

Appendix B. Summary of Public Comments

Stakeholder Workshop, September 4, 2013

On September 4, 2013, the City of Walnut Creek conducted a Stakeholder Workshop on the Housing Element Update. To advertise the workshop, the City sent an email notice to nearly 100 local agencies, community organizations, and stakeholders in the city. The City also posted an advertisement in the City newsletter, *In a Nutshell*, and provided a press release to the Contra Costa Times. The meeting was also highlighted on the City's website. Approximately 30 people attended the Stakeholder Workshop.

At the workshop, City staff and the Housing Element Consulting firm, Mintier Harnish, presented a brief overview of the Housing Element Update and facilitated an interactive discussion to solicit ideas from participants about the most critical housing issues facing Walnut Creek residents and new ways the City and community might address these issues. The following is a summary of the issues and ideas discussed at the workshop. The issues and potential solutions were identified by workshop participants and do not necessarily represent the opinions of City of Walnut Creek staff. The input provided at the workshop will be used to shape the Housing Element policies and programs.

Major Housing Issues and Barriers to Affordable Housing

- There is little available housing for younger residents (i.e., 20-somethings).
- Financing is the largest barrier to affordable housing. It takes several funding sources to build affordable housing.
- Many people are having trouble affording housing and making ends meet. They have to make difficult choices about how to stretch their incomes to meet their daily needs.
- Plan Bay Area doesn't go far enough to address employment needs. Contra Costa County is still largely providing housing without the jobs to match.
- The perception of affordable housing is a major barrier. Affordable housing residents are stigmatized.
- The planning process is a constraint because of public opposition to affordable housing.
- The Housing Element needs to address constraints on all types of housing, including market rate housing. It should analyze total development costs on the feasibility of market rate housing (e.g., land, construction, fees).

- Infrastructure costs to build housing in the Priority Development Areas (i.e., around BART stations) will be difficult without Redevelopment funds. The Housing Element should address this issue.
- The Housing Element should consider the traffic impact of 2,235 new housing units.
- Apartments in Walnut Creek don't provide enough parking.
- The City should look at increasing the inclusionary requirement and the housing impact fee; 10 percent is too low.
- The City must also consider inclusionary as a constraint on the development of market rate housing. The fee is relatively high.
- The unmet needs of homeless residents must be addressed (housing first approach). There needs to be more education about homelessness and affordable housing.
- The "Sandwich Generation" is getting squeezed. They are taking care of both senior parents and children. There is a need for more multigenerational housing (e.g. second units).
- City housing programs can't meet all the housing needs in the community, especially affordable rental housing needs.
- Sometimes the First Time Homebuyer Program is not enough to bridge the income gap.
- The requirement to pay prevailing wages to build affordable housing that uses Federal funding can be a barrier. It can add 25 to 30 percent more to the labor costs.

Opportunities and Potential Solutions for Providing Housing

- The City could provide incentives for working and living in the city.
- The Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program requires applicants to identify amenities. The City could identify amenities in its analysis of housing opportunity sites, especially transit.
- The City should promote flexible zoning of areas that allow multiple uses to encourage walkability, density, and affordability.
- The City's free trolley improves accessibility.
- The areas north and west of the BART station contain the best sites for affordable housing.

- Providing opportunities for people to live downtown would help revitalize the city. The City should conduct a study to identify the proper residential/business mix for a viable downtown.
- The City could sponsor educational sessions about affordable housing myths/facts to help overcome the stigma and to help people understand what housing programs are available.
- Increasing density is a tool to encourage affordable housing.
- Land value recapture is a tool for creating a new funding mechanism for affordable housing.
- The City can help support applications for funding by providing incentives to developers (e.g. fee waivers). These incentives make funding applications more attractive.
- A study found that a higher housing impact fee could be supported in the city.
- Better marketing of housing programs would improve the community's understanding of what programs are available.
- The City could facilitate more partnerships between non-profit and for-profit housing developers.

Community Workshop, December 11, 2013

A Community Workshop for the 2015-2023 Housing Element update for the City of Walnut Creek was held on December 11, 2013 in the Third Floor Conference Room in Walnut Creek's City Hall. The City's consultants, Mintier Harnish, provided background information on the Housing Element requirements and presented an overview of current housing needs and programs. After the presentation, community members engaged in a workshop activity to gather their ideas on issues and solutions for housing in Walnut Creek. Participants were asked to brainstorm housing issues and choose the top issues. Participants then brainstormed solutions to those top issues. Finally, participants brainstormed other solutions that didn't fit any issue already discussed. The results of this process are reproduced in their entirety below.

