



City of Sebastopol Housing Subcommittee
HOUSING ACTION PLAN
SURVEY RESULTS
From May 22, 2016 Meeting

Introduction

The subject questionnaire was designed to obtain opinions about actions to address housing issues. This did not include the issue of rent control.

The questionnaire was administered at the May 22 Housing Subcommittee meeting, attended by over 30 persons, a number of whom have attended several such meetings and gained some information regarding a range of housing issues. For some questions, rounding produced percentage results slightly more or less than 100%.

Please note that this is a 'non-scientific' survey, with respondents self-selecting. In addition, the knowledge or expertise of persons responding is unknown. Finally, it is an opinion survey, not a survey that necessarily identifies actual housing needs or the most effective policies.

Some persons did not fill out a questionnaire, and some who did, did not respond to every question. In that there were numerous questions, and some questions were somewhat technical in nature, this is understandable. 23 questionnaires were returned.

Analysis

The responses show considerable consensus about policy ideas, although several questions did show significant differences of opinion. Highlights include:

- Question A.4. concerning a law to prohibit discrimination against prospective Section 8 tenants showed some division of opinion, with most respondents opposed, but a significant proportion favoring such a law.
- Question B.3. regarding reducing discretionary review of housing projects found support for the concept, but with some respondents favoring this only for affordable housing projects.
- Question C.1. found strong support for using the City's limited affordable housing monies to rehabilitate the vacant apartments at the Village Park mobile home park.
- Question C.3 indicated that family housing and senior housing had highest support for future development.

- Question D.1. regarding increasing the allowed size of ADUs found support for the concept on large lots.
- Question D.2. regarding vacation rentals found support for allowing this in 'hosted' situations.
- Several questions asked about reducing parking requirements. There was moderate support for this concept.
- Several questions asked about 'streamlining' ideas. There was majority support for most of these concepts.
- There was high support for calculating impact fees on a per-square-foot basis, and for discounting or exempting fees for small units.
- There was solid support for increasing the Transient Occupancy Tax and devoting the increment to affordable housing, but most respondents opposed raising property taxes for this purpose.
- There were many individual suggestions written on the questionnaires. These are listed.

Responses are totaled below.

Responses

A. Section 8:

The Section 8 program is a valuable housing resource, but housing availability is an issue. How can owner participation in the program be increased?

1. Encourage the County to make rental *owner participation* in the program easier.
 - Yes **95%**
 - No
 - No opinion **5%**
 - Other comments: Including reducing stigma.
2. Support more program *marketing* to rental owners.
 - Yes **78%**
 - No **9%**
 - No opinion **13%**
3. Periodic City distribution of program *information/publicity*.
 - Yes **92%**
 - No **4%**
 - No opinion **4%**
4. Pass law to *prohibit* owner discrimination against prospective Section 8 tenants.
 - Yes **33%**
 - No **57%**
 - No opinion **10%**
 - Other ideas: Marin County did this; The law already exists within Supreme Court's decision on Fair Housing, we just need a lawyer to take a class action suit to enforce it.

B. Support:

In recent decades in many parts of California, housing developments have faced community resistance and demanding review processes. For these and other reasons, societal housing production needs have not been met. How might community acceptance be shifted?

1. Should the City conduct on-going *education/publicity* about housing needs?

- Yes **71%**
- No **5%**
- Only for affordable housing **14%**
- No opinion **10%**

2. Would you be willing to *speak* in support of housing projects?

- Yes **45%**
- No **18%**
- Only for affordable housing **27%**
- No opinion **9%**

3. Should the *City reduce discretionary review of housing development?*

- Yes **30%**
- No **15%**
- Only for affordable housing **30%**
- No opinion **25%**

C. Build New Homes:

With very limited resources, how can the City stimulate or initiate affordable housing development?

1. Should the City use available affordable housing funds (less than \$200,000) or other monies to rehabilitate vacant apartments at *Village Mobile Home Park*? This would expand actual, existing very-low income housing resources operated by West Sonoma County Community Services. The poor condition of the vacant apartments currently precludes occupancy. Apartments could be occupied within six months of authorization.

