



Town of Corte Madera Housing Element Update

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP MINUTES

Monday, June 30, 2014

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Corte Madera Recreation Center

498 Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera, CA

I. Welcome and Overview of the Workshop Purpose

- A. Welcome and Introductions – Adam Wolff, Director of Planning and Building, welcomed and thanked participants for coming to the workshop. He spoke of workshop materials, noting the Town will formulate a comprehensive email list and keep participants informed. All materials will be posted on the town’s website. He stated the second workshop is designed for those that could not attend tonight’s workshop on Thursday, July 24th at 7PM at Town Hall and will mirror the content presented tonight. Mr. Wolff introduced Christine O’Rourke, Contract Planner, and former Planning Director Dan Bell.
- B. Agenda Overview – Ms. O’Rourke gave a brief background of her experience in updating municipal Housing Elements and discussed the agenda format.

II. Overview of the Town’s Housing Element Update

- A. Staff and Consultant Presentation
- B. Questions of Clarification
- C. Overview of Discussion Topics

Ms. O’Rourke gave a PowerPoint presentation on the following topics:

What is a Housing Element? Ms. O’Rourke explained that a Housing Element is one of 7 required elements of the Town’s General Plan. Housing elements have been required since 1969 and are reviewed and certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). In this cycle, housing elements are updated every 8 years and Corte Madera is using HCD’s streamlined process update, given that the Town had adopted theirs only 3 years ago in 2011.

Requirements: In updating a housing element, evaluation of the current housing element must be undertaken, as well as review of demographic and housing need analysis, constraints on housing development; site inventory; and adoption of programs to promote housing opportunities and meet RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Assessment).

REGIONAL HOUSING NEED ASSESSMENT (RHNA): HCD establishes the statewide housing need, while the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) develops RHNA for cities and counties in the Bay Area. The Bay Area's RHNA is 187,990 units, Marin County's RHNA is 2,298 units, and of this, Corte Madera has 72 units for its current RHNA cycle, from 2015 to 2022.

RHNA History for Corte Madera: From 1980 to 1990: 758 units; from 1990 to 1998: 438 units; from 1999 to 2006: 179 units; from 2007 to 2014: 244 units; and from 2014 to 2022: 72 units

RHNA for 2014-2022: Very Low: 22 units; Low: 13 units; Moderate: 13 units; Above Moderate: 24 units. Ms. O'Rourke then discussed income categories for very low, low, moderate and above moderate income levels, noting that the median income is \$103,000 for a 4-person household in Marin County. She then reviewed income distribution levels in percentages for Corte Madera and Marin County, as a whole.

Progress for the 2007-2014 Period: San Clemente Place was built in 2008 consisting of 79 affordable apartments; 2 single family homes were built; 2 second units developed. Ms. O'Rourke then displayed a graphic on demographic trends for population stating that the largest population increase in Corte Madera was between 1990 and 2000 and then it levels off with about 1,000 over the next 30 years. She discussed job projections, age group trends, age group projections, types of households, and tenure which shows more owners than renters.

Special Needs Populations: Seniors: 25% of senior households pay more than half of their income for housing. Homeless in Marin County: There are 174 unsheltered homeless people in January 2013, 519 sheltered homeless people, 240 other sheltered homeless people, and Corte Madera's share is to provide the appropriate zoning to accommodate 6 homeless persons.

Corte Madera Median Home Prices: In 2013, the median sales price was \$997,500 for a single family home; \$583,500 for a condo or townhome; and a family of four with a moderate income of \$124,000 could afford, at most, a \$500,000 home. Ms. O'Rourke then presented average rental rates in Marin and annual income needed, and affordable rents in Marin broken out by income levels and types of rentals.

Needs Analysis: Corte Madera needs both rental and ownership housing for a variety of household types and sizes, and there could be an emphasis on senior housing. Apartments can be affordable to low-income households at market rates. Condos can be affordable to moderate income households at market rates.

Affordable Housing in Corte Madera: Market rate units, second units and below market rate units. Ms. O'Rourke then presented examples of San Clemente Place (79 apartments-low and very low incomes), affordable ownership units (32 below market rate units-15 low and 17 to moderate incomes), and affordable units at Aegis (118 units-4 low and 5 very low incomes).