Attendees

Carmen Barrett	Mary Fenelon	Penny Brody
Kara Blankenship	Chris Percy	Tom Cromelia
Jan Warren	Tessie Percy	Sandhya Jha
Devon Corbett	Donna Witt	Kenneth Jones
Donna Colombo	Doug Witt	Phil Broemel
Keyvan Fotoohi	Natalie Mark	
John Frangulis	Janet O'Cleary	

Major Housing Issues

- Top Issues:
 - Not enough affordable housing for different age groups (seniors and young people)
 - Not enough diversity of housing types
 - Secondary effects of new housing: traffic, schools, and services
 - Concern over the impact of high-density development
 - Not enough affordable housing
 - The gap between people who make \$46,000 and those who make much less
 - Imbalance between retail jobs generated and workforce housing
 - Current policy does not require low income housing to be built (instead developers can pay fees)
- Other Issues:
 - Not enough owner-occupied housing (too many investment properties)
 - Contra Costa Center: vacant lot and retail space is not rented
 - Affordable housing is stigmatized
 - Is affordable housing built to "green" standards?
 - Availability of appropriately zoned land
 - Displacement of low-income residents
 - Housing for homeless people

- Addressing the needs of veterans

Potential Solutions to Housing Issues

- Issue: Not enough affordable housing for different age groups (seniors and young people)
 - Companies could invest in affordable housing or homebuyer assistance programs.
 - Find more land for Habitat for Humanity
 - Apply for more subsidies and grants
 - Zoning changes (second unit ordinance)
 - Require housing on top of any new retail or commercial building
 - Use Shadelands or vacant land for housing
- Issue: Not enough diversity of housing types
 - Change zoning ordinance
 - Find more land for Habitat for Humanity
- Issue: Secondary effects of new housing: traffic, schools, and services
 - Provide better public transportation
 - Provide better wayfinding signage
 - Don't sell public space or schools
 - Increase pedestrian rights
 - Move pedestrians and bikes
- Issue: Not enough affordable housing
 - Factor in "green" awareness into affordable housing
 - Walnut Creek should look for alternative jurisdictions to develop housing
 - Increase non-profit development
 - Require affordable units in new developments
 - Reduce low-income housing loss from redevelopment
- Issue: Concern over the impact of high-density development
 - Slow down development
 - Evaluate the traffic impacts on current city residents
 - Describe the development process to current residents and a broader audience
- Issue: The gap between people who make \$46,000 and those who make much less
 - Increase the minimum wage
 - Create incentives to both live and work at home (employer-based incentives)
 - Public-private partnerships
- Issue: Current policy does not require low income housing to be built (instead developers can pay fees)

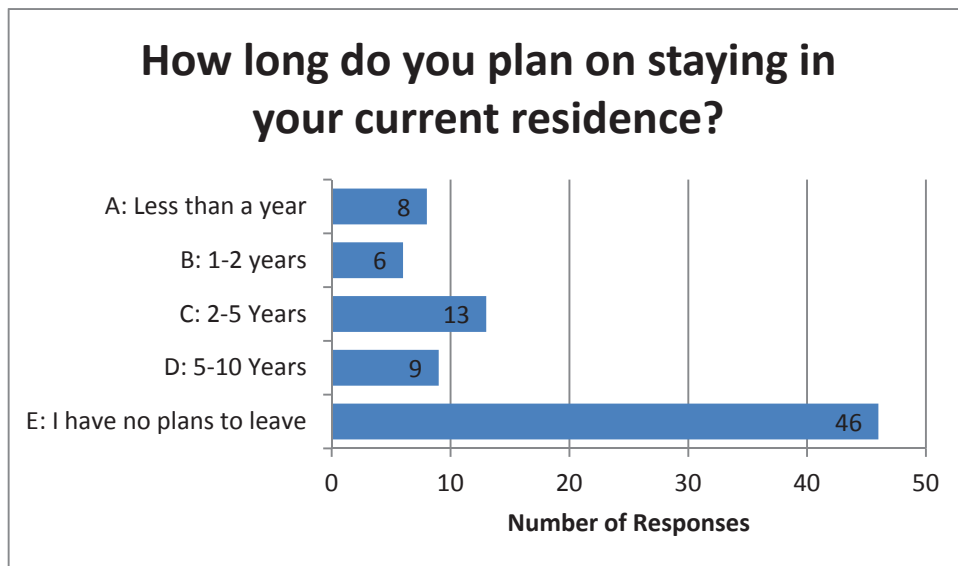
- Land value recapture (Community benefits from improving private land values)
- Seek a source to replace redevelopment funds
- Increase the percentages of moderate-, low-, very low-, and extremely low-income units
- Density bonuses (If the developer wants to go to five stories, they need to increase affordable housing)
- Streamlined development design review

