
WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL – SF HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

TO: WTPCC
FROM: MATT CHAMBERLAIN (MATT.CHAMBERLAIN@MICROSOFT.COM)
SUBJECT: NOTES FROM SF PLANNING DEPARTMENT, HOUSING ELEMENT CAB MEETING #1
DATE: 10/27/2008
CC: N/A

NOTES FROM HOUSING ELEMENT CAB MEETING #2

- The SF Planning Department has created a web site where all the documents and notes that are generated for and by the Housing Element CAB are stored and publicly available. That site is: <http://housingelement2009.sfplanning.org/>
- The second Housing Element Community Advisory Body (CAB) meeting was on October 1st. The focus of this second meeting was on discussions about the limitations of adequate sites for additional housing, and brainstorming ways to address the physical limitations of the San Francisco peninsula. As described by the SF Planning staff, the Housing Element should describe policies that will help achieve the following objectives:
 - Identify Adequate Sites
 - Facilitate Development of Affordable Housing
 - Ensure Equal Housing Opportunities
 - Maintain Existing Housing Stock
 - Protect At Risk Housing Stock
 - Remove Constraints: Governmental and Non – Governmental

It is the last bullet that I think will concern WTPCC and its member organizations. This desire to remove impediments to building additional housing is probably not appealing to residents of the West side who are concerned about the impact that high-density housing could have on the infrastructure in this part of the City. Reducing the impediments could take multiple forms though, and the CAB discussed some of those including: Providing financial incentives to foster specific types of housing projects, eliminating permit fees for non-profit housing developers, etc. - so it may be possible to reduce some constraints (financial for instance) to housing development and not eliminate the existing permit and notification process. However, I think this is an area that WTPCC and its member organizations will want to pay special attention to, and may want to raise during public hearings when they begin in January-February of 2009.

- There were two “Stakeholder Sessions” held by the SF Planning Department for input into the 2009 HE. One was targeted at Public Housing advocates and developers, the other was targeted at private for-profit developers. They were held over the lunch hour on October 8th and October 10th. I was unable to attend either of these sessions.
- There are financial impacts on SF for not having an approved Housing Element. It restricts San Francisco from qualifying for certain state and federal housing related funding. I’ve asked the SF Planning staff for a specific list of the funding that SF has lost out on because the 2004 HE has

been challenged in court and found inadequate. I hope to hear back on this question during the next HE CAB meeting on November 5th.

- I think the SF Planning Department staff working on the new Housing Element are bright, hard-working people. They seem to be taking the task very seriously and are very conscious of the need to solicit feedback from as many groups (i.e. special interests) as possible. I do not envy them their jobs. It will not be easy to balance the needs of the three main groups that I see engaged in this process including: 1) For Profit Developers, 2) Non-Profit Public Housing Developer, 3) Existing Residents/Homeowners.
- The City and County of San Francisco is preparing an **Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2004 Housing Element**, and will be preparing for environmental review of the next Housing Element Update, which is due to the Department of Housing and Community Development in June of 2009.
 - The initial **Public Scoping Meeting** for the EIR will be held by the Planning Department on **November 6th 2008 from 6:30pm to 8:00pm** at:
Room 431
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, Ca 94103
 - I suggest that WTPCC member organizations attend and raise any concerns they have regarding the EIR for the 2004 Housing Element.

MISC. NOTES

I took a lot of notes during the meeting and a few items stood out. These are for the most part NOT main data points that were raised by the SF Planning staff. Instead, most of my notes are about comments made by various CAB members. I include them here to add “color” and to give an idea of the extreme edge scenarios that the HE CAB has discussed.

- With 7sq. miles of land mass, the City of San Francisco doesn’t have much free space to work with for building new housing.
- The HE can set a policy that we want to achieve certain numbers of units of new development in a certain price range, but there is no way to require the SF Planning Department approve projects on a quota system that will meet these goals.
- It’s important to note that there is no requirement for the HE to foster home ownership. The goals are to provide “roofs over heads” – nothing more. For that reason, several members suggested that the HE focus exclusively on apartments and other high-density development.
- It was suggested that the HE should also foster “walkability” for all new development projects. They should be designed to encourage people to walk to local shops, parks and shopping rather than reverting to cars.
- While there are about 19,000 units in the Planning Department Pipeline right now, history has shown that there will be about a 25%-30% drop off rate, so we should expect that only about 13,300 will actually be built.

- When we discussed “creative” ways to meet the housing targets, it was bluntly stated that what we really mean is looking for creative ways to increase density, since that’s what this exercise is about. Adding more housing units to a fixed physical space.
- Historically, about 1/3 of the available land in SF is used by 2/3 of the total units, and the other 2/3 of the land space only holds 1/3 of the housing units. It was clear that the West Side is the area that most of the Public Housing and For Profit Housing developers on the HE CAB want to target for development. In fact the West Side was referred to as the “sacred cow” of SF that’s historically been untouchable for development – and how that needs to be changed.
- Time was spent discussing whether our zoning rules should be modified to allow single-family homes to be sub-divided. The idea was to promote 3rd floor additions, then conversion to a duplex. A sub-point raised was that the huge number of “illegal” in-law apartments in the South section of the City house a large number of residents who are suffering evictions (without any protections under current laws). This needs to be regulated by legalization of the in-law apartments.
- Perhaps with the move away from autos we could examine demolition of more freeways to free space for high-density housing units.
- There was a complaint that many rental units are being converted into condos and being sold. It seemed like the speaker wanted to make a provision for some housing to be marked as “permanent rentals” that could never be converted into condos and sold to the highest bidder.
- The question of why the City doesn’t just buy and operate public housing instead of relying on non-profits to do it. It was stated that it would be “cheaper to operate them that way.” The Mayor’s Office countered that it’s not really cheaper – it just shifts the cost away from a non-profit and onto the City (taxpayers).

FAQ

Q. Have they had a meeting?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the schedule for future meetings? Where are the meetings held?

A. All meetings will be held from 9:00 am - 11:00 am at 1650 Mission St. Room 431.

Meeting #2: October 1, 2008

Meeting #3: November 5, 2008

Meeting #4: December 3, 2008

Meeting #5: January 7, 2009

Meeting #6: January 21, 2009

Q. Who else is on the committee?

A. I didn't get a complete list of participant names. There are supposed to be about 5-6 specialists appointed by the Planning Department (not sure what that means yet), and one representative from every district. Most of the supervisorial appointees seem to be builders, or PAC members. I'm not 100% sure on this. Key City personnel include:

Abigail Kiefer – City Planner

Craig Adelman – Deputy Director from the Mayors Housing Team

Johnny Jaramillo – City Planner, Economic Development

Kearstin Dischinger – City Planner

Sarah Dennis – City Planner, Sr. Manager

Teresa Ojeda – City Planner, Sr. Manager of Analysis

There were only two or three others who appeared to be “normal” citizens appointed by their supervisors. I didn't get their names.

The SF Planning Department staff have promised to provide a complete list of CAB participants at the November 5th meeting.

Q. Has the Planning Department formulated an initial plan?

A. They are going to use the 2004 plan as a base and modify it as necessary to meet the requirements of the lawsuit brought against it that kept it from being ratified and put into action. That means that the City is currently operating from the 1999 plan, though when I checked on the SF Planning Department's web site I couldn't find a draft of the 1999 plan, only the 2004 plan which was challenged in court and technically never enacted.