



Our Community: Housing and Our Future

June 12, 2018

Project Overview and Summary of Community Input to Date

Project Background

Housing is a high priority issue for the City of Redwood City. The City applied and was selected as one of four pilot cities to receive a community engagement grant from [Home for All](#) last fall. In an effort to address the issue of housing in San Mateo County, Home for All focuses on promoting the preservation and production of all types of housing through sharing information, promoting innovation and convening the community. Redwood City's grant has included a wide range technical support, coaching and facilitation assistance provided by Home for All and consultant Common Knowledge Plus.

Community Partnerships

With the goal of broadening awareness of and participation in a series of City housing decisions, the City has been implementing a multi-pronged effort of community education, dialogues, pop-ups and survey. Redwood City has partnered with Redwood City 2020, the Redwood City Library Foundation and a variety of organizations to engage over 700 people to date. A March meeting convened twenty Latino leaders that have been helpful in improving reach to the City's significant Latino population. Both groups have provided significant support as co-promoters and event co-hosts. The City's efforts have focused on listening and developing shared understanding as a prelude to asking for feedback on general policy directions.

Outreach & Engagement Efforts

Community Conversation Series

Since April, the City has held three community conversations.

- The first conversation, held on April 7, brought together roughly 40 Spanish-speaking community members at Casa Círculo Cultural. Participants were joined by City staff and members of the Redwood City Council, who attended as listeners. Interpretation and headsets were provided for English speakers.
- The second conversation, held on April 11, brought approximately 100 attendees to the main library for an evening of dialogue in Spanish and English. The conversation featured a mix of residents, homeowners, tenants, building owners, developers and nonprofit leaders talking side by side. About half of the attendees were new to the issue of housing. Several members of the Redwood City Council, Housing and Human Concerns Committee and Planning Commission attended as listeners.
- The City's most recent conversation, held on May 22 at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, was co-hosted by the Housing and Human Concerns Committee (HHCC). Nearly 80 community members came together to discuss the issue of housing and to learn more about actions the City is taking. Again, Council members and HHCC members attended as listeners.

Pop-Up Engagements in the Community

The City has also engaged residents through a series of seven pop-ups at locations throughout the city:

- Pop-up locations have included the Redwood City Farmers Market, the Redwood City Main Library and the Redwood Shores Library, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church and the Redwood City Boys and Girls Club Forest High Center.
- During each pop-up, community members were asked
 1. What do you appreciate about Redwood City?
 2. How do current housing conditions affect you and the people you know?
 3. What thoughts do you have about these community priorities?
 - Helping people be able to stay in their homes
 - Finding ways to make existing housing more affordable
 - Building new affordable homes

Housing Survey

The city has also launched a housing survey, which will be open until June 15. The survey seeks to learn more about how community members are impacted by housing and to hear their suggestions for how the city should spend its affordable housing funds. To continue building on bilingual engagement to date, a Spanish-language version of the survey has also been created. To access each survey visit:

- English survey: <http://www.redwoodcity.org/housingsurvey>
- Spanish survey: <http://www.redwoodcity.org/encuestadevivienda>

Housing Communications and Resources

The City's engagement efforts have also been supported through coordinated communications and an increased online presence:

- A series of blog posts were added providing information about the community conversation series and actions underway (or recently approved) to help address community housing needs.
- Flyers and handouts were created to provide relevant background information and to highlight local organizations providing short-term housing assistance.
- All of the resources for this initiative are available at the [“Our Community: Housing and Our Future” project webpage](#) at the City's website. In addition to directing visitors to the housing survey and blog posts, it also features copies of flyers, handouts, presentations and meeting reports from the community conversations.

Learning to Date

All participants are affected by the rising cost of housing. Whether renter or owner, longtime resident or newcomer, this issue is creating stresses for families, employers, organizations, and quality of life in the community overall.

The community conversations about housing were well received by participants. Attendees gave high marks for “useful information” and the meeting format that provided participants with the opportunity to talk with other members of the community and to hear from those that they might not otherwise engage with. Community members also appreciated the City's interest in engaging the community and how much is being done to address the issue of housing. Participants reported increased understanding that housing is a complex issue requiring multiple actions by multiple partners

Major Themes

Over the course of the community conversations several themes emerged:

1. Increase housing security; need for more short-term support while pursuing mid- and long-term solutions
2. More housing options for families, seniors, singles, homeless and those serving the community (such as teachers, police, fire fighters, nurses)

3. Enhance social and economic diversity; increase community connections and cooperative approaches
4. Engage large employers and preserve small businesses; increase possibility of wage increases for low income earners
5. Coordinated planning, including transportation

Solutions with Community Interest

Community members expressed significant interest in these broad solution areas:

- Renter protections, safety of housing, renter/landlord relations and other immediate assistance
- Increased diversity of supply, infill, second units
- Purchasing currently affordable housing and converting to deed restricted
- Building new housing if fees can be well leveraged
- Working with large employers with campuses

Pop-Up Findings

Overall, input from the pop-up sessions was consistent with the community conversations. Residents agreed that the dramatic increase in housing costs affects everyone. They also felt that the City should address immediate needs while preserving existing stock and encouraging the building of new homes. Young people reached through pop-ups expressed high levels of concern about housing. Many young people said they are directly impacted by displacement and/or anxious that they won't be able to stay in Redwood City. Pop-up participants would also like to see:

- Help for people across median income, low and extremely low income; help for people with disabilities
- Integrated transportation, e.g., shuttles and rush-hour solutions

Indicated Actions & Next Steps

Proposed Allocation of Affordable Housing Funds

Although survey responses continue to come in, based on feedback to date, community members would like to see funds directed toward:

- Acquisition of existing multifamily housing for conversion to affordable
- Buying land for development of new affordable housing, especially near transit
- Funding construction of new affordable housing
- Providing funds to nonprofits to purchase, refinance or rehabilitate affordable housing

Increase Reach of Housing Information

To continue reaching the community about housing, staff are considering:

- A Housing Resource Guide: Print and Online in English and Spanish
- Blog series
- Video series
- Electronic newsletter focused on housing

Upcoming Meetings

Discussion of how best to allocate affordable housing fees will go to the HHCC on June 12 and to the Council on June 25.