

Albany 2015-2023 Housing Element Update

“Town Hall Meeting” Summary: July 22, 2014

The City of Albany convened a Town Meeting on Housing as part of its 2015-2023 Housing Element. Approximately 25 people attended (a sign-in sheet was provided). Anne Hersch and Jeff Bond welcomed attendees and introduced planning consultant Barry Miller. Miller provided a presentation on the requirements for the Housing Element, the timeline for the document, and the context for the evening’s discussion. A Town Hall format was used, with Miller, Hersch, and Bond responding to comments and questions from attendees.

- Please define the HUD income ranges. What do we mean when we say “low” income? \$65,000 is not low income to me.
- Can I find out about the senior housing? How can I reserve an apartment? Who will live in the development?
- Albany needs more buildings with elevators for its seniors
- How many second units are there in town and how can we get more?
- How can the city amp up its homesharing resources? It’s a great solution for extremely low income. Can we incentivize? Does it happen now? Education and outreach---publicize the opportunity, especially for owners with large homes.
- Capitalize on the sharing economy---grow the city organically and increase density within the existing building stock rather than adding units
- Do ABAG and the State drive this process?
- The RHNA is not focused enough on low and very low. I don’t like the focus on individual sites –focus instead on building an entire corridor
- Do a specific plan for San Pablo? Would that make it easier for developers? (pre-entitle?)
- The city’s sites are too small. How can they be more substantial
- We need to a visual to illustrate what this density will look like
- Can we build over existing buildings?
- Renting rooms is a good way to provide housing for lower income people.
- I am not a fan of senior housing. I prefer housing where people can age in place. 4-story condos with elevators are better than all senior buildings
- Can we get credit from the state for the CAP and the things we are already doing right? We are increasing our population --- does the city have the political will to deal with anti-growth neighbors? Need to think bigger at the political decision levels.
- City should subsidize housing
- City creates these policies but nothing happens. How do we make things happen?
- City should put its assets on the table for discussion-look at Pierce Street, look at the Golden Gate Fields North Parking Lot. Stop saying “we can’t look at these sites”
- Are we better off getting scattered site development or should we do a specific plan for 870 units and start building?
- What is needed from the community to make this happen
- Think outside the box—look at recycled building materials, tiny homes on the GG Fields parking lot, tiny homes, home-made bricks, adobe houses
- We should consider having a rent review board

- Need to match people with empty homes, or homes where the owner is on medicare. Give someone a grant for home repair if they let an extremely low income person live there, or offer property tax breaks, transfer of lower rates under Prop 13, etc.
- There are opportunities for more second units in backyards. The recent amendments to the parking requirements will help. New ordinance will allow people to legalize
- City needs to talk to school district. At some point city will need more schools. School needs to be a collaborative partner in these discussions
- Lower the fees for second units?
- We have a food supply close at hand—promote roof gardens’
- Rents are very high
- Buildings next to new senior housing—why couldn’t they have housing on top of them?
- What about the Albany Hill site? Can developers look at this site? Is it affected by Measure B?
- We need code changes to encourage straw bale homes and tiny homes
- Allow SROs on San Pablo
- Caltrans has a lot of ROW near the end of Buchannan—any housing potential there?
- Corner of Cleveland and Washington should be considered a housing site.
- Trigger the market to do this—what do they need. Height, smaller setbacks, reduced daylight plane
- San Pablo and Solano is a good node because it is transit served. Focus there
- People are being priced out. Person lost income when their disabled daughter turned 18. Many people are at risk of homelessness. Some people are trapped in their homes because of high maintenance costs
- Is there anything the City can do to consolidate parcels on San Pablo
- Can the city do a mock up of small properties showing how they would look with mixed use?