

Jessica Lynch

From: Stephen M Wheeler <smwheeler@ucdavis.edu>
Sent: Thursday, July 1, 2021 4:21 PM
To: Jessica Lynch; Barbara Archer
Cc: Darryl Rutherford ;; Catherine Brinkley
Subject: Comments on Draft Housing Element

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Dear Hard-Working City Staff and Council:

I know there has already been lots of debate and discussion over the Draft Housing Element. Unfortunately I haven't had time this spring to participate. Some controversies (over process, whether certain projects should be included in RHNA counts, reasonable density assumptions for future projects, etc.) are highly technical, and I won't address them here. Instead, I'd like to make a few general comments:

1. The Draft Housing Element, while lengthy, well-researched, and written in a highly professional manner, does not communicate the urgency of the housing crisis or make clear specific strategies to deal with it. It would be good to add an Executive Summary or otherwise itemize such strategies up front.
2. Thinking-outside-the-box is needed to deal with Davis' housing problems. Although groups such as Sustainable Growth Yolo have been criticized for representing developer interests, I think many of that group's recommendations do in fact represent the wishes of many residents who want more sweeping and creative policy change.
3. Reducing or eliminating parking requirements is one obvious area for change, based on national experience.
4. Revising R-1 or PD zoning to explicitly allow 3-4 units on formerly single-family lots is a step also being taken by other jurisdictions nationally and seems particularly appropriate for Davis, given that its existing land is largely built out with single-family homes.
5. Allowing as-of-right approval of projects seems highly reasonable, and helps reduce what many scholars see as one of the main causes of current housing problems (NIMBYism).
6. The comments others have been made about rezoning existing shopping centers to mixed-use also make great sense.
7. The Draft Housing Element says relatively little about recent changes in the city's inclusionary housing requirement. This is a significant omission. Strengthening inclusionary requirements should be a central strategy to increase affordable units.
8. Any future expansions to the city under Measure R could potentially have a high percentage of affordable units, since owners of that land would be receiving a financial windfall through annexation and rezoning. Adopting policy requiring, say, 30-40% affordable for those projects would be a relatively easy way to increase the pipeline of affordable units in the future.
9. The Housing Element should think ambitiously about converting underused areas of the city, such as the East 5th corridor between L and Poleline, to mixed uses emphasizing housing. Several thousand units could be accommodated in that one area alone. The city would need to mobilize political resources to, for example, encourage PG&E to relocate its corporation yard. But entrepreneurial jurisdictions can do such things.

Thanks much for your attention. I'd appreciate it if you could forward these comments to council and commissions as appropriate.

Best wishes – Steve

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Books

Reimagining Sustainable Cities: Strategies for Designing Greener, Healthier, More Equitable Communities (w/ Christina Rosan; forthcoming from UC Press 2021)

The Sustainable Urban Development Reader (Co-edited w/ Timothy Beatley; Third Edition from Routledge 2014)

Planning for Sustainability: Creating Livable, Equitable, and Ecological Communities (Second Edition from Routledge, 2013)

Climate Change and Social Ecology: A New Perspective on the Climate Challenge (Routledge 2012)