

# Fairfield Forward 2050 Housing Workshop Report

**JUNE 1, 2022**

*Prepared for*

**The City of Fairfield**

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## **Project Background and Meeting Objectives**

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The City of Fairfield is preparing a comprehensive update of its Housing Element, which is a component of Fairfield General Plan that will serve as a blueprint for housing the City’s residents at all economic levels—including low-income residents and households with special needs—from 2023 through 2031. The Housing Element, one of seven State-required general plan elements, was last updated in 2015 and is now being updated to reflect more recent housing opportunities, challenges, and approaches that have emerged in the community, as well as comply with new State laws.

The purpose of this workshop was to provide information about the General Plan and Housing Element update process and gather community input on potential housing sites locations, housing issues, and recommended strategies. This short report summarizes the key themes and ideas that emerged during the workshop. Detailed discussion notes are located in the appendix.

## **Workshop Location and Format**

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The workshop took place on Monday, May 9, 2022 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm online via Zoom meeting. The workshop was held in an online format due to public health concerns from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic; this gave community members flexibility to attend the meeting from any location and drop in and out at any time. Approximately 30 community members attended the workshop.

The planning team gave a short presentation during the workshop that included an overview of the workshop format, the General Plan and Housing Element update process and state requirements, and Housing Element work completed to-date, including a draft map of potential sites.

After the presentation, participants then proceeded to one of two Zoom breakout rooms for small group discussion. Attendees were not required to participate in breakout room discussion and were allowed to spend as much or as little time in their small group discussion breakout room as they wished.

## **Breakout Group Discussions**

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The second half of the meeting was spent in two small group discussions where community members had the opportunity to brainstorm together on where housing was most appropriate in Fairfield, and what The group conversations were structured around the following questions:

1. What has your experience been like with housing in Fairfield? What housing issues are you affected by?
2. Where should housing go?
  - a. Do you agree with identified locations?

- b. Can you think of others?
3. What should the City focus on to:
  - a. Produce more housing?
  - b. Protect existing affordable housing?
  - c. Protect tenants?

Unique discussions from each group, key takeaways, and common themes are described below. For more detailed notes from each group facilitator, see Appendix A.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Some of the key takeaways from discussion included the following:

### *Locations*

- Cordelia is in need of services; existing services are not sufficient to support more high-density housing. Participants expressed preference for infill development, primarily in the central Fairfield, which has better transit access and amenities.
- Develop along corridors and near transit, or at the Solano Town Center.
- Avoid sensitive areas and develop within character of the neighborhood. It is possible to do affordable development on a smaller scale.

### *Housing Types/Potential Strategies*

- There is a desire for mixed-use development; some Cordelia residents were supportive of housing in mixed use arrangements if it included a commercial or community-serving component.
- Desire for a greater variety of housing types in Fairfield, including condos, duplexes, or other types of homeownership models beyond single-family.
- Lower/stagnant incomes make it difficult to support home ownership or rentals in Fairfield. Need to provide housing options for people ineligible for subsidized housing, but cannot afford market rents – including teachers.
- Senior housing is an identified need in Fairfield and supported by community.
- ADUs are a promising strategy for affordable housing, affordable by design – especially for moderate-income households. Additional interest for inclusionary requirements, or in-lieu fees.

