

From: Salim Damerджи

Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 7:07 AM

To: epc@mountainview.gov

Subject: Agenda item 6.1 - Housing Element Update

To the Members of the Environmental Planning Commission,

When the next housing element cycle ends, I'll be 35 and most of my friends will be married, looking for a home to settle down in. To me, this housing element is not boring city planning; it's the major deciding factor in whether my friends and I can afford to settle down in Mountain View.

That's why I was so happy to read the staff report. With a city this diligent about our housing element, we are on a great track to reduce rents, displacement, and evictions.

There's much in this report to commend - from its distillation of HCD requirements to its honest appraisal of where our site inventory stands without additional upzoning - but I'll focus on a few opportunities.

For outreach, we should do more targeted AFFH outreach by holding sessions with the Day Worker's Center, the Mobile Home Alliance, folks who use the safe parking program, and other at-risk groups. (And it goes without saying that these meetings should lead to new housing element programs with specific timelines and concrete commitments - otherwise we're just wasting these folks' time and they'll trust city outreach less in the future.)

For the site inventory analysis, the city should use a data-driven approach to calculating the likelihood of redevelopment of nonvacant inventory sites. Currently, Mountain View is on track to develop around 21% of its 5th RHNA cycle site inventory, so 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.

With respect to the city's priorities, I'd like to recommend a few things:

- Affordable housing providers and market rate housing providers agreed tremendously in their respective stakeholder meetings. Both stakeholders suggested *we should streamline permitting, remove (or reduce) parking mandates, and invest in city staff capacity*. Let's feed two birds with one scone and make these priorities for the housing element.
- We should pursue affordable housing funding by pursuing HCD's pro-housing designation. Mountain View is one of the most pro-housing cities in California, and there's a strong chance we can get this rare designation, thereby granting the city priority status for affordable housing grants from the state.

Finally, I'd like to note that much of our housing element depends on details. Do we set concrete timelines for programs? Are those programs 'exploratory' or will we commit to action? Will our solutions be big enough to match the scale of the crisis? Much of this remains to be seen, but I'm optimistic. I hope the city releases components of the draft plan as soon as they're available - particularly the site inventory in Excel format - so the public has sufficient time to give feedback on the details.

Thank you,
Salim

From: Lenny's Sonic

Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 12:40 AM

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Subject: Housing Element

Mountain View is doing a good job of planning for new housing, but our ability to generate below-market housing is constrained by the high cost of producing such housing. Staff has done a great job of identifying potential policy topics.

Here are some areas that I hope will be addressed in the Housing Element Update:

To preserve and expand our stock of affordable housing, we need to stop allowing the demolition of apartments that are not collapsing on their own. It's not enough to provide relocation assistance to tenants. Every lost unit creates an additional financial burden on the below-market housing sector.

Therefore, we should consider an approach, similar to that adopted by the City of Los Angeles, to require the replacement of protected (rent-controlled) housing or other housing occupied by low-income residents.

Furthermore, we should take a strategic approach to funding affordable housing. That is, we should assess the cumulative need for funds and try to budget to meet that need.

Planned housing in East Whisman and North Bayshore will make a significant dent in our housing development obligations, but because of the complexity of the Google/LendLease projects much of that construction will not necessarily be completed within the eight-year timeframe of the housing element. Furthermore, those Precise Plans will not improve our jobs-housing imbalance. It is important, therefore, to repurpose other commercial areas – such as the Terra Bella area and Charleston Plaza - where development can proceed more quickly.

Land dedication in East Whisman and North Bayshore will provide opportunities for the development of below-market housing, but there is no guarantee that those projects will be built in a timely fashion, if at all. The City, County, Google, Sobrato, etc. should convene meetings designed to accelerate development on those parcels, beginning with the site-specific identification of preferred affordable housing developers.

The northern half of Mountain View is ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, but the southern half is relatively affluent with few residents from Latinx, African-American, or Southeast Asian backgrounds. The city should use census data to confirm or disprove this observation.

Given the paucity of developable property south of El Camino, the city should address the lack of diversity by creating a program that goes beyond allowed the development of companion units

(ADUs), actually facilitating the construction of below-market companion units with design, permitting, and financing assistance, perhaps even arranging construction or the acquisition of pre-fabricated units. Such a program would have the auxiliary benefit of helping retired homeowners extract value from their properties without leaving the community.

There is one major parcel south of El Camino that is well located – that is, near schools, health care, and retail - for affordable housing and already owned by the city: The Cuesta Park Annex. The only reason not to evaluate its housing future would be the anticipated NIMBY outcry.

Page 7 of the staff report discusses homelessness, stating: “The City has been an active player in the response to homelessness, including the support and operation of local transitional housing, the development of new emergency housing, and COVID-19 rent relief funding.” I support these programs, but it’s time for us all to admit that in many cases “transition” is a euphemism for forcing people out. People should not be pressured to leave transitional housing, such as LiveMoves Mountain View or Safe Parking, unless they have a suitable place to go. In most cases, leaving Mountain View or couch surfing is not an acceptable outcome. In fact, Mountain View should explore creating RV parks, where vehicle residents could live until they find better alternatives.

Lenny Siegel