Housing Element Update: Stakeholder Workshop #1

Meeting Summary

Subject	County of Santa Clara Housing Element – Stakeholder Workshop #1
Date | Time	July 6, 2022 | 10:00am – 11:30am
Location	Zoom (Meeting Recording – here)

Workshop Purpose

The County of Santa Clara (County) invited stakeholders to a workshop to launch the **2023-2031 Housing Element Update**. The County assembled a list of organizations, service providers, advocacy groups and other stakeholders to discuss key housing issues occurring and emerging in the County. Feedback from this meeting will be used to identify a series of opportunities and challenges to be addressed when engaging the County's broader community. The meeting agenda can be found in **Appendix A**.

Attendance

Representatives from local organizations were invited to the first Stakeholder Workshop to solicit input in support of identifying housing challenges and opportunities. The following list demonstrates the organizations present at the workshop:

- Burbank Community Association
- County of Santa Clara Department of Aging and Adult Services
- County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing
- County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department
- County of Santa Clara Public Health Department

- Green Foothills
- Greenbelt Alliance
- Latinos United for a New America
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Milligan Land Company
- Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley
- San Antonio Hills Homeowners Association

- San Martin Neighbourhood Association
- Silicon Valley at Home (SV@Home)
- Silicon Valley Leadership Group
- Silicon Valley Open Space Authority
- South Bay YIMBY
- Stanford University

Feedback Summary

The workshop focused on gathering input from attendees regarding housing opportunities and challenges in the County. This section includes the questions asked and a summary of the participant feedback. The participants were randomly partitioned into four breakout groups for a 45-minute in-depth discussion.

The participants' input were grouped by topics, demonstrating the key themes from the discussion. The meeting agenda can be found in **Appendix A**. Notes taken during the facilitation can be found in **Appendix B**.

1. **Icebreaker question: What is the top housing issue that should be addressed in the Housing Element?**

2. **Question: What are the greatest housing challenges facing the County?**

   Key theme: Housing Affordability

   - Rising ownership and rent costs are driven by a lack of supply
   - There is a rise in people who are house rich but cash poor due to high mortgage payments relative to income. Others are priced out and have to move out of their communities to find more affordable housing
   - Rules for access to Section 8 vouchers create challenges for families seeking housing relief from the state
   - Information on how to access affordable housing can be complex and difficult to find

   Key theme: Housing Accessibility

   - Lack of options in rural areas
   - Limited availability of housing for vulnerable populations (e.g., seniors)
   - Universal design is needed to make housing accessible for those of varying needs such as people with disabilities and seniors
   - Housing discrimination is an issue for people of color and other marginalized communities
   - People who have been incarcerated face difficulties in securing housing due to stigma

   Key theme: Housing Supply

   - Permit and process barriers including wait times, parking minimums, traffic policies and red tape create challenges for developers seeking to commence development projects
   - The Regional Housing Needs Allocation for this cycle is high, which may be a challenge for the County to achieve

- The high cost of construction is impacting the production of new housing
- Infill development is not being prioritized as it should be, difficulties exist in changing the character of neighbourhoods that are already built out and sometimes underutilized
- Local Agency Formation Commission has shown some aversion to annexation, which could free up land for new development
- New development tends to be out of the price range of low-income residents
- Anti-development and Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) sentiments can hinder the approval of new development
- Consider expediting the annexation of unincorporated urban service area pockets into cities
- The gradual aging of the County's housing stock poses an issue related to the expense of upkeep and maintenance. The County is reliant on property owners to invest in the responsible upkeep of private property
- Some older housing units may not meet the current safety standards identified in the building code (e.g., lead paint)
- The quality of affordable units needs to be maintained without associated increases in affordability
- Foreign investment in housing development may exacerbate housing supply issues

Key theme: Environmental Impact

- The protection of farmland should be prioritized
- Water resources are limited, particularly in Southern Santa Clara County
- Climate change poses a threat to all residents and the housing supply (e.g., flooding, fire in the east and west mountain ranges)
- Address nitrate issues due to septic density in areas like San Martin
- New development in proximity to active farms can limit agricultural productivity (e.g., managing pesticide plumes and dust)

Key theme: Farm Worker Housing

- Adequate servicing and utilities are needed in rural areas to support farm worker housing. Sourcing water and building independent septic systems can be prohibitive

Key theme: Services

- Certain areas cannot accommodate more housing due to insufficient services (e.g., water, septic)
- Access to support services (e.g., social services, healthcare, community services) and amenities (e.g., grocery stores, green space, recreation) is lacking in some areas
- A diversity in transportation options is missing from some communities (e.g., public transit, cycling routes, trails)
- New development out of range of high-quality jobs can be detrimental to quality of life
- Increased investment is needed for vulnerable communities (e.g., people with disabilities)
- Affordable housing is sometimes concentrated in underprivileged communities leading to issues of concentrated poverty
- The cost burden of upgrading a septic system can be prohibitive for the creating of new housing opportunities