## **Appendix A: Breakout Group Facilitator Notes**

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### **GROUP 1 NOTES**

#### *Introductions*

- Participant 1- Lives on Thomasson, has rental property in Fairfield, family here for 100 years. Good and bad changes. Having a good mix of housing makes the city what it is.
- Participant 2- paradise valley estates- retirement community- rental property that we owned. Came to Fairfield via Travis. Connected to base.
- Participant 3- Cordelia area- concerned about housing- haven't added any infrastructure, schools overpopulated, only one grocery store. Concerned about adding more housing in that area.
- Participant 4- bought before bottom of market. Place where we could live. Worked in redwood city, much longer. Main concerns- regarding overabundance of residential and dearth of infrastructure to support those.
- Participant 5- pregnant mother of one and half year old. Been in Cordelia for 10 years now. As someone else mentioned, concerned about increase of housing that has happened, with no improvements to infra or schooling. But don't know if schooling will be possible, not enough room. Worry about all of the traffic being around them, terrible traffic. Concerned about fires and ability to evacuate in case of emergencies.
- Participant 6- Cordelia junction- been here my whole life. Hear their perspective on housing, Cordelia is single family oriented. As young adult, as someone who wants to stay here, don't see myself being able to live in Cordelia, no opps for me to live here.
- Participant 7- Lived in Fairfield for about 8 years now. Working for one of larger property management companies, brought to this area, home costs- something to share from property management background, concerned about affordability of homes as they are skyrocketing with growing pop.
- Participant 8- real estate broker. Fam in solano for 100 years, history here. Fairfield's planning has not been successful to try and improve what's being done.

## Discussion

- Fairfield has not been successful bringing in high paying jobs. Great anchor and great opportunity. Lower green valley is business park. Tilt up industrial buildings, not appropriate for that. Should have been for businesses. Need to consider truck traffic and future use of that.
- People in Cordelia being ignored for infrastructure requests. Support for Nelson hill as an area for housing. Parks are lovely, but can incorporate that into Nelson Hill, could be combo and old truck stop area. Would have been better there. West side and Costco, building empty there.
- 680 corridor and flyway. People commuting here. Cordelia hit hard by traffic.
- Cordelia has been overdeveloped by housing. Warehousing that takes up space. Takes away land that could be used for econ development or housing. There was no vision when developing those warehouses. Would like to see more housing developed within core of town itself. Integrated economic and housing areas together.
- Affordable housing or mixed housing should be near transportation centers.

- Infill development should be where housing goes. In City core, amenities there. Mental health services, no food desert. Get to these services. Has been a lot of housing growth in Cordelia, but Cordelia is a food desert. Aren't any services here for existing homes and residents. Adding a lot more, having it be low income, people not going to have ability to get where resources and services are. I want affordable housing for everyone, but need to consider people already here and not build over any more.
- Cynthia- solano town center- mixed use came to downtown Fairfield area. Older fixtures, stores, that could require revamping, building exteriors, build up or above like in Emeryville.
- Transportation TSSP. Apartment complex being built out there, but not sure there is enough to make sure that around train station has enough parking for commuting site. Higher density housing around that area.
- This is a universal problem- Fairfield housing costs are on par with the Bay now in terms of average home prices.
- Interest in inclusionary zoning ordinance or something being explored- contemplating and doing a study on. Something the city is thinking about.
  - Solano and Vallejo- increasing affordability with new housing developments.
- Senior housing should be considered in the downtown corridor. Elderly people, when they're out in those areas, they struggle to get to drs appt. not always living nearby. Concentrate on what city can do with infill first. Apartments are not the answer, they are expensive. More mixed use, condos, single family homes, duets and duplexes, fourplexes. Cost of land dictates what builders want to build.
- One participant wants to live in townhouse or rowhouse, or some other type of ownership model beyond single-family. Something that's very lacking in FF, only in older type in downtown. Or in older places in the county more readily available. Condos and mixed use (housing above businesses) older military population and seniors.
- More condos. People downsizing. Keeping with that. Some of best with both worlds. Smaller units more affordability.
- Mixed use idea- intriguing to some participants. Combination shopping areas. Pittman and Link, some of that in Suisun in waterfront.
- neighborhood corridors idea for more housing and mixed uses.

## GROUP 2 NOTES

### *Full Notes*

- Bought property 30 years ago.
- Finding work in Fairfield is an issue, not the housing itself. Do not eliminate sites with potential for non-residential uses when selecting housing sites – disqualifies places for additional job growth.

- Friends that moved to Sacramento because they can get bigger places at better prices there. Lives at home because they do not get paid well. However, income is too high for lower-income places, but too low for a place of their own. Want a program for people like teachers, educators, etc. to fix that issue.