- Yes **91%**
- No **9%**
- Other ideas: More mobile home parks instead of building new buildings. Much lower cost. Units should not be jammed together but more garden/green area around; Can we make Village Park have more units?; Use General Fund money for that too; Vacant retail stores turned to housing; Build up, not out; Use Housing trust.
- No opinion

2. What are priority uses of any *future* affordable housing funds? Please check your TWO highest priorities.

- Village Park services and repairs **25%**
- Repair/rehabilitation assistance for lower-income households **14%**
- Homeless outreach services
- Housing matching or counseling services **14%**
- Seed money for affordable housing development **25%**
- Assist non-profit purchase/mgt. of existing rental housing buildings **17%**
- Other ideas: City voucher program (like Santa Rosa has); Risk mitigation pool and tenant assistance pool; Forget the above choices; Also other types of "housing developments" i.e. tiny house villages, etc.
- No opinion **6%**

3. What is your *highest-priority* category of housing?

- Family housing **46%**
- Senior housing **21%**
- Single-person housing **13%**
- Housing for the homeless **17%**
- Other ideas: Senior low-income housing (60-80% of AMI); Residential; All types of housing!
- No opinion **4%**

4. Once policy changes are implemented, should the City perform *outreach* to owners of possible housing development sites and builders to encourage housing projects?

- Yes **80%**
- No **10%**
- Other ideas Do this for affordable housing.
- No opinion **10%**

D. Development Standards:

Development standards are a factor in the cost and feasibility of housing development. Should the Zoning Ordinance be changed?

1. State law allows larger ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units, or 'granny units') than the current 840 sq. ft. City limit. Should the City allow ADUs *larger than 840 sq. ft.* (up to 1,200 sq.) ft. on larger parcels?

- Increase allowed size on large lots **67%**
- Increase on any lot **24%**
- Don't increase **5%**
- Other ideas: Allow multiple ADUs on large parcels; ADUs should not be so tall as to look down into neighbors' yards; But, if ADUs are going at market rate it won't help us; How many ADUs are required before supply goes up enough to lower

prices?; We need ADUs and rent protection; By allowing on any lot you are creating two affordable units—the homeowner, and the renter; And decrease regulations/restrictions, etc.

- No opinion **5%**

2. Should the City permit *vacation rentals* of ADUs and single-family homes only in ‘hosted’ situations, where a permanent resident lives in one of the units, and require Use Permit for other types of vacation rentals? (Planning Commission recommendation.)

- Agree with Planning Commission recommendations **68%**
- Do not restrict vacation rentals **5%**
- Prohibit vacation rentals **16%**
- Other ideas: Vacation rentals should be heavily taxed and enforced, to discourage this option; We need to protect our limited housing stock; Prohibit as much as possible.
- No opinion **11%**

3. The General Plan has increased allowed residential densities. Should the City *reduce minimum lot sizes in residential zones*?

- Yes to concept of reduction in lot sizes **84%**
- No **11%**
- Other ideas: Maybe, not sure.
- No opinion **5%**

4. Sebastopol has considerable commercial zoning, such as along Healdsburg, South Main and Gravenstein Hwy. South. There appears to be a *greater need* for residential development than commercial development. Should the City *decrease* the required proportion of commercial space, or *eliminate* the requirement?

- Change regulations to require less commercial in mixed-use projects **65%**
- Allow purely residential development in these areas **35%**
- Keep current regulations
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion

5. Should the City change the inclusionary housing ordinance to allow use of ‘*land trust model*’ in for-sale housing subdivisions?

- Yes **76%**
- No
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **24%**

6. Should the City *reduce* the 1-bedroom parking requirement from the current 1.5 spaces per unit requirement?

- Yes **80%**
- No **20%**
- Other ideas: Absolutely not; Yes, more people bike and use public transport;
- No opinion

7. Should the City *reduce* the 2-bedroom parking requirement from the current 2.0 spaces?

- Yes **62%**
- No **24%**
- Other ideas: Not at all.
- No opinion **14%**

8. Should the City *reduce* the senior housing requirement from the current 0.75 spaces?

- Yes **47%**
- No **42%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **11%**

9. Should the City *reduce* the downtown residential parking requirements from the current 80% of the standard requirement, to a reduced standard?

