

## Comments from the Town Hall Meeting

October 1, 2013

- Is the purpose of the Housing Element to look forward or backward?
- Can the City provide a (letter) “grade” for how we are doing compared to other cities? Our housing production numbers seem very low.
- Small sites are a development constraint.
- Safeway should be considered a possible housing site—it should be back on the table
- There is not enough housing for low income people in the city, and Albany should not evict people from the bulb until a supply is created. \$1,200 for a one-bedroom apartment is not realistic for someone on a fixed income, or with no income. In the meeting handout, it is unconscionable to say that more supportive services for homeless residents “may” be needed—such services are essential.
- Albany needs to be kinder to its extremely low income population.
- What about an affordable housing fee (in lieu of inclusionary units)—wouldn’t that be a more effective way to assist extremely low income people?
- Things are hard today, and they are getting worse. Don’t evict people from the bulb just before the rainy season starts. People need shelter. We have a crisis on our hands and need to deal with it now—no bureaucracy. There are ways to provide housing without building large-scale affordable projects.
- What incentives can the City provide to encourage affordable housing? Can you explain inclusionary zoning?
- Can we make it easier to do second units? Or to add a unit in the R-2 or R-3 zones?
- Our zoning setbacks need to be smaller and our height limits need to be higher.
- Be careful of a second unit amnesty program---if you require people to bring their units up to code, they may end up losing their tenants and an affordable unit is lost.
- Can we accommodate people sleeping in accessory buildings?
- Albany should work with non-profits to encourage economic diversity in the city, including housing. Think outside the box.
- Note that many of our services are provided by Berkeley, especially mental health. Can we work jointly with agencies in nearby cities?
- Albany does not need an affordable housing incentive program since we already have a density bonus program.
- Could create a program like Fairfield’s---the city forgives all the permit fees until the development is occupied, and then collects them over time through rents. The “write-down” helps make the unit more affordable.
- This discussion is mostly short term. What is our longer-term vision of what could be? Who has the vision for the future of housing in Albany? Is there one?
- Four stories will be perceived as too dense. The City is unwilling to compromise and give up open space. Can’t have more density unless we give up views/light and open space.
- Consider a restriction—allow second units with no parking on the condition that second unit occupants may not have a car. If they get a car, they must move out.

- NIMBY is a big challenge to all these ideas.
- Redevelopment funds have ended. Are there other funds available?
- What happens to Albany's regional housing needs number if we don't build the affordable housing?
- How are opportunity sites identified?
- Was the project at Cornell and Brighton required to pay an inclusionary housing fee?
- What constitutes housing? Would a "Dignity Village" type development count?
- Container housing should be considered (\*shipping containers used as dwellings)—Berkeley has the resources to build this. It could be transitional housing.
- The City does not have adequate resources—but what would it take to make some of these things happen? How much staff and money would we need? Can we offer volunteers?
- Housing diversity is an important part of the vision. It is more important to focus on extremely low right now, because that's where the needs are greatest and the gap is biggest. I'd like to see a conversation with C.E.S.P. to see if there is a way to diffuse the immediate situation and not victimize residents of the bulb.
- Permit costs and parking requirements are preventing me from converting my single family home into a duplex, even though I am in a zoning district where duplexes are allowed. I need the income from the additional unit and would be willing to rent-restrict the unit to get permission to build it.
- Let's be hopeful that we can accomplish some of these things in 2015-2022 if we can't do them in 2014. Albany should be the city that other cities are talking about. Our motto is urban village—this means economic diversity.
- Is there a mechanism to charge lower fees for affordable projects?
- How much of a parcel tax would the City need to create a long-term funding source for affordable housing.
- I appreciate that this has not been a priority in the past, but don't take it out on the poorest people.
- Can we accommodate some of our housing needs with vacant and abandoned units? There are many of 18 million of them in the country—
- How can we get other Albany residents on board in supporting affordable housing? An education process is needed. Otherwise there will be a lot of push back on height and density.
- Is CMX really the best zone for emergency shelter?
- If the City provided senior housing, seniors could move on and more single family homes could become shared housing. I don't agree that we have to sacrifice open space to get high density. Perhaps the Council could tour affordable housing developments and see their merits.
- Shared housing is a good idea. We should pursue a shared housing project, similar to what is done on the Peninsula.
- How can we call ourselves an urban village when we don't allow density?
- Small units are better. They have lower carbon footprints. Recognize the link between housing and climate action goals.
- Consider using other materials, like cobs and hay bales. Burlap bags filled with concrete a la Maybeck.
- Revisit idea of housing for teachers on Solano Ave.