Strategies to meet RHNA: Under Construction or Approved: Tamal Vista (180 units); single family homes approved (3 units) and remaining RHNA equals 30 units total. Ms. O'Rourke pointed out that there are some market rate units at Tamal Vista that may be affordable to moderate incomes, which would reduce the unmet RHNA in this category.

Strategies to Meet Remaining RHNA Units: Single family sites that are vacant: 26 units; Second units: 16 second units; 1421 Casa Buena: 3 affordable units of the 16 townhomes; Wornum Drive Extension: 25 very low and low units. Ms. O'Rourke identified the single family sites, second units (Robin Drive and others), 1421 Casa Buena Drive (16 townhomes); and the Wornum Drive extension with a capacity of 25 units which is owned by the Town and could be an excellent site for senior development.

Ms. O'Rourke called for public comments.

A participant said he and his wife just moved to this area and referred to page 2; how RHNA determines the number of housing units per City. He said he attended a conference in the North Bay and noted that developers were talking about deploying 250 single family homes in tracts of land. It would seem that 72 units would be very difficult here given the lack of land available. He asked how people could influence this at all.

Ms. O'Rourke said ABAG assigns the Bay Area portion of the statewide housing need based on a formula that includes population, growth, jobs, availability of transit, and how much low income housing was produced, and every RHNA cycle is a different process. She added that it is difficult to determine what future RHNA requirements will be beyond the current cycle and noted that the Town was a member of ABAG but withdrew its membership. She explained that many jurisdictions were upset with their past housing numbers, and they were lowered by up to 70% in some cases in the current cycle.

Pat Ravasio asked why the Town was still engaged in the housing element update process if it withdrew its membership from ABAG. She suggested allowing amnesty for second units and softer zoning.

Ms. O'Rourke said the Town is still subject to the allocation process that starts with the HCD forecast and is administered through ABAG and amnesty for second units is a bit tricky in meeting RHNA goals. The Town would have to prove to HCD that these second units have not been counted before or previously counted in a census.

Judy Yardsruney asked for clarification of "second units".

Ms. O'Rourke explained that second units can be attached, detached, by building a new unit, expanding the existing home, or they can be created by taking existing space in the home and repurposing it.

David Kunhardt referred to the employment slide (Jobs Projections) and asked and confirmed these were jobs within Corte Madera. He said many people are commuting throughout Marin and felt what was needed was taking cars off the road. He also suggested bringing data on housing costs up to 2014 because prices have and still are increasing which is true across the Bay Area.

Ms. O'Rourke commented that the information presented is a true apples-to-apples comparison, given that the housing numbers were created at the same time. She agreed rents and housing prices are very high throughout the Bay Area.

Ed said the previous RHNA number for Corte Madera was for 244 units and the Town still fell short of that which was later found to be an error created by ABAG. He asked what fallout is there by not meeting it.

Ms. O'Rourke said there is none. It is not very typical where cities end up meeting their past RHNA. HCD looks at the housing projections, particularly for low income, but there is no penalty.

Jim Robinson said he lives in Madera Gardens and voiced concerns with added traffic if second units are allowed in certain neighborhoods. On his old street homes are approximately 1600 s.f. and with a 750 additional s.f. second unit on the property, he questioned whether the site would be adequate. He supports the process and wishes the Town well in its efforts.

Jane Levinsohn asked if things would change from HCD's perspective if the 180 unit development at Tamal Vista had a substantial number of vacancies.

Ms. O'Rourke said it will not change the numbers because the housing is already built and units do not have to be occupied. She commented, however, that the owner of the development might resort to lowering rents in an effort to fill any vacancies.

Bob Bundy said he supports the idea of having people able to live and work in Corte Madera. He asked how well the San Clemente project worked out in this regard such that residents are not commuting out of town. He also asked where the figure on the 6 homeless came from.

Former Planning Director Dan Bell noted that there is a high percentage of people who previously lived or worked in Corte Madera who are now living at the San Clemente project. Ms. O'Rourke said regarding homeless, most of the homeless population comes from all over Marin and Corte Madera's share is based on its population relative to the overall county. For instance, if Corte Madera's population is 7% of the total of Marin County's population, a percentage is calculated which leaves 6 homeless for Corte Madera. For this cycle, most of the homeless were actually identified as being in San Rafael and Novato because this is where the shelters and services are located.