### *Discussion*

- Participants talked about development along transit and corridors, avoid sensitive locations. Expressed interest in the Solano Town Center.
- One participant expressed that they do not believe that new high density units are actually affordable (pointed to Vacaville as an example).
  - Fairfield should try to promote ADUs – will be slower in development, but less impact on infrastructure. Nicer for the tenant, melded into the neighborhood (see Green Valley neighborhood).
  - Sees other cities promoting it more, permit fees where they eliminate impacts. Other cities have made it possible to build larger ADUs without triggering impact fees. Provide information online.
  - Not intended for the unincorporated area.
- Another participant agreed that ADUs should be looked at more. Opportunities to promote them, but still early in the process to have that many of them in the city.
- One participant was an affordable housing developer doing a project in Benicia – smaller project with a lot more affordable housing.
  - Larger apartment complexes can concentrate lower-income households.
  - A smaller, tax-exempt project that doesn't impact that area and creates cluster of affordable housing. All subsidized, still working on financing – regulatory agreement and working with different agencies like the State (grant for infill, etc.) and 30% of construction project helping with cost, affordable via interest rates. PG&E also has a good program.
  - Need to fight with Benicia for the project, got HCD involved
  - Should be opportunity for small developers to get involved, know what the options are.
  - Do not need massive numbers of units, but it can be challenging for financing. Can build smaller projects and still be economically sound, especially with State support. Provide a pattern for other small developers to build in residential areas that fit in.
  - Project is a three-story. One-bed, 1 bath on ground floor with townhome style above. FAR was 2.0, barely built on a fourth at 18 units on about .69 acres
- One participant, an owner of the Solano Town Center, discussed an overlay for the Town Center. Potential as backup for affordable housing in case of another pandemic event. They need to know density so they can project capacity, and could get up to about 200 units. Willing to work with the City and State to ensure affordability.
  - Affordable to moderate-income (not income-restricted). Expensive to build, especially because commercial zoning.
  - Will work with the City (177 parking spaces) on development standards to work around them.

- Want to see housing there – people can live and shop in the same place.
- One participant suggested looking at Canada, where they have moratorium on corporations buying homes. Corporations increase the cost of homes
- One participant suggested building townhomes like those near Sullivan middle school. Also two-story studio over garage
- One participant noted that seniors are a good niche for affordable development. There is a perception of multifamily affordable housing associated with crime. Seniors would reduce the impact on services too.
- One participant pointed to the need for housing for teachers with stable income, especially with kids, should be able to get housing (single moms with kids), should be exception to the rule for income-restricted.

#### *Other Comments*

- Supervisor Monica Brown, District 2, provided input on housing types and issues in Fairfield.
  - Concerned about keep unincorporated area unincorporated.
  - Build duplexes in Cordelia without being obstructive.
  - ADUs and duplexes
  - Deed restriction so lower-income people can buy a home
  - Not enough parking in the train station.
- One participant was concerned about keeping rural areas rural.
- One participant said to look at infill projects along corridors (transportation). Want a mix of people close to transit, like on West Texas. Build in the types of areas where people don't have to drive.
  - Also pointed to senior housing, townhomes, etc. and need for amenities
- One participant wants bus routes to come more often.
- One participant with a background in affordable housing wanted to ensure there are no barriers for nonprofit real estate developers to developing areas, since RHNA numbers are quite high.
- Commissioner Shawn Smith provided input on housing development,
  - Make sure we focus on infill development, help with transit goals.
  - Use underutilized and vacant land. Options like downtown and Solano Town Center. Best way to achieve numbers without doing major changes.
  - Unaffordable areas should be eliminated from consideration, will not support lower-income development.
- One participant noted the importance of senior housing. Each time projects are presented for approval, they ask for senior housing. Less or no impact to the schools. Less impact on infrastructure and traffic. Should consider infrastructure first.
  - Look at ADUs for affordable housing – projects with concentrated number of people who need affordable housing tend to become “ghettos” and it's better to spread them out



## Zoom Chat Transcript

18:04:26 From \*Roxana Damas (DiversityRD) to Everyone:

Si alguien necesita interpretacion a el espanol- nos deja saber en el chat. Gracias

18:09:06 From Debbi Davis to Everyone:

Not on the poll but would like to see more low cost housing for individuals with disabilities

18:09:29 From Maureen Courter to Everyone:

Preserving existing open space!!!!

