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HOUSING ELEMENT FACT SHEET

As we move through the current planning process for housing in Marin, I want to share with you some detailed information. A truly informed public process will help all of us understand the different points of view and concerns expressed about housing needs in Marin. I appreciate the time that the residents of District Three are taking to become informed on this very important topic. I hope that you find this bulletin helpful and share it with your neighbors.

What is the “Housing Element”?

The State Legislature found that the availability of housing is of statewide importance and enacted legislation in 1969 which requires all local governments to prepare and implement “Housing Elements” as part of their General Plans, and to revise them every five years. The purpose of the Housing Element is to ensure that local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of all people within the community—regardless of their income.

Marin County adopted its first Housing Element in 1970, and amended it in 1971, 1984, 1994, and 2003. State legislation enacted in 1980 required councils of governments (in our case, the Association of Bay Area Governments, or “ABAG”) to forecast regionally and determine each county and city’s existing and projected housing needs and to use that data in their housing element planning.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) must approve the Housing Element of each city, town and county. Each jurisdiction has a “fair share” of future housing needs at all levels – market rate to affordable to low income – to plan for in its Housing Element. The planning is for two cycles current 2007-2014 and next 2014-2022.

Currently, every county, city and town in the Bay Area is undertaking a process to update its Housing Element. The Housing Element process is a strategic opportunity to develop real solutions to local housing needs. It is an opportunity to engage local residents, elected officials, and other stakeholders in a constructive dialogue about the current and future needs of our communities.

What does the Housing Element mean for Marin County?

There has been tremendous growth and development in Marin County since the 1950's. Through decades of careful planning, the County has preserved a great deal of agricultural and open space and directed most of that growth, by design, mainly along the 101 corridor and the cities and towns along the freeway.

While the growth rate in Marin is expected to decline and level off at just 0.3% (202 persons) per year, this still represents a need to plan for additional housing. Several factors converge here: Marin has one of the oldest populations in the State; Generation Y is entering family-planning years; single person households are rising; and trends in housing preferences are toward walkable neighborhoods. For the older population to age in their community, and for the younger population to find reasonably priced housing close to employment, a greater range of housing choices should be provided.

The concept of "village core" living arrangements for seniors and families reinforces the ability for people to achieve a high quality of life with access to local amenities, choices in housing, healthy living, and activities, contributes to a sense of community, and means that many of our current residents can stay in the County that they've called home for so many years. Another factor affecting housing choice locally is the lack of available undeveloped land in the unincorporated county that is not already protected agricultural land, parks and public open space.

The County's approach to meeting the State planning requirements for housing need is to identify infill areas throughout unincorporated Marin already planned for mixed use, and not to rezone single-family neighborhoods, open space and agricultural land. The County has identified a number of sites throughout unincorporated Marin for inclusion in the current or next housing element cycle. Almost all of the sites are currently zoned to allow housing.

Input from a diverse citizen committee was an important part of selecting potential housing sites that stay within the existing limits of development established by the Countywide Plan. No changes to existing rules are needed to accommodate potential future housing, although higher densities are being proposed for some sites to allow for more compact site designs that preserve open space.

Here are some helpful links:

Marin County Housing Element information

www.marincounty.org/HousingElement

Marin County Affordable Housing general information

<http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/housing/index.cfm>

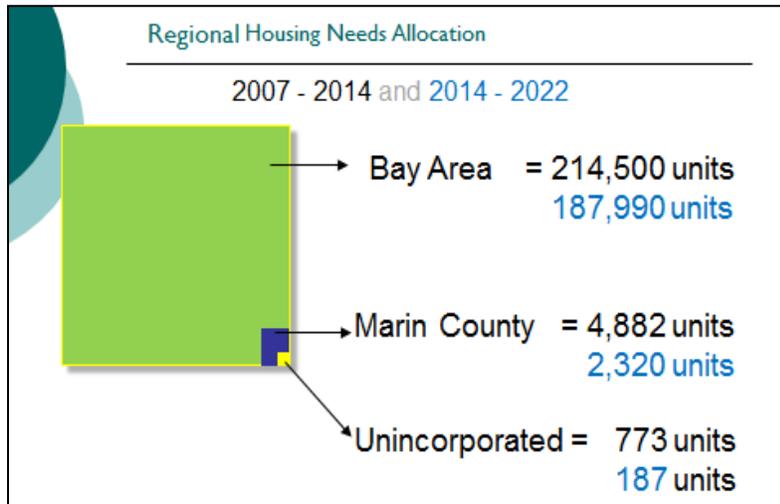
Housing Element Law, Government Code Section § 65580-65589

<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&group=65001-66000&file=65580-65589.8>

You can subscribe to receive email notifications for Housing Element information at the main page above (www.marincounty.org/HousingElement).

