

May 22, 2013

Albany Planning and Zoning Commission

General Plan Study Session #3

The third Albany Planning and Zoning Commission General Plan Study Session was convened at 6:30 PM on May 22.

Consultant Barry Miller did a PowerPoint presentation outlining demographic trends and census data for Albany, and possible ideas for the Housing Element.

The following comments were made by Commissioners:

- City should include dedicated section of the Housing Element where the influence of UC Village on Albany's demographics are discussed, including household size, income, age, percent of income spent on housing, etc. The element should acknowledge the number of units and estimated population of UC Village and explain how it skews the numbers (including comparisons of 2000 vs 2010).
- Include an action to explore the feasibility of an affordable housing mitigation fee, like what Berkeley has adopted for new rental projects.
- OK to add an action supporting participation in the County's Mortgage Credit Certificate program.
- Consider a policy giving the City the authority to do fee waivers for affordable projects (case by case basis).
- Encourage affordable housing for teachers (it was noted that there was a proposal some years ago to put affordable units for teachers above the library, and another proposal to do teacher housing on the old Vista School site). Include action program to communicate with School Board on this.
- Consider a policy to seek out affordable housing developers who can do smaller projects (4-6 units) that reflect the smaller sites and residential infill context of Albany's housing sites.
- Add an action measure to start the process of revisiting parking requirements---gearing up for an eventual ballot measure. As an interim measure, consider reducing the dimensional requirements for spaces (does not require vote).
- Add policy which supports the FAR incentives for mixed use that are already allowed through zoning. Also, recognize that the San Pablo design guidelines encourage mixed use.
- Consider a bigger bonus for senior housing than other types of affordable housing.
- Consider tax incentives for second units so they are not taxed like second dwellings.
- Perhaps encourage (incentivize) second units in R-2 and R-3, since these are already multi-family zones.
- Cross-reference CAP policies for energy conservation and efficiency.
- Consider floor area incentives for projects with energy efficiency measures; e.g.. if you use green building measures, you are entitled to more floor space.

- Measure D has not really gotten the city anything—perhaps change parking space dimensional requirements also. Need a ballot measure?
- Consider incentives to build smaller units (reduced parking is one)—people would rather build one large unit than two small units; need to change this dynamic.

The following comments were made by the public:

- The owner of Albany Bowl addressed the Commission. He has owned the site since 1986 and would like maximum flexibility in his ability to develop it in the future. Avoid a designation that “requires” residential over retail. Instead, retain the flexibility to do mixed use OR 100% commercial. There are a lot of retailers who are interested in this site for 100% commercial. For mixed use to be feasible, the City needs to allow additional height and require less parking. The economics do not support 100% retail along the length of San Pablo Avenue—need to maximize flexibility. Don’t mandate mixed use. The City should not have lowered the height limit to 38 feet.
- A resident of Albany noted that the City had no control over UC, so it shouldn’t set policies for UC Village in the Housing Element. The City’s greatest need is for affordable senior housing, ideally near medical, shopping (El Cerrito Plaza), transit, etc. Albany Bowl is a good site for that. The City is falling behind in senior housing production and should work in cooperation with local developers.