

From: "Cox, Robert"

Date: February 14, 2022 at 12:20:58 PM PST

To: William Cranston

Subject: Livable Mountain View comment on Item 6.1: "Housing Element Update 2023-2031".

Chair Cranston,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on item 6.1: "Housing Element Update 2023-2031".

We thank staff for their careful selection of sites to meet Mountain View's 2023-2031 RHNA requirements. We support the methodology of designating pipeline, opportunity, and rezoning sites. We believe that the opportunity sites selected have a good opportunity for being redeveloped in the time frame of the upcoming RHNA cycle, as they generally represent commercial and retail sites that have opted for redevelopment in the recent past. We appreciate that staff was able to compose the list of sites without requiring a rezoning of existing sites. We believe that the sites are equitably distributed throughout the city and will provide a high quality of life for those who will live in them when they are redeveloped. We are happy that staff avoided the inclusion of sites whose redevelopment is questionable or whose rezoning could be subject to controversial and intense public debate. Identifying the RHNA sites is a state requirement and should be done expeditiously.

We do note that local village centers like the Mountain View Shopping Center at 173 East El Camino and the shopping center located at the intersection of El Camino Real and El Monte are listed as opportunity sites. We agree that these sites are currently underutilized and could support housing as well as restaurants and retail. But we believe that should that be done, the functioning retail on the site must continue. We have seen many new mixed-use residential/retail complexes developed that have only token retail (for example, a bubble tea place/coffee shop or dog salon). Maintaining a vital restaurant and retail presence is key component of walkable neighborhoods. Local businesses support sustainability, consumer quality of life, and provide employment opportunities and a vital sales tax base for our city. Shopping centers like the one at El Camino Real could be redesigned with housing, putting the parking underground, and moving the restaurants and retail up to the street.

Finally, we support Mountain View being designated pro-housing city and appreciate staff's recommended goals, policy, and programs for the housing element. We would like to highlight our support for programs that will extend the life of aging naturally affordable housing in Mountain View. This constructive action would enhance the richness of the life of our vulnerable populations who have too often lived under the threat of displacement from our community.

Thank you for listening to our views,

Robert Cox, Louise Katz, Mary Hodder, Jerry Steach, Toni Rath, and Lorraine Wormald

For the Steering Committee of Livable Mountain View

From: Salim Damerdji
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 6:30 PM
To: MV YIMBY epc@mountainview.gov;
HousingElements@hcd.ca.gov
Subject: Item 6.1 Housing Element - MV YIMBY

Dear Members of the Environmental Planning Commission,

Mountain View YIMBY would like to provide comments for Item 6.1 Housing Element. In this letter, we will restrict our attention to the first question, regarding site inventory methodology.

The city's housing targets have almost quadrupled, and before you is a site inventory methodology designed to maintain the status quo. If we do not create a realistic plan to build far more housing across the income spectrum, we are doing a disservice to the working people who came to housing element meetings to ask for a real plan to address the housing crisis.

The draft site inventory is too small. The city cannot accommodate a 3.8x increase in our housing target [1] while excluding R1 lots, R2 lots, and residential lots with any existing density greater than a triplex. **No data or evidence is provided to show that this methodology leaves us with enough zoning capacity to realistically hit our housing targets.**

What data does exist shows we're on the wrong track, particularly for Low & Very Low Income housing. The sites in the inventory are projected for lots of BMR, whereas actual projects being built have much less [2]. And so, to reach the BMR target, the city should list many more sites, donate land for all-affordable projects, or both.

To predict what will happen, we should look at what has happened and what is happening now. **Mountain View is on track to develop around 21% of its 5th RHNA cycle site inventory [3].** So, Mountain View YIMBY believes **we should apply great scrutiny to a housing element that claims the median inventory site has much more than a 21% chance of development by 2031.** Of course, many sites have a higher chance of development - such as North Bayshore and East Whisman - but even these projects face real uncertainty [4] and include land donations for affordable housing that currently do not have timelines for development.

We understand that staff is trying to produce the smallest possible site inventory, while leaving some sites in the city's "back pocket" should HCD reject the site inventory. Keeping rezonings in the 'back-pocket' is emblematic of a larger problem in the city's approach. The housing element so far aims to do the least necessary to get HCD approval. Instead, **the focus *must* be on the least we can do to meet the full housing needs of the Mountain View community, present and future.** We need a far more ambitious site inventory to build thousands of homes across the income spectrum.

Best,

Salim Damerdji

On behalf of Mountain View YIMBY

Footnotes:

[1] And a double of housing production compared to the past 7 years.

