

Albany Planning and Zoning Commission
October 8, 2014 Meeting Summary

Study Session to Forward Working Draft 2015-2023 Housing Element to HCD

Consultant Barry Miller delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed new Housing Element, with a focus on the changes made to the prior Element in response to public comment.

Commissioner Eisenmann- asked about timing and what would happen if items assumed to be approved in January were not approved. Miller said these items would be added to the Housing Element before it's adopted, in the event they were not implemented by that time. Commissioner Arkin noted that the former City maintenance site was not added to the list possible development sites. Miller indicated that this was because the idea had not yet been vetted with the neighborhood and would also trigger additional CEQA requirements. He noted that it would be considered through the Land Use Element.

Chair Donaldson invited public comment. The following testimony was received:

- Reverend Kevin Omi indicated he supported the changes and appreciated the quantified objectives by income category. He requested that the document include interim goals for 2015, including 5 extremely low income units, 5 very low income units, and 7 low income units. If these are not achieved, he suggested we should evaluate what can be done to further expedite development. He also added that he supported the Element's provisions for multi-lingual outreach, noting that there were a substantial number of residents in the city with limited English.
- Alexa Hauser indicated she was pleased to see so many of the DHWG's suggested changes in the document. She noted that she was struck by how vulnerable so many members of the community were and appreciated the seriousness of the Commission in addressing housing issues. She urged the Commission to continue looking at the Pierce Street property as a housing site, and posed a question to the Commission about their vision of what the Housing Element should accomplish.

Chair Donaldson brought the item back to the Commission for Discussion. Nick Pilch asked that the text clarify the definition of the HUD income levels on P. 1-4, and potentially include a footnote indicating what the dollar ranges are. David Arkin indicated he liked the way the public participation process was described. In regard to Hauser's question, Commissioner Arkin said that the process the City has gone through will hopefully provide steps towards removing barriers that keep housing from being developed. Chair Donaldson agreed with Arkin, but mentioned issues regarding height limits, parking, and R-3 setbacks may come up. Stacy Eisenmann indicated that somewhat taller buildings would work on San Pablo, as they energized the street.

Nick Pilch asked if the Chapter 2 narrative describing progress on implementation of Policies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc. had been intentionally formatted as it appeared, or whether that was a typo. It was further noted that the footnote for UC Village on page 2-2 should note that UC subsidizes housing on an individual basis, or should cross-reference the Chapter 3 discussion of the UC units. Chair Donaldson also asked the reported

net gain of 53 (vs 73) units on Page 2-9 (redlined version) be checked. He also noted a typo on Page 2-15 under Policy 3.3 (“continue to be relevant”).

Stacy Eisenmann asked if the decline in population reported in 2010-2014 was accurate or an estimate, and if it was significant. Barry Miller indicated it was based on demographic models and not an actual count. Doug Donaldson noted that one of the housing sites (Evelyn) was on the market. He also observed that the Pierce Street Park site was still not on the list. He pointed out a typo on Page 5-4 (in far) vs (a far). He also noted that the reference on P 5-15 to the second unit setback requirement appeared to be incorrect. Anne Hersch noted that there was some confusion in how the ordinance was worded that would be cleared up, and that the text should say “zero to six inches.”

Nick Pilch pointed out that the blue font text on P. 5-23 (re: the Fire Code) should be black. He asked for clarification on the sprinkler requirements in new multi-family construction. On P. 5-30, it was requested that the text on public art requirements be edited to note that single family homes were exempt. Barry Miller indicated a footnote to this effect would be added. Miller noted the possibility for this fee to be waived for affordable housing and other projects where the money would best be allocated elsewhere.

David Arkin suggested that the text on green building be updated to note that Title 24 Energy Efficiency requirements increased on July 1 and that all new residential units will be required to be zero net energy after Jan 1, 2020.

On Chapter 6, Nick Pilch asked if the concept of “Affordable Housing Week” would be a significant new expense for the city. Chair Donaldson felt that a higher priority should be to designate a housing coordinator, potentially sharing that position with another city. Another high priority is to do outreach to developers and communicate that the city is serious about attracting housing and diversifying its building stock. Miller noted there was already an Affordable Housing Week in the East Bay and it would probably not cost the City much to participate.

On Program 4A, the Chair asked if the Commission agreed with the considerations listed, and wondered if any should be edited. He specifically asked for feedback on the idea of increasing the FAR for single family homes in the R-3 zone from 0.55. One idea put forward was to allow a higher FAR only when adding a second unit. Another idea put forward was to allow increased height at the Solano/San Pablo node. On Program 4/F, the Commission suggested that ballot “initiative” be changed to ballot “measure.” Stacy Eisenmann also asked if so-called “tiny homes” could be built under the Building Code.

At the end of the discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to forward the Draft to the City Council, with a recommendation to submit it to HCD for review.