Peter Arthur welcomed Adam Wolff and said one of the reasons he is here is people will pay attention this time around. He felt that the numbers are not the driving force with this update. The Town is covered by providing the RHNA and it has the chance to identify the priorities people want to see in housing, senior housing and second units. It seems those are the qualitative things residents can look at in this small town rather than small numbers and hopes that the WinCup property does not rent out. He would like to see a qualitative approach on how the process by which the Town approves development in a limited area.

Ms. O'Rourke then called for questions regarding specific slide questions.

Ted McKay referred to jobs projections and asked to look at the freeway congestion. He said people live here and work in the Bay Area where there are jobs. Regarding WinCup, he does not understand the idea of a market rate, stating this would vary on the size of the unit, condition, maintenance, and quality of the unit. He thinks WinCup could be market rate but strictly for low income people because of its density.

Mr. Wolff said it is a matter of being zoned to be able to meet the RHNA. The conversation can be about housing policy with regard to second units and how to achieve them, and those policy discussions will be tracked. Ms. O'Rourke said the Town currently has the appropriate housing sites to satisfy RHNA (no additional sites need to be rezoned).

Mary said she is on disability and was forced to leave her apartment. She has a son in high school and all rental rates are substantially higher. She looked at all subsidized housing in Corte Madera and cannot even apply for affordable housing at San Clemente. She asked what can be offered for people in her situation.

Mr. Bell suggested contacting the Marin County Housing Authority, who monitors affordable units for the town.

Steve Cardellini said the zoning is in place to make it possible for those 72 units to be built so we can go forward and not worry about losing funding. If we get through this period and none of the units get built, he asked if ABAG was going to ask the Town to build more than 72 units if the sites are not built.

Ms. O'Rourke said if the zoning is not in place and property is not available for the Town's RHNA allocation, or if the Town does not have an adopted housing element, the 72 units would be added to the next cycle.

Karen Gerbosi referred to page 6, "Special Needs Population" under "Seniors" and she confirmed this data pertained to Corte Madera. Regarding the "Needs Analysis" slide, said the slide seems to indicate that seniors do not have existing housing and commented that most seniors already have a home.

Ms. O'Rourke said as people age, housing needs can change for people living here, and there is a housing need for the current and upcoming senior population.

Julie referred to page 2, "RHNA History for Corte Madera", and she asked what happened and why did ABAG assign 244 units, noting no real trend.

Ms. O'Rourke said she was unsure, but all cities were unhappy with their high numbers in the past cycle and this is reflected in the current cycle. Cities do not know what their next allocation will be and if job and population growth holds true, it could mean that the housing numbers will not jump.

Pati Stoliar said she took 72 and subtracted WinCup and got 34 so she was not sure how the Town arrived at 30 units.

Ms. O'Rourke explained that above all of the moderate housing has been taken care of and she simply added the units by each category to show the remaining RHNA requirement.

Jennifer Larson said she is still trying to determine how the 244 units were assigned for Corte Madera. She said she contacted ABAG and was told by a staff person there that Corte Madera never had to rezone for the WinCup site. Also, the Town never got credit for the overage.

Ms. O'Rourke commented that cities do not receive credit because more is built. She explained that cities without adopted housing elements run the risk of being sued. There is also funding tied to being in compliance as well. The next cycle is added in also. If the Town does not adopt its Housing Element, it will carry over the 72 units to the next cycle. She then presented all towns in Marin, what their housing allocations were last year and the comparison to this current cycle, which shows changes of up to 70% less in housing numbers.

Jim Robinson said information is misleading because not taken into account is the gross square miles of the towns. He said he thinks it would be a better comparison to show actual buildable land masses. As a citizen that would be more informative.

Ms. O'Rourke commented that all towns throughout Marin County do not feel they necessarily have available land.

Bill said it is his understanding that there does not need to be active development plans but only property properly zoned and available for housing.

Ms. O'Rourke said this is true, and she provided an example of a small commercial building that could accommodate additional growth, but the building has a long-term lease, so it is an under-utilized site but not available, so this cannot be counted.

Peter Chase asked if the designation the Town is considering is a suburban designation.

Ms. O'Rourke said for default density, the Town must zone land for at least 20 units an acre, and if they do have a site all of it could be counted for the RHNA for low or very low income. Corte Madera is still considered a suburban zone and this will not change in the future.

