

Housing Element Update: Stakeholder Workshop (Development Focus)

Meeting Summary

Subject	County of Santa Clara Housing Element – Stakeholder Workshop (Development Focus)
Date Time	August 2, 2022 10:00am – 11:00am
Location	Zoom (Meeting Recording – visit the project website)

Workshop Purpose

The County of Santa Clara (County) invited select development-focused stakeholders and housing advocates to a second workshop in support of the **2023-2031 Housing Element Update**. The meeting asked participants to provide feedback specific to the challenges encountered when developing affordable housing in unincorporated areas of the County. Feedback from this meeting will be used to identify strategies and policies to streamline development to meet the County’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allotment for the 2023-2031 Housing Element cycle.

Attendance

Representatives from local development organizations and housing advocacy organizations invited to attend the workshop. The following list demonstrates the organizations that attended:

- Adobe Services
- City of Gilroy
- Housing Trust Silicon Valley
- Santa Clara County Office of Supportive Housing
- Eden Housing
- Santa Clara LAFCO
- Santa Clara County Housing Authority
- Housing Choices
- Silicon Valley at Home (SV@Home)
- Allied Housing
- Charities Housing
- Bay Area Building Industry Association
- Dividend Homes
- Santa Clara County Office of the County Counsel
- Greenbelt Alliance
- MH Engineering
- Habitat East Bay/Silicon Valley

Feedback Summary

Following the presentation, participants were led through a facilitated group discussion focused to identify challenges in the development process and opportunities for streamlining. Three questions were posed:

1. What constraints have you encountered in the development process? What would simplify or streamline this process?
2. What are other jurisdictions doing well?
3. What types of incentives should the County consider?

The following is a thematic summary of the feedback heard. Pictures of the live notetaking can be found in **Appendix A**.

Theme: General Plan

- **Identified Challenge:**
 - The County General Plan’s low-density zoning, limited density allowances and protection of agricultural land limits the ability to construct small urban developments in Unincorporated



Santa Clara. These factors make development unattractive or unfeasible for private and nonprofit developers.

- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - Revise the General Plan to allow for development through conforming zoning and revising densities and make development more attractive
 - Examine the General Plan for areas that are suitable for higher density designation and conforming rezoning

Theme: LAFCO Process

- **Identified Challenge:**
 - The LAFCO annexation process is lengthy and can be cost prohibitive due to the Environmental Impact Report process. Additionally, LAFCO has a different definition of vacant developable land than Counties, which leads to the assumption that all vacant land in a city must be developed prior to the annexation of additional lands. However, it may be the case that some vacant lands are not suitable for development.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - Facilitate dialogue between county, municipalities and LAFCO to settle on an agreeable definition of vacant land to rationalize the need for more annexation of unincorporated county land
 - Engage in dialogue with LAFCO to streamline timelines for annexation to reduce costs
 - Communicate housing goals with LAFCO to reach RHNA allocation numbers through annexation as necessary

Theme: Streamlined Process

- **Identified Challenge:**
 - Required coordination between the County and local municipalities can create confusion for developers about regulatory overlay, policy interpretation and approval authority.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - Establish a process for early coordination meetings between the county and local jurisdictions to streamline communication and mutual understanding between involved parties. This includes policy interpretation, regulatory overlay, timeline, oversight and identifying who has final approval.

Theme: Incentives

- **Identified Challenge:**
 - Development in Unincorporated in Santa Clara County can be undesirable due to reduced densities, high construction costs, distance from services and amenities and other reasons. Targeted incentives may help to attract development to achieve the County's RHNA allocation.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - Reduce processing times and fees and exactions
 - Waving fees (e.g., exactions, impact fees) for infrastructure improvements (e.g., traffic impact mitigation) can help incentivize development
 - Reduce the number of development application reviews as multiple rounds of review increases costs and can be prohibitive



- Consider density bonuses and incentives for alternatives to fees and exactions, a menu of choices developers can take regarding future development
- Look at the sites that are available for development and consider incentives tailored to having those sites developed
- Survey developers for sites of interest for development to understand market interest

Theme: Services

- **Identified Challenge:**
 - A lack of servicing infrastructure, transportation options, social services and community amenities limits the attractiveness and feasibility of development in certain areas of Unincorporated Santa Clara County. This is especially true when infrastructure improvements are required to be made by developers.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - Coordinate with municipalities for infrastructure agreements for improvements such as sidewalks, sewer, water and stormwater management to facilitate housing
 - Make sites available for development that are approximate to services and transportation

Theme: Additional Feedback

- Consider creative interpretations of what housing can look like, or what forms affordable housing can take (e.g., moderate density through townhomes that blend into existing community character)
- Consider partnerships with community developers
- Facilitate housing for the unhoused, formerly incarcerated and undocumented residents

Next Steps

Feedback collected from stakeholders during this workshop will be used to inform policies and strategies to streamline the development process. A second Stakeholder Workshop is scheduled for August 17th, 2022. Visit sccgov.org/housing-element for event updates.



Appendix A: Discussion Activity

What constraints have you encountered in the development process?
What would simplify or streamline this process? (governmental and non-governmental challenges)

Early coordination and communication with local jurisdiction re: streamline development process	Coordination with LAFCO	Early communication: Policy interpretation and regulatory	Consideration: geological and natural boundaries	Infrastructure agreements between County and City (i.e. sidewalk, sewer, and storm)	RE: Unhoused communities. Rely services near population development sites
Early communication: Timeframe, approval process and who has final approval	Clarity on approval authority	Sites? Areas of development unclear. LAFCO is challenge	Flexible about what affordable housing typology looks like	Permitting time and cost	Subsize mitigation fees
County to revise General Plan to allow residential development and revise density	RE: farmworker housing. Lack of infrastructure and public utilities. i.e. sewer and water. Guided by infrastructure	Price of infrastructure should not be covered by developers	County Islands – getting city and county on the same page re: infrastructure improvements (i.e. sidewalks to schools)	Consider: Housing for undocumented and unhoused population. Including services to get people back to baseline	

What are other jurisdictions doing well? (e.g., policies or initiatives to be considered)

Gilroy is open to early conversations with housing developers and advocates	Gilroy HEU: looking at policies to incentivize ADU, microunits, farmworker units, large family housing units	Reduce round of reviews for developer plans	Challenge: LAFCO procedure (potential EIR processes)	RE: LAFCO. Vacant land vs Vacant Lane available	Dialogue with jurisdiction (esp. LAFCO) to define vacant land
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What types of incentives should the County consider?

- Relook at General Plan, consider areas for higher density designation and rezoning
- Definition of vacant land available for development
- Streamline process
- Density bonuses
- Facilitate the incentives for developers on newly selected sites
- Developer surveys re: market interest and site selections
- Look at Caltrain stations for potential sites (San Martin station)

