

Albany Planning and Zoning Commission
July 23, 2014 Meeting Summary

Study Session on Draft Conservation and Sustainability Element (with Housing Element lead-in)

Barry Miller, General Plan consultant- presented his report on the housing element, detailing objectives for the study session, future housing opportunities, recent accomplishments, pending actions, and possible actions for 2015-2023. Miller responded to questions from the Commissioners.

The Chair invited public comment

- **Alexa Hauser**- was interested in the City's strategies for public outreach. She felt that one meeting was not sufficient to engage and educate the community and wanted to work with the City to come up with mutually acceptable methods of outreach. Some of the specific points raised:
 - Focus on housing needs right now as well as in the future, look at both immediate and long term housing concerns
 - Demonstrate the political will to stand up to the opposition
 - Support SRO hotels
 - Encourage measurable targets
 - Add the Pierce Street parcel
 - Put tiny homes on the Key Route median
 - Redevelop the whole corridor instead of doing it site by site, following the model of the El Cerrito Specific Plan
- **Karen White**- noted that she had recently gone to a countywide meeting on ending homelessness and had notes to pass along to the City. She indicated the "Dignity Village" model and the tiny homes movement were transferable to Albany.

The Chair indicated he thought the City should add a few new sites to the inventory, including Safeway, the Town Center shopping center, and maybe the waterfront. He suggested the City pursue allowing developers to meet the inclusionary requirements by rehabilitating existing lower cost apartments and making them affordable, since this could be more cost effective than building new units.

Barry Miller continued with the Conservation Element. Miller described aspects of sustainability in other elements of the General Plan and went through the seven goals of the Conservation and Sustainability Element: Protection of Natural Features, Urban Forestry, Air and Water Quality, Biologic Resources (plants and animals), Energy and Water Conservation, Sustainable Development, and Waste Reduction. He presented some feedback from the Sustainability Committee.

Chair Donaldson noted that the Sustainability Committee had some cutting edge ideas, but he was concerned about the City setting benchmarks that were unattainable. He liked the idea of a Dark Skies initiative but questioned why it was in the Biologic Resources section considering it is primarily for astronomy. Isn't this mainly for cities with telescopes? Is it related to birds? He noted that there was a policy about reducing glare already. Perhaps dark skies goes in the goal about energy. Be careful that the policy as written is not used to block proposals along the waterfront. He asked if there was an urban forest element in the existing plan.

Commissioner Moss- noted there were already state requirements on Dark Skies and these should be looked at first. The state laws are restrictive-the City should not take something already required by the Green Building Code and make it worse. Instead of the action proposed, perhaps participate in the state process to adopt a dark sky law.

The Chair asked for public comment on the proposed policies:

- **Anne Goess**- liked the Dark Skies initiative and thought the City could do even more with it than what is just required by state. When the street lamps were changed, the City became brighter.
- **Alexa Hauser**- was glad to see the link to more diverse housing.

Commissioner Eisenmann noted that the Clean Air Plan was important because air pollution comes from sources external to the City. She noted that communication with adjacent cities was important. She suggested we add more statistical information on how commercial uses/manufacturing contributed to greenhouse gases relative to residential uses.

Commissioner Pilch suggested that in the goal covering urban forestry, an action should be added to create tree plans for major streets.

Commissioner Moss asked if the policy to protect plants on Albany Hill applies to native plants only, or also to invasive plants. He suggested adding a program for replacing sick or declining trees and replace trees that have been removed.

Chair Donaldson suggested that the order of the policies under Goal 6 be rearranged. Policy 6.2 should come first, then 6.1, then 6.3, then 6.5, then 6.6, then 6.7, and then 6.4. In regards to transportation, he asked about a long range BART plan for an Albany station and asked that it be cross referenced.

Donaldson also suggested that under Policy 6.1, staff should check BART's long range plans for an intermediate station at Solano Avenue. Also, x-reference the Transportation Element after Policy 6.1.

Phil Moss asked that the policy for alternative fuel vehicles be edited to add "and electric" and also reference priority parking for carshare vehicles, smart cars, etc.