Other Potential Solutions to Housing Issues

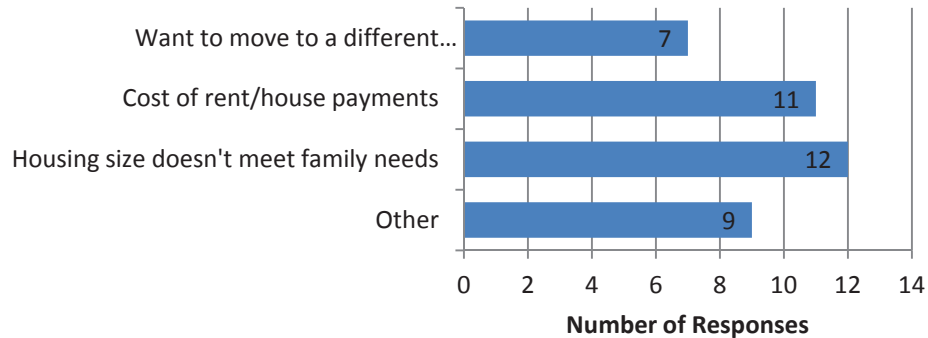
- Housing co-ops
- Smaller units
- Tiny homes
- Building policy for modular/manufactured housing

Open Town Hall Online Forum – Housing Needs Survey Results

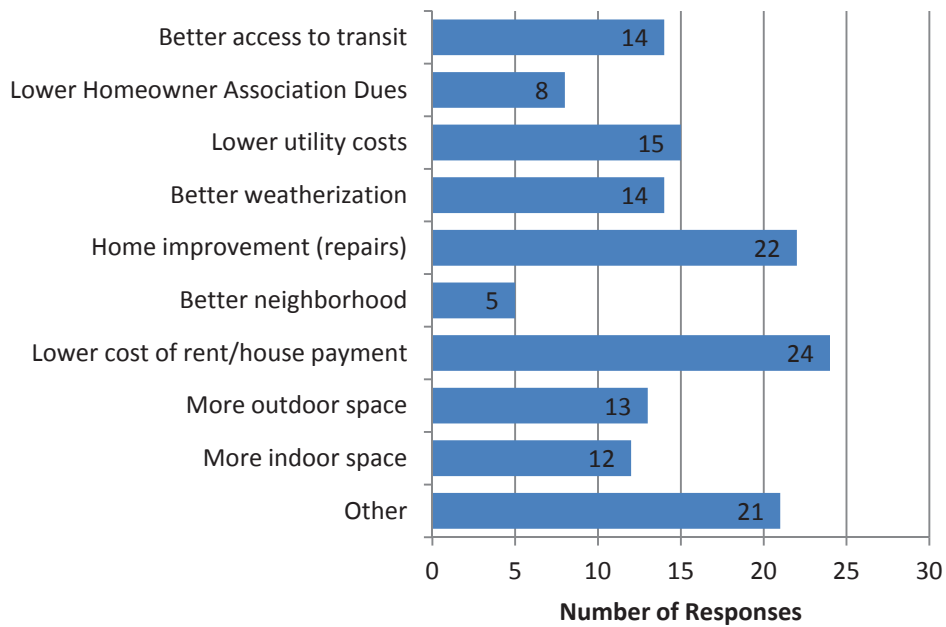
As part of the 2015-2023 Housing Element Update, the City conducted an online survey through Open Town Hall soliciting input from the public on Walnut Creek’s housing issues, current needs, and future needs. There were 161 responses to the survey, and 386 people viewed the survey.



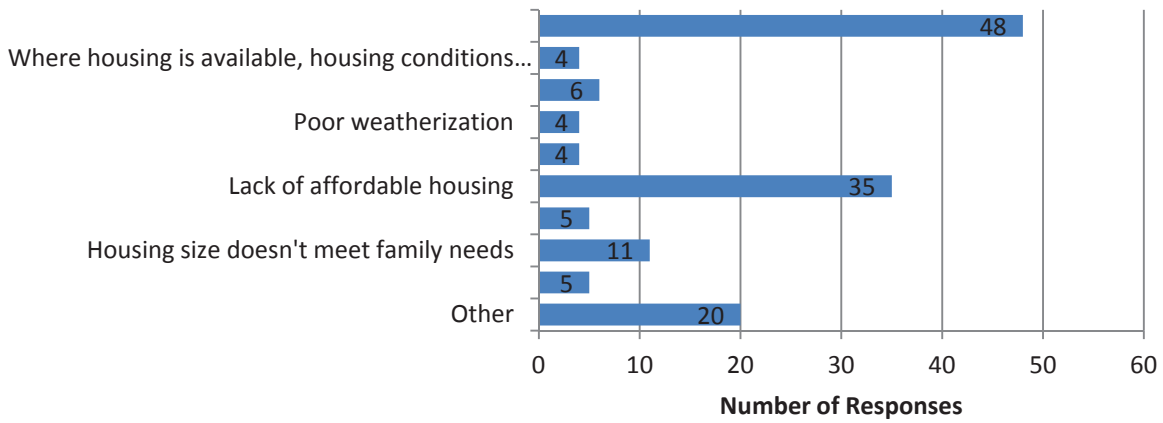
If you answered A-D, please identify your reason for planning to leave:



Please identify what would most improve your current housing situation (can choose more than one):



The most significant housing problem in Walnut Creek is (can choose more than one):



Which of the following best describes your household?