3. **Question: What are the greatest housing challenges facing the County?**

    Key theme: Housing Affordability

    - Provide funding opportunities to subsidize ADU development, particularly for low-income residents
    - Create policies that provide tenants with an opportunity to purchase their rental unit (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act)
    - Create programming to address homelessness such as a Heading Home Campaign or a community plan to end homelessness
    - Strengthen rent stabilization, just cause eviction and create a tenant right to counsel
    - Remove barriers to and prioritize affordable housing unit development in areas with community amenities
    - Create education campaigns and engage with the public more on the RHNA process
    - Create preferential policies for displaced residents

    Key theme: Housing Accessibility

    - Streamlining the review and approval process for ADUs can increase housing availability
    - Create incentive programs to convert existing uses into housing (e.g., office buildings, warehouses, historic buildings)
    - Create incentives and education programs regarding SB9 to encourage individual homeowners to build ADUs
    - Refer to the County's new Master Plan on Aging for solutions to housing for people of all ages and stages

    Key theme: Housing Supply

    - Create efficiency by streamlining permitting (e.g., remove parking minimums in proximity to higher order transit, reduce public hearings, limit discretionary language) and other regulatory processes for new development, particularly for affordable housing
    - Consider consultation with housing developers to pinpoint challenges in the permitting process
    - Coordinate with LAFCO to annex more unincorporated lands and introduce services to develop more housing
    - Additional student housing on Stanford Campus can alleviate some housing pressure
    - Explore opportunities for development in urban services areas such as Los Altos, Los Gatos and Morgan Hill
    - Explore development opportunities in northeast San Jose
    - Encourage infill development in urban areas and dense development along urban corridors and near transit hubs (e.g., Bascom Avenue in San Jose)
    - Partner with and provide funding for community development organizations
    - Incentivize dense development
    - Prioritize 100% deed restricted development on public owned land

    Key theme: Farmworker Housing

    - Create policy that allows onsite development on agricultural land
    - Create farmworker housing funding opportunities

Key theme: Aging Housing Stock

- Create a retrofit program that incentivizes landlords and property managers to invest in upgrades and property maintenance

Key theme: Environmental Impact

- Incorporate conservation goals into Housing Element policies
- Incorporate urban forestry and greening into affordable housing development policies
- Create education programs on water availability including information on where water coms from, how much water is available and how water availability impacts development
- Address the potential for urban sprawl that may threaten natural areas
- Collaborate with the Office of Sustainability on a climate action plan that considers the housing stock and development standards
- Maintain collaboration with community partners who provide relief from extreme weather (e.g., cooling centers)
- Develop a program to provide air filters to those affected by wildfire smoke and other air quality issues

Key theme: Services

- Create affordable transportation policies (trip-based policies)
- Ensure access to green space and parks in proximity to affordable housing
- Prioritize development in areas where multimodal transportation opportunities exist

4. **Question: What are the top five priorities for the Housing Element Update?**

Participants were asked to identify the top five priorities that should be considered for the Housing Element Update. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the input they provided for the previous two questions in identifying priorities. The table below demonstrates the priorities chosen by each breakout discussion group.

Breakout Group 1	Breakout Group 2
• Land availability	• Incentives
• Stanford as an opportunity for new housing	• Streamline permitting process
• Servicing Infrastructure (water and public sewer)	• Good development policies in urban centers
• Affordability (re-use of existing structures, homelessness)	• Access for affordable housing
• Strategies for aging in place	• Clustering development (density)

Breakout Group 3	Breakout Group 4
• Incentives	• Streamlining permit process
• Homelessness	• Understand process barriers affecting development
• Affordability	• Address threat of climate change

Breakout Group 1	Breakout Group 2
• Lessening barriers for communities to obtain housing • Regulatory streamlining to expedite affordable housing development	• Incentivizing infill development • Increasing access to affordable housing for residents of all races and incomes

Next Steps

Feedback collected from stakeholders during this workshop will be used to inform engagement with the community in upcoming public workshops. All inputs will help inform the project team's development of preliminary policies for inclusion in the draft Housing Element.

A second Stakeholder Workshop is tentatively scheduled for August 2, 2022, where results from the first round of meetings will be shared. Visit sccgov.org/housing-element for event updates.

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

Time	Item	Lead
10:00	**Opening Remarks**	The County
10:02	**Welcome** • Project team introductions • Meeting purpose • Agenda review	WSP
10:05	**Attendee Introductions**	WSP
10:15	**Presentation** • What is a Housing Element? • County role in housing • County profile • Areas of focus • Housing Element Requirements • RHNA • Previous Housing Element Strategies • What We're Hearing	The County
10:35	**Discussion** • What are the greatest housing challenges facing the County? • What opportunities are available to the County to support housing needs? • What should the top five priorities be?	All
11:20	**Next Steps** • Report Back • How will feedback be used? • Project timeline • Thank you and closing remarks	WSP and The County

Appendix B: Discussion Activity