18:09:33 From \*Jessie Hernandez (City of Fairfield) to Everyone:

Thank you for your comment Debbi! We are documenting all comments, including those shared through chat.

18:11:01 From Shawn Smith to Everyone:

Housing for seniors would make less impact on local school enrollment issues.

18:12:13 From Monica Brown to Everyone:

It was a long process. I served on that committee.

18:12:22 From \*Jesus Morales to Everyone:

Moderate income shows 5,539 units

18:21:31 From Maureen Courter to Everyone:

There are supposedly many unoccupied homes near the base that have been neglected and could be repurposed to meet many housing needs mentioned instead of filling in limited open spaces!! They also already have existing infrastructure and sewage!!

18:30:39 From Edward Saulig to Everyone:

Edward from Fairfield, Sydney Australia - an observer for today. Greetings from our community of 200,000 people.

18:30:50 From Maureen Courter to Everyone:

Has there been any discussion about setting rent caps to limit increases that are pricing out families already living in the area?

18:31:34 From \*Rajeev Bhatia, Dyett & Bhatia to Everyone:

Welcome to our Australian Fairfielders!

18:31:59 From Edward Saulig to Everyone:

Thank you! Off to a brief meeting, back soon

18:32:26 From Maureen Courter to Everyone:

General rental market.

18:32:38 From Monica Brown to Everyone:

There has not been any push for rent control

18:33:53 From Hoang Tran to Everyone:

What is the plan for Solano Town Center? Is there an opportunity for a mixed used project?

18:34:06 From Josh Hampton to Everyone:

AB 1482

18:35:19 From Josh Hampton to Everyone:

<https://sfrb.org/article/summary-ab-1482-california-tenant-protection-act-2019>

18:35:34 From \*Tanya Tran, Fairfield Housing Authority to Everyone:

Thank you, Josh. It is AB 1482

18:35:39 From Josh Hampton to Everyone:

It expires in 2030

18:35:45 From Maureen Courter to Everyone:

One of the main issues for current residents in the city is that rent is increasing at rates that are unsustainable for families on fixed incomes and with rising inflation. The city should look at setting its own ordinance to prevent families from being priced out.

18:36:03 From Shawn Smith to Everyone:

I would also suggest looking at Solano Town Center for development options, especially if they would count toward the RHNA figures.

18:37:31 From \*Jesus Morales to Everyone:

Look up AB 1482, the California Tenant Protection Act of 2019. for more information on statewide rent protection.

18:37:39 From \*Jesus Morales to Everyone:

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200AB1482](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1482)

18:50:35 From \*Matt Alvarez-Nissen to Everyone:

•What has your experience been like with housing in Fairfield? What housing issues are you affected by?

- Where should housing go?
- Do you agree with identified locations?
- Can you think of others? AFFH?
- What should the City focus on to:
- Produce more housing?
- Protect existing affordable housing?
- Protect tenants?

18:58:59 From Edward Saulig to Everyone:

For your information, Fairfield City Council AU - Local Housing Strategy - [https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/plan\\_build/planning-exhibitions/lep-review-stage-2/3.0-draft-fairfield-local-housing-strategy-2021.pdf](https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/plan_build/planning-exhibitions/lep-review-stage-2/3.0-draft-fairfield-local-housing-strategy-2021.pdf)

18:59:51 From Edward Saulig to Everyone:

For your information, Fairfield City Council AU - Medium Density Study - [https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/plan\\_build/planning-exhibitions/lep-review-stage-2/4.3-medium-density-housing-study.pdf](https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/plan_build/planning-exhibitions/lep-review-stage-2/4.3-medium-density-housing-study.pdf)

19:13:36 From Julianna Aguilar to Everyone:

I agree with Monica

19:16:07 From Maureen Courter to Everyone:

Allison, I'd be okay with mixed use in Cordelia as long as it brings in services!!!

19:21:02 From Monica Brown to Everyone:

Which Cordelia? unincorporated or Cordelia Villages which is in the city limits.

19:21:56 From \*Rajeev Bhatia, Dyett & Bhatia to Everyone:

<https://www.fairfieldforward.com>