Phyllis Metcalf stated that Peter Chase was referring to AB1537, a bill by Assemblymember Marc Levine. Currently, under California housing law, Marin County (because of its close proximity to San Francisco) is considered "metropolitan" for purposes of building affordable housing. This requires Marin County to have the same high density affordable housing as San Francisco. For the purpose of one housing cycle (8 years), AB1537 corrects this by lowering Marin County's density requirements to that of a suburban county like Sonoma.

Mr. Bell clarified that Novato, San Rafael and the unincorporated County currently have a default density of 30 units an acre. AB1537 would lower that to 20 units an acre, similar to Corte Madera.

III. Discussion of Housing Element Update Topics

- A. Are there any additional housing strategies the Town should pursue to meet its affordable housing needs and RHNA requirements?
- B. Are there other housing issues or concerns that should be addressed?

Bob Bundy said he thinks there are some under-utilized commercial areas and he suggested designating them for redevelopment and housing. If there is a long term lease or multiple owners, it might be difficult but the owners and tenants might recognize there is value in renovating that would result in housing units on those properties as well as other use.

Ms. O'Rourke said it might make sense to change zoning and she suggested Mr. Bundy was talking about mixed use. She asked for specific areas.

Mr. Bundy noted one area is on Paradise Drive at Madera Del Presidio for which the Town must provide flood protection. The buildings are very old and if they could be renovated for mixed use housing, the area could be elevated out of the flood plain and serve to provide as RHNA credit as well.

Rachael Ginis said she lives off Paradise Drive and proposes the Town adopt an ordinance to allow junior second units which create a less expensive, more energy efficient and less intrusive option in the community.

Jim Andrews said the traffic congestion at Madera Gardens, particularly around the schools, is a mess. When WinCup is done it will also be a mess and he asked to keep an area available to put a road through because of congestion.

Pat Ravasio said she would like to hear Ms. O'Rourke address the big picture. She said the Town withdrew its membership from ABAG, hired consultants to help the Town comply and asked how the Town proposes to work with the community to protect and solve its housing needs together. She cited the Wornum property which is already zoned for housing and asked if the Town did this.

Ms. O'Rourke said that the Wornum property was in the Housing Element from 2002 and it has an overlay zoning district on it. It has been available for housing for a long time. Mr. Wolff added that this is a Town-owned site and the Town can choose what it wants to do with it.

Diane Furst, Councilmember, explained that even though the Town withdrew from ABAG, it does not absolve them from the responsibility of state law, and the Town must comply with it. As to the argument that we had lost a voice at the table, Corte Madera's ABAG representative was invited to attend one meeting per year and this was the General Assembly, which constituted panel discussions and a 15 minute meeting. This is the only vote Corte Madera's ABAG member ever got--one vote on the annual budget. All policy decisions, Plan Bay Area, RHNA and a host of other decisions are all made in subcommittees and the Town never had a representative on a subcommittee.

Julie Electa voiced concern with parking and traffic and the number of cars owned by families. She liked the junior second unit idea asked if they would also add to the car count of the home. She asked people when thinking about creative ideas to also think about consequences, and she thinks there is way too much traffic. Corte Madera has single car streets, no sidewalks, and people need to negotiate driving.

David Kunhardt supported junior second units, but worries about amnesty for second units as they could result in more vehicles and homes that were not originally permitted properly. He knows an owner of a home on Christmas Tree Hill. There are three homes that have been divided up for 4 units each and now there are several cars at the property. He noted that most of the traffic comes from kids and schools. He suggested students be forced to bike to and from school.

IV. Summary and Next Steps

A. Summary of Workshop Comments and Review of Next Steps

Ms. O'Rourke announced that another workshop will be held on July 24, 2014 at the Town of Corte Madera Town Hall. The July 24th workshop will repeat the same information provided in tonight's workshop. She and staff will be working on the draft streamlined Housing Element Update and outlined the following next steps:

October: Preliminary Housing Element to the Planning Commission and then to the Town Council, and then onto HCD. HCD has up to 8 weeks to review the Housing Element and may return it to the Town for revisions in order to achieve certification.

January: Planning Commission hearing, Town Council final adoption of the Housing Element.

A participant asked and clarified that the best way to provide comments is via email. Mr. Wolf added that the Town's website has a link to the Housing Element Update and staff posts updates regularly as appropriate.

B. Evaluation of the Meeting and Thank You

Mr. Wolff concluded the Workshop and thanked everyone for participating.

Adjourn: 9:00 p.m.