What is The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)?

The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) is the state-mandated regional process, through ABAG, for determining how many housing units, including affordable units, each community needs to plan for through zoning and development policies. This allocation is the total number of housing units, by income category, for which each city, town and county must plan in their Housing Elements. As you can see in the graphic below, Marin's portion of housing is a tiny fraction over many years of the projected need for housing in the nine Bay Area counties.



In the current cycle, the County is responsible for demonstrating to HCD that there are 773 potential unit sites zoned for development in the unincorporated areas of the county (the 773 units includes both market rate and affordable homes). In the next cycle, 2014-2022, the County is responsible for only 187 units, and sites can be “reused” from the current cycle if they have not been entitled or developed. Information on the RHNA allocation process can be found in the Housing Needs section of the One Bay Area site (<http://onebayarea.org/regional-initiatives/plan-bay-area.html>).

What is Affordable / Workforce Housing and why do we need it?

Despite all of our successes, housing affordability in Marin and in the Bay Area as a whole is now at an all-time low. This has implications for all of us, as it becomes more difficult to fill vacant jobs; roadways are clogged with workers traveling longer distances; and many young families, longtime residents, older adults and other community members relocate because they can no longer afford to live here.

Very little growth in either population or employment is projected for Marin County over the next twenty years. However, traffic congestion is growing about two times the rate of either the population or employment growth in the County. This increase is tied to people commuting into Marin for existing jobs because local affordable housing is lacking. Improving the work/housing balance reduces commuting traffic. Creating housing near transit and creating mixed-use developments are also beneficial, reducing the need for many mid-day automobile trips. This not only has implications for traffic, but also for the people employed, and the businesses and

services available in our community. And since over 60% of Marin’s greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation, reducing the number of car trips each day helps the environment and our air quality.

Ideally, housing costs should not exceed 30% of a household’s gross income. For homeowners this includes principal, interest, taxes and insurance and for renters it includes rent and utilities. In the first quarter of 2013, the average rent for a studio apartment in Marin County was \$1,258 and was \$2,309 for a 2 bedroom apartment. The median sales price for a single family home was \$850,000 and \$380,000 for a condominium. Even with historically low interest rates, the monthly costs for the average mortgage can easily exceed 30% of a household’s gross income.

Housing costs in Marin are high. Housing that matches these incomes is hard to find, forcing people to pay too much of their income on local housing, if they can find it, or to face long commutes, clogging our roadways. Either way, this situation is a problem and growing. Here’s a sample of the income and amounts available for housing for several familiar members of our local Marin communities:

**WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT – MARIN COUNTY
ADVERTISED SALARIES (2012/2013)**

Position	Annual Income	Monthly Housing
<i>Senior on fixed income</i>	\$20,000	\$450
<i>Starbucks Barista @ \$11/hour, 40 hrs/wk</i>	\$22,880	\$570
<i>Print Production Manager, \$17/hour, 40 hrs/wk</i>	\$35,360	\$885
<i>Dixie School District, Elementary School Teacher</i>	\$48,475	\$1,210
<i>Administrative Assistant, \$25/hour, 40 hrs/wk</i>	\$52,000	\$1,300
<i>Marin County Firefighter</i>	\$69,684	\$1,740

What is a Priority Development Area (PDA)?

Priority Development Areas (or PDAs) are locations, identified through the Plan Bay Area regional planning process, where future commercial and residential growth may be accommodated in close proximity to public transit, jobs, services and other amenities. Plan Bay Area grew out of “The California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008” (Senate Bill 375), which requires each of the State’s 18 metropolitan areas – including the Bay Area – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. Signed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the law requires that a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) promote compact, mixed-use commercial and residential development. The Plan Bay Area process is separate from the Housing Element process.