- Yes **50%**
- No **40%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **10%**

10. Should the City increase the allowed *compact parking proportion* from the current 40% to a *higher* percentage?

- Yes **45%**
- No **20%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **35%**

11. Should the City allow *tandem parking* for single-family, and for condominium and apartment development, where spaces are assigned?

- Yes **68%**
- No **11%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **21%**

12. Should the City allow *street-front parking* to count towards multi-family parking requirements? (This is done for commercial development now.)

- Yes **74%**
- No **21%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **5%**

13. Should the City review Subdivision Ordinance provisions regarding street width and other requirements, and *reduce/revise* the standards?

- Yes **67%**
- No **17%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **17%**

14. The City's Growth Management program states that housing projects have one year to use their housing allocations. Permitting timelines may make this challenging; and economic downturns often last longer. *Should this limit be longer?*

- Yes **95%**
- No **5%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion

E. Development Procedures:

Extended process can increase costs, add uncertainty, and expose housing projects to delay or denial. More hearings, notices and appeal opportunities tend to result in greater costs and higher risks. Should current procedures be adjusted?

Should the City change some of its procedures to facilitate housing?

1. Should the City change Subdivision Ordinance to allow *Planning Commission approval* of smaller subdivisions, instead of also requiring City Council approval?

- Yes **68%**
- No **21%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **11%**

2. Should the City *change the threshold* for Design Review of homes in single family subdivisions from the current 2 lots or units, to a greater number?

- Yes **61%**
- No **22%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **17%**

3. Should the City exempt *small multi-family and mixed-use developments* from Design Review?

- Yes **53%**
- No **37%**
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion **11%**

4. For appeals, should the City require a *fee equal to appeal processing costs*, rather than the current lesser amount?

- Yes **33%**
- No **33%**
- Other ideas Not sure what this question means.
- No opinion **33%**

F. Fees:

Should City 'impact fees' be revised? (Noting that fee reductions will reduce City resources for other important needs):

1. Should impact fees be revised to be calculated on a *per-square-foot basis* to incentivize ADUs and other small units?

- Yes **89%**
- No **5%**
- Other ideas: Keep reducing impact fees-still too high;
- No opinion **5%**

2. Should the City exempt *small units* (such as below 500 sq. ft.) from impact fees?

- Yes **79%**
- No **21%**
- Other ideas: Exempt below 600 sq. ft.;
- No opinion

3. Should the City *discount* impact fees for deed-restricted/regulated units?

- Yes **94%**
- No
- Other ideas _____

No opinion **6%**

4. Should the City exempt ADUs (granny units) from selected impact fees in return for long-term affordability?

Yes **83%**

No **11%**

Other ideas _____

No opinion **6%**

G. Increase Finance Resources:

Should new budgeting or taxes be considered?

1. Pending adoption of possible new taxes, should the City make a *budget allocation*, or dedicate an existing revenue source to a new City affordable housing fund?

Yes **61%**

No **17%**

Other ideas And tax the wealthiest 10% residents, 1% and put it towards this fund. _____

No opinion **22%**

2. Should the City propose to *increase Sebastopol's Transient Occupancy tax* from 10% to 12%, with revenues from the increase dedicated to affordable housing? This requires a ballot measure and 2/3's voter approval.

Yes **89%**

No **11%**

Other ideas _____

No opinion

3. Should the City propose an increase in *Property Tax* paid by all land owners in Sebastopol, with revenues dedicated to affordable housing? This requires a ballot measure and 2/3's voter approval.

Yes **39%**

No **50%**

Other ideas: Transfer tax when property is sold; But just the top/wealthiest 10% residents, 1%, and put it towards this fund.

No opinion **11%**

4. Should the City support County-wide efforts for affordable housing, including potential taxes or bond measures, or trust funds?

Yes **81%**

- No 19%
- Other ideas _____
- No opinion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

H. Responsibilities:

Yes, the City can take some actions, but the issue is much bigger. *What are actions that each person might consider—what can we all do?*

- Renters
- Homeowners
- Residential property owners
- Commercial property owners
- Businesses
- Non-profits
- Housing developers
- Designers

List your top ideas.

