has continued to be built, although at a lower rate since Thatcher. Unfortunately, the stigma remains.

**Room 4 (Spanish):**

high costs, many people in the apartments, apartments in poor condition, not much parking, often no repairs and transferred to the landlords

it is somewhat difficult to find housing because you need two monthly payments and rent, 3 payments in total to rent the room, it is one of the challenges and they ask for good credit.

the apartments are in poor condition due to the excessive number of people watching in each unit, many are afraid to file a complaint because they are afraid that the rent will be raised.

the community has complained about parking, there is a mess, nothing is being fixed so far.

overpopulated, the increased number of people in the units brings excess garbage, lack of parking, that people need to comply with the contracts

I know someone who rents out 3 rooms in an apartment, it is something that is happening a lot.

cockroaches are terrible in the canal community, cockroaches are overpopulated.

it sounds good that they want to do new housing but there are no more plans to consider for low income people, you need to consider the low income population.

when building homes it is not known if we will be able to qualify

If you are not considering building more low-income units, could you think about rent control?

It is difficult to get an apartment in a building such as northgate mall because you don't have the income, social security



There is no point in making other units if the prices are high, help the people of the canal to be able to give people the opportunity to live in other parts of the city.

there are a lot of people coming into the canal who bring a lot of garbage and problems.

let's hope the housing developers give opportunity to Latinos who also work hard and can afford to pay.

Buying a house is good but also having more apartments to rent. A lot of people go to other cities to live more quietly because they don't want to spend the weekend in the canal because there are too many people.

no parking, too many people, there is only one parking space per apartment but sometimes people have two and there is no parking.

that there is sufficient parking because sometimes we have more than one car

it would be a good idea to for the city to see how many people actually live in the apartments.

owners send letters about limiting the number of people living in the apartments but people don't follow through with what they say

the owners have given the requirements of how many people must live in each apartment but they do not verify, they only give a notice but do not confirm.

in one situation the owner charged extra to a person when they began to live at their parent's house in the contracts one has to put the number of people living but many people do not put the actual number.

more communication, that the city connects with the group or other groups that work with the community.

give notice, giving flyers, communication and support among one another

note that in the presentations you will be able to listen to the presentation in your language.

conectarnos con Voces de Canal, con Jose y con Marina.

It was a little complicated to enter the zoom with the link.

a meeting in Spanish only and in person would be a good idea.

Connecting with community groups

the presentation should be simpler to understand and shorter.



look for places where people are, such as churches or big stores like Cardenas or at the clinic in the waiting room because there are a lot of people coming in.

the more people can be invited the better.

Good that the city has included the Asian community.