Regional Planning Initiatives

http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/housing/regional_initiatives.cfm

Sustainable Communities Strategy

<http://onebayarea.org/regional-initiatives/plan-bay-area.html>

Concerns have been raised that PDAs and the regional planning process will require local jurisdictions to plan for greater numbers of housing units through the Housing Element update process. This does not appear to be the case, however, as the planning requirement for the next Housing Element cycle (2014-2022) is expected to drop to approximately 187 homes (includes both market rate and affordable) for unincorporated Marin as a whole from the current requirement of 773 homes. The regional planning process has been changing and now better reflects the concerns of residents and public officials that planning should not exceed very modest growth patterns in Marin County.

Areas designated as PDAs are eligible for greater amounts of funding for transportation improvements. For example, \$175,000 of federal transportation funds were recently allocated by the Transportation Authority of Marin to prepare a plan for pedestrian and bike safety improvements in the Tam Junction area. These funds were made available to the community as a result of the Tam Junction area including a PDA. Areas without a PDA are not eligible to receive the 50% of state transportation dollars that are designated for projects in PDAs.

Examples of Successful Multi-Family Housing in Marin

Throughout Marin, we have multi-family housing at moderate densities that are successfully integrated within their communities. Toussin Senior Apartments in Kentfield is a multi-family development at a density of 33 units per acre. The Fireside Apartments in Tam Valley provide homes for families, older adults and special needs individuals. With 50 units, Fireside's density is 45 units per acre. Warner Creek in Novato provides senior housing at a density of 26.4 units per acre.

Must the sites on the housing list be developed?

Identification of housing sites in the Housing Element is for planning purposes; it does not mean that development proposals for these sites are currently under review or will be submitted in the future. No housing is mandated to be built at these locations; only if the property owner decides to design a project, submit an application and go through the regular, lengthy public review process, including environmental review, and the project is approved, would there actually be building on these sites.



If a property on the Housing Element list is proposed for development, it must follow the County's review process. There are opportunities for public input at many stages of the process, such as environmental review, Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors hearings. Applicants should also discuss development plans with the community prior to submitting an application.

The Marin Countywide Plan and Development Code provide the basic framework for determining what uses and development may occur in any given area.

Marin Countywide Plan

http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/fm/cwpdocs/CWP_CD2.pdf

Development Code

<http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/comdev/CURRENT/devCode.cfm>

Are there height limits and good design controls?

Marin County Code limits building height to 30 feet in most areas. This effectively limits development to two or three stories maximum. The County is in the process of developing multi-family design guidelines. A project is required to demonstrate conformance with the existing single-family guidelines (or new multi-family design guidelines when adopted) through Design Review.

Single-family Residential Design Guidelines

http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/Forms/Single-family_Residential_Design_Guidelines.pdf

Multi-family Design Guidelines

http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/Main/comdev/current/multi-family_guidelines.cfm

How might development financially impact our schools?

New projects must pay a school impact fee. Frequently, a School District levies a fee per square foot of new residential development. The fees are to be used for modernization, construction, and/or expansion of the District's school sites. The Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998 (Senate Bill 50) preempts local jurisdictions from devising their own requirements to mitigate or otherwise address impacts of new development on school facilities. If a developer agrees to pay the fees established by SB 50, the project may not be denied due to impacts on schools or due to the inadequacy of school facilities. While non-profit housing is exempt from annual ad valorem taxes, they are not exempt from the extra school parcel assessments and taxes, depending on how they are structured.

Going forward together

We all recognize that there is little room for development in Marin other than appropriate in-fill development that fits the character of the community. We need housing choices that will meet all of our life cycle needs. This includes housing for older adults who wish to drive less as they age in their homes; parents downsizing to smaller homes; young adults wanting to live near restaurants and work; families with young children seeking good schools and green spaces to play; and employees, teachers and service providers seeking to reduce lengthy commutes.

Traffic is cited as the top concern of Marin residents and we need to find ways to address our current and future traffic challenges. Planning for our future must include ways to enhance the use of public transit, bikeways and pedestrian paths. This will take dedicated transportation funding and figuring out how to reduce single-rider car trips. In-fill housing may be an important part of this puzzle. So let's carefully review the Housing Element and its proposed housing sites and consider how best to address our needs.

Stay informed and let me know your thoughts and ideas...

I welcome your thoughts and suggestions so we can achieve a plan that enhances our current and future quality of life in Southern Marin. Again, keep in touch.

Please sign up for my e-mail news and information to stay informed about issues of community-wide significance as well as events, volunteer opportunities and ways to get out and enjoy the parks and open spaces all around us.

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAMARIN/subscriber/new?topic_id=CAMARIN_43