



City of Larkspur Housing Element Update

SUMMARY REPORT

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
Tuesday, October 21, 2014
6:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.

Overview

On Tuesday, October 21, 2014 the City of Larkspur held a public workshop to provide information and receive input on the City's 2015-2023 Housing Element Update. The workshop was held at Larkspur City Hall and had approximately 13 attendees. The meeting was noticed to the public with the following methods:

- A notification sent to 359 citizens subscribed to the City's General Plan Update email notification list;
- An advertisement published in the Marin Independent Journal on October 6 and October 13;
- A mailed announcement to 45 public agencies, non-profit organizations, homeowner associations and citizen groups;
- Newsflash postings on the City of Larkspur's home page as well as the Planning Department webpage; and
- Flyers posted at the Larkspur Library and City Hall.

In addition, the Marin Independent Journal published a front-page article on the upcoming workshop on the day before the meeting.

Neal Toft, Director of Planning and Building, provided introductory remarks, and Christine O'Rourke, housing element consultant,



presented a slide show that covered the following material:

- Background on housing element requirements and the Regional Housing Need Assessment (RHNA) process.
- Historical and current RHNA, broken down by income categories for the 2015-2023 planning period.
- Housing production over the 2007-2014 planning period.
- Demographic statistics, including population and employment trends, age group trends, and household types and characteristics.
- Current rents and sale prices for housing, and how these prices relate to the various household income categories (very low, low, moderate and above moderate).
- Existing affordable housing in Larkspur, both rental and ownership.
- Strategies to meet the RHNA for the 2015-2023 planning period, including the retention of housing opportunity sites identified in the prior Housing Element, adopted in 2010.

Participants asked questions following the presentation and engaged in a group discussion. Staff posed the following questions to the group:



- Are there any additional housing strategies the City should pursue to meet its affordable housing needs and Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requirements?
- Are there other housing issues or concerns that should be addressed?

The agendas, presentations and minutes are available on the City's website at <http://www.cityoflarkspur.org/HousingElementUpdate>.

Summary of Discussion and Input

While concerns were raised about State housing requirements, State density bonuses, the historic statewide drought, and traffic impacts of new residential development, there was a general understanding that meeting the 2015-2023 RHNA requirements would not require endorsing new housing projects or significant new housing policy.

As presented, housing developed through already approved projects, including Rose Lane, Drake's Cove, 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle, and 285 Magnolia Avenue will

address a large portion of the City's RHNA for low, moderate, and above-moderate households. Continued production of second units and development of housing at other residential or commercial sites identified in the 2007-2014 Housing Element cycle would sufficiently meet the City's remaining RHNA requirements for very-low income housing. By carrying over the existing sites identified in the prior Housing Element cycle, the City can meet the current RHNA without rezoning properties.

Some participants requested that the City consider removing sites that were identified in the current housing element because the City's RHNA requirement has dropped from 382 units to 132 units. City staff explained that these sites are already zoned, and in some cases entitled, for residential development, so removing them from the inventory would require downzoning specific parcels. Additionally, having more sites than actually needed ensures the City will still have enough remaining sites if some of the sites are not developed to their expected capacity or affordability levels.

Discussion related to housing policy and strategies focused on facilitating and directly incentivizing second units and junior second units as a way to address affordable housing needs for very-low income households and evolving housing demand. The resulting traffic from any new housing production was a concern, as was the availability of water to serve new housing units.

Comments from Participants

The following comments were provided both during the meeting and on submitted comment forms and letters.

Housing Policy

- Some of the City's housing stock is in need of rehabilitation and updating, especially rental housing stock. The City should adopt a streamlined process for such rehabilitation and should promote maintenance and upkeep.
- The RHNA should be reduced in recognition of the statewide drought and other finite resources. Existing residents should not have to conserve more and more only to accommodate new residents or meet statewide growth mandates.
- There is a disconnect between the planning authorities and the Marin Municipal Water District, as the District is obligated to accommodate the growth proposed by the cities.
- City staff and officials should anticipate the predatory developers that will come in and try to maximize entitlements.
- Many Larkspur residents have a very negative feeling toward housing development and policy in Larkspur, and do not trust ABAG, the Transportation Authority of Marin, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. There is a lot of concern with traffic impacts of new residential development. Larkspur is at a

culp of maintaining its quality of life and character and turning into something very different.

- Homeowners should be given the same incentives and exceptions to zoning as high-density housing developers.

Second Units

- The City's existing development standards for second units, particularly the requirement for an additional parking space, actively discourage property owners from developing second units.
- The City should actively promote and incentivize development of second units, such as making personal contact with property owners. Estimating costs for homeowners ahead of time can help to encourage second unit production.
- Nearly all participants supported the concept of junior second units to create a less expensive, more energy-efficient and less intrusive housing option for the community. Development standards for junior second units should be as flexible as possible, including allowing interior access to the main house and not requiring an additional parking space.
- Fees for second units are very high and keep property owners from adding second units to their homes. The City should consider reducing building permit and development fees.
- Regarding junior second units, the City should maintain its existing requirement for the property owner to reside in either the main unit or the junior second unit.

Senior Households

- Senior households overpaying for housing are likely renters, which may not correlate to a need for smaller for-sale units for seniors.
- Rental developments for senior households will likely experience high turnover rates with replacement by other seniors, while for-sale units owned by seniors will likely not be sold to other seniors but rather families or younger adults.

Housing Sites

- The City should increase the projected second unit production to meet RHNA requirements and take the Bon Air Shopping Center parcel off the list of housing opportunity sites.
- As the prior Housing Element Cycle required significantly more units than the current cycle, there are opportunities to remove housing opportunity sites from the updated Housing Element.
- Having extra units in the inventory has an inflationary effect on proposed development, as project proponents refer to site capacity identified in the Housing Element.
- The Bon Air Shopping Center site should be removed from the sites inventory.

- There is not a strong market base to accommodate the proposed units at the Bon Air Shopping Center. Such development would be very unattractive to developers and likely wouldn't occur.
- The City should incorporate potential density bonuses into their estimates of capacity for each housing opportunity site so residents have a true understanding of the level of development and impacts to infrastructure that could occur.
- 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle has toxic contamination and may make a good parking lot for the ferry terminal.
- The City should consider downzoning existing sites.
- Tiscornia is a very constrained site and with density bonuses could accommodate two mini-WinCups on Magnolia Avenue.
- 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle is owned by the Ross Valley Sanitary District and should be used for the public good, such as a new school. Enrollment continues to increase and the school districts need new resources.

Next Steps

In response to the input gathered from the community, staff will consider policies related to the concept of junior second units. Suggestions from the community to remove sites from the housing opportunity sites inventory will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for their review and discussion.

City staff will also review existing Housing Element programs and policies to determine if any modifications are needed to support identified needs for senior housing, live/work opportunities, and sustainability goals. Existing development standards and inclusionary housing requirements will also be evaluated. The draft 2015-2023 Housing Element is scheduled to be presented to the Planning Commission in December of 2014 and January of 2015.