

October 28, 2010

Housing Element Update



Dear Community members:

The City is entering into a new phase in the Housing Element update with selection of a City Manager's Working Group and I want to inform you of upcoming activities.

First, I want to thank you for the tremendous interest and participation the community has shown in the update process. Well over 200 people attended the last public workshop on October 14th. Representatives from the State Department of Housing and Community Development and from the Association of Bay Area Governments were invited to the workshop to hear the concerns of the community and address questions. It was an energetic meeting in which many community members expressed their frustration with and opposition to State and regional agency involvement in local planning for housing. Community members were also disappointed that these public agencies were not able to answer all of the public inquiries, though the agency representatives committed to providing additional information in writing. [Click here for a video of this meeting.](#)

Turning to upcoming activities, City staff had tentatively scheduled two public workshops in November for further discussion of Housing Element issues. Staff wishes to insure that these discussions will be as wide-ranging as possible and that answers to community questions will be available. To allow additional preparation time for these meetings, staff is rescheduling them. Tentatively, the workshops will be held in January; the exact dates will be announced.

At past workshops, members of the community expressed a strong interest in working in partnership with City staff on solutions to housing concerns. In response, a City Manager's Working Group has been brought together to address housing issues and work to reach consensus on recommendations regarding housing policies. The group is made up of twenty three community members from all over the city representing a range of community perspectives. Many neighborhood leaders who have been involved in the housing workshops are members of the working group. Members of the group are listed at the end of this message.

The first meeting of the group was held on October 25th. This meeting focused on the organization and role of the group and their discussions extended into concerns and aspirations for the future of Novato. The group will continue to meet over the coming months in order to develop their recommendations. The next meetings are November 17th and December 8th. The focus of the group will be developed by consensus of the group members but topics for discussion may include:

- Concerns about housing and crime

- State law requirements

- Review of sites available for housing

- How other jurisdictions are addressing housing issues

Density and compatibility with existing development

A key issue for the Working Group discussions will be sites for housing and it is expected that the Group will have recommendations leading to a new or revised listing of possible housing sites.

The Group's meetings are open to the public but the focus is on having the working group dig into these issues in depth and given the volunteer's time constraints an open public comment time is not presently included in the agenda. The group's agendas and information will be posted on the city's Housing Element website so the community will be able to follow their work. The group will be discussing how to engage the community and how to get further input. Staff anticipates there will be public review and input on the working group's recommendations as part of the process.

I am looking forward to working closely with this group as they prepare recommendations for housing solutions that work for Novato and I will keep you informed of their activities.

David Wallace

Community Development Director

Housing Working Group Members

Jeanie Gallagher	Susan Wernick
Susan Stompe	Pam Drew
Kathy Rus	Harry Lehman
Lloyd Pittman	Marla Fields
Alan Berson	Fred Reece
Stacy Tachis	Don Dole
Shannon Doherty	Virginia Menzel
Stacey Grossman	Carolyn Placente
Jay Strauss	Marie Chan
Katie Creselius	Toni Shroyer
Diet Stroeh	Nikki Stephenson
Curt Kinkead	