[2] According to Table 2 on page 7 of the staff report, opportunity sites are projected to be 5,462 / 6,830 = 80% BMR units, whereas actually proposed projects in the pipeline are on track to be 1,842 / 8,236 = 22% BMR units.

[3] See Table A.1 in Appendix A. <https://www.lewis.ucla.edu/research/what-gets-built-on-sites-that-cities-make-available-for-housing/>

[4] One project in East Whisman - 415 E. Middlefield - already failed due to financial feasibility. For North Bayshore, the city's plan on how to streamline North Bayshore is still in flux and may not guarantee Shorebird South (1794 homes) by 2031. Last, MVWSD's proposed Mello-Roos style tax, if approved, will render new housing infeasible.

From: James Kuszmaul

Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 8:43 PM

To: epc@mountainview.gov

Cc: HousingElements@hcd.ca.gov

Subject: Item 6.1 Housing Element - Parking Policies

Chair Cranston and Members of the Environmental Planning Commission:

There are a plethora of important aspects to our upcoming Housing Element, but I would like to call attention to one in particular: Parking policy. Residential parking requirements and policies have an outsized impact on our transportation system and on the feasibility and affordability of housing, and with the Housing Element being the guiding document for the next 8 years of development in Mountain View, we should use this opportunity to commit to substantial reforms. In particular, we should strongly consider:

- Eliminating all residential parking requirements.
- Imposing parking maximums near existing transit (e.g., a maximum of 1 space / unit within 0.5 mi of "high quality transit").
- Requiring unbundling of parking for rental units to make it so that residents need not pay for parking more cars than they have.

Additionally, we may wish to consider streamlining the Residential Parking Permit program to better price on-street parking so that new developments do not result in congestion of on-street parking.

There would be a wide range of benefits to these policies, including, but not limited to:

1. **Lower rents** for car-free or car-lite households, to the tune of \$300-\$600 / month [1]— \$600 / month is about at the level required to go from the Very-Low-Income to Low-Income rent maximums for affordable housing, suggesting that reductions in parking would go a long way towards helping housing affordability.
2. **Reductions in car ownership.** Both from removal of parking requirements [2] and from unbundling of parking [3]. The availability of parking is comparable to, if not greater than, the presence of transit in determining mode use among residents, and if we require that our new housing all be built with parking, we are locking in a large amount of continued car-use for the lifetime of those buildings.
 - a. I will not re-iterate **all** the reasons that increased driving is bad, but would note that increased driving (rather than transit ridership, walking, and biking) implies: Increased congestion; increased carbon emissions; reduced air quality (and thus reduced health in our vulnerable populations); reduced safety (see Mountain View's Vision Zero policies); increased paving costs to the city; higher traffic enforcement costs.
1. **Greater variety in architectural styles.** If housing must accommodate a driveway (even if it is an entrance to an underground garage), that severely limits potential ground floor layouts and uses, especially on small lots. This makes it harder to provide ground-floor retail, and limits the number of units that can be made accessible without an elevator.
2. **Fewer driveways.** The presence of driveways creates pedestrian-car conflicts, makes sidewalks harder to navigate due to extra up/down bumps, and prevents the city from using the curb-space taken up by the driveway for anything else (e.g., street trees, bike lanes, delivery zones, or even just on-street parking).

3. Removing parking minimums and instituting parking maximums is criteria 1F for **HCD's "pro-housing" designation**, which would qualify the city for additional affordable housing grant money (as well as some additional grant categories).

The benefits of reducing parking in new developments are copious, and even all the new housing stock being built in this upcoming RHNA cycle will still only end up representing ~a quarter of the housing stock in the city, and that housing stock is likely to be with us for the next half century. If we are to begin making progress on our sustainability goals, it behooves us to begin making progress as soon as possible. If Buffalo can eliminate parking minimums, then so can Mountain View.

Thank you, to both staff and commissioners, for the time and effort you are putting into this process, and I hope that we can make the most of this opportunity to shape Mountain View's future for the better,

James Kuszmaul

Footnotes:

[1] See references in <https://padailypost.com/2021/06/24/opinion-citys-parking-laws-raise-housing-costs/> —~\$250 - \$300 / month for one spot; most 2+ bedroom units in Mountain View are currently required to be built with 2 or more spaces.

[2] See this comparative study from San Francisco: https://people.ucsc.edu/~jwest1/articles/MillardBall_West_Rezaei_Desai_SFBMR_UrbanStudies.pdf

[3] See the summary numbers in Table 3 of <https://www.vtpi.org/park-hou.pdf> , suggesting that a ~\$100 / month parking fee can incentivize a 15-30% reduction in car ownership.