

Marin Voice:

Supervisor details next steps for county's Housing Element plan

By *DENNIS RODONI* | November 10, 2022

I am pleased to announce that we are in the final stages of completing the **Marin County Housing Element**, a plan that every city and county is required to submit every eight years for certification by the state of California.

The purpose of the county's 2023-2031 plan is to meet the housing needs of all residents in the unincorporated areas of Marin, particularly those with lower incomes and special housing needs. **Although the County is not required to build these additional housing units directly, we are required, by law, to identify 3,569 potential home sites that could be built (by a land trust, nonprofit or other developer).**

We began this process almost 18 months ago and have made community engagement and input a top priority. With our Housing Element community meetings, joint Board of Supervisors-Planning Commission meetings and email communications, we received many substantive comments and thoughtful recommendations.

We heard many stories of ongoing disparities in housing, incomes and access to resources – challenges that largely remain in part due to old racially discriminatory housing policies.

We heard that the cost of housing affects young adults, families and seniors alike. We also learned that many of our renters, particularly our residents of color, are experiencing severe increases in housing costs and substandard living conditions. They want more tenant protections to provide housing stability.

We learned that gentrification and the increase in housing costs are forcing long-term residents to leave the county and prevent many who grew up in Marin to find homes of their own. We also heard from local businesses and schools that we need more workforce housing to help meet their hiring needs because people cannot live near where they work.

These comments echo what I have witnessed over my six years as the supervisor for District 4: workforce and affordable housing are countywide concerns. I have heard this from renters who live in some of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Marin, from residents in West Marin villages where 25% of the dwellings are vacation homes, and from neighborhoods of all sizes and densities in between.

What we've learned has been woven into our current Housing Element and is now reflected in the goals, policies and programs we have identified.

As we continue to develop strategies to address these complex issues, we are also required to develop housing opportunities at all income levels; we are choosing to identify sites in all areas of unincorporated Marin County. We are also tasked with preserving our existing

affordable housing stock to prevent displacement and reduce the number of households who are rent burdened.

After our board adopts the Housing Element in January, it will be sent to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for approval and certification. However, that is just the beginning. This will not be a plan which sits on the shelf and collects dust; it will act as the county's work plan to make positive change.

Some of the areas that I am particularly interested in are considering ways to increase stability for local Marin renters, improve and add housing for our farm workers, as well as work with property owners to increase the supply of accessory dwelling units.

These efforts require that we continue to work closely with all stakeholders. I look forward to our partnership as we look for ways to address our housing needs for all residents in the unincorporated areas of Marin County.

I encourage your participation at the next **Marin Communications Forum**, hosted by First 5 Marin [via Zoom](#) on Nov. 17 at 10 a.m., with Spanish interpretation. We will be discussing the plan's approval process, as well as next steps for implementation. To register, email Michelle@First5Marin.org. For more information, or to access our Housing Element meeting recordings, email housingelement@marincounty.org.

While meeting the requirements for a certified Housing Element can be difficult, it also presents opportunities for us to envision and create a Marin that is welcoming and supportive for all residents.

Marin Supervisor Dennis Rodoni represents District 4, which encompasses West Marin, Corte Madera, San Quentin Village, East Novato and West San Rafael, as well as parts of Mill Valley and Larkspur.