- Long overlooked in need for affordable rentals and homeowner funding to buy are seniors who are in 60-80% of AMI and considered low income but their income maximum (minimums in some situations) do not qualify as now, local affordable housing is only available to seniors 50% or less of Ami. Please include this in all plans.
- Make simple process to legalize ADUs. Should not be expensive. Should be sane.
- Generate revenues and dedicate to affordable housing or rent subsidies. Possible revenues increase transfer tax, charge business tax on 100% of rental units.
- Encourage and promote ADUs. Benefits (lower fees) for units dedicated to affordable.
- Coordinate with County on fringe around Sebastopol City limits.
- Create clearinghouse to help renters and rental owners-subsidies, incentives, etc.
- A dedicated team of city staff, housing providers, property management, renters and land trust-to meet and make specific goals and push special projects.
- Support a local land trust to form-help it raise \$.
- Change zoning at former CVS-building housing and a new small park/square.
- Work opportunities in small spaces will provide small income. Not enough to pay rent.
- Sebastopol will be gentrified very quickly I wish I could slow it down.
- Replicate Lilypad homes.
- More loans for ADUs.

- Section 8: enact no-discrimination policy.
- Mediation services for rent increase, set up mediation policies.
- Voluntary rent stabilization.
- Affordable senior housing.
- Voluntary rent guidelines.
- Streamline the process for short-term rentals, please.
- Housing bond?
- Identify properties in the city that can be renovated/converted into rental units (or rental units added on small scale).
- Get creative re: diverse housing options (communal housing; multi-family; etc.)
- Renters: survive.
- Homeowners: not increase rent.
- Residential property owners: not increase rent.
- City-sponsored tenant organization.
- Keep money local-how about a 'city bank' with loans and payments staying in our town and regulations created by agreement of/from our community.
- Get communication, cooperation, 'general plan' with all agencies, city planners, community input, education for long range solutions /goals, designs/demographics.
- Support (fee reduction, etc.) for land grant (?) protect agricultural/housing/etc. mixed projects with various sizes of houses included-all moderate to low income.
- Think tank of citizens for creative ideas for increasing character and kinds of housing styles.
- How to increase affordable housing availability-on-going meeting.
- Michael Black thought of singles or couples having private bed-sitting rooms set around common spaces for gathering, cooking, etc. so perhaps 6-8 private spaces to each central space. Might have to be new construction (probably?).
- Greater communication and education for renters and rental housing providers.
- Affordable housing partnerships—BMRs, rental improvement program, Best Practices.
- Housing creation—ADUs; workforce housing; streamline permitting/fees lowered; city land acquisition and preservation.

I. Other ideas

What *other ideas* should be considered? Please list.

- Oversight of current affordable housing access should be conducted by auditors who include low income (60-80% of AMI) seniors, push current programs to include access, to rentals and aid to buy, low income seniors.
- Lilypad?
- Land trust.
- Voluntary relocation.
- Teachers.
- Low wage workers.
- Down payment assistance.
- Housing: top priority on city agenda.

- Large new companies need to provide % of housing compliant with Sebastopol standards.
- Housing website-voluntary rent guidelines.
- Non-market solutions-land trust model.
- Mixed-use identify higher density.
- Tiny home neighborhood.
- Tiny homes-very low processing, impact fees, waiving fees.
- Mediation practices between landlord and tenant to limit rent increases.
- Subsidy for down payments.
- Free loans for rehabbing units to rent.
- Rent caps in line of ending ADU fees.
- Redefine 'affordability' if based on AMI it will always go up faster than wages so low income people will be competing with middle class for help.
- The California Apartment Association rep in our group dominated the conversation and continually steered conversation away from measures to protect renters that were unfavorable to her.
- Remove requirement for underground electrical service for ADUs.
- Landlord partnership program with CDC and Housing Authority, incentives to rent to Section 8 voucher holder; loans for ADUs if you rent to Section 8 tenant.
- Voluntary rent stabilization.
- Right to lease program—require landlords to offer the option of a 12 month lease to tenant.