

City of Torrance

Housing Element Update

HOUSING ELEMENT WORKSHOP #2

Community Workshop

July 28, 2021

MEETING SUMMARY

The City of Torrance held its second community workshop regarding the update of the 6th Cycle Housing Element (2021-2029). Due to technical difficulties, the workshop started nearly 30 minutes late. Twenty-one members of the public participated via Zoom. Staff from the Community Development Department introduced the workshop and answered questions. A PowerPoint presentation was provided by members of the consultant teams who are preparing the Housing Element and the Housing Corridor Study; they also answered questions. The PowerPoint presentation provided at the workshop can be viewed at <https://www.torranceca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/67530/637631557256430000>. Below is a summary of the discussion, questions, and input from the workshop. There were no formal minutes taken.

Public Comment from Meeting Participants:

Early in the presentation a participant asked if the presenter was using her own words or the State's Housing Element and legislation language. The presenter replied she was summarizing State Housing Element guidance.

Participant #1: Comment – Participant has spent the better part of three years fighting the State's efforts to take away local control, including zoning control from local governments. Expressed concern over proposed State changes to zoning that would affect single-family neighborhoods and urged the other participants to contact their legislators to tell them to vote no on this proposed legislation. Personal preference is to have the City continue to fight the RHNA numbers. Concerns include possible densification of existing neighborhoods with no required upgrades to infrastructure. Also expressed disagreement with relaxing parking requirements and used an example of a senior development in the City where visitors have considerable difficulty finding parking. Expressed concern about the proposed Butcher Solano project, and said it is proposed on the site of a toxic waste dump.

City staff responded that one of the goals of this effort is to try to preserve the City's single-family neighborhoods and follow what the City understands to be resident's desires to retain the character of the City of Torrance. That is why the focus is on corridors and underutilized parcels. Staff also explained that the City has also been actively following State housing legislation and responding when concerns arise about proposed legislation.

Participant #1: Questions

- Q. How do the Border Avenue renderings compliment Old Torrance?
 - A. The Housing Corridor Study is in the initial phases and the renderings provided this evening are just examples of possible building types and styles. There will be more opportunity for community input as the project progresses.
- Q. Where are the sites specifically in the Riviera neighborhood?
 - A. The City will post **the list of the draft Sites Inventory and Map on the City's website** so that all interested parties can view them. The power point presentation and meeting summary will be posted as well. The presenter explained that some of the sites in the Riviera area are religious institution properties and provided additional detail regarding new State legislation that allows religious facilities to build affordable housing on 50% of their parking lots. Further clarification was provided that this is not an effort to get rid of religious institutions, rather responding to the fact that some religious institutions find that they have excess parking and are expressing interest in looking further into this possibility.

Participant #2: Comment – South Torrance homeowner – Noted that he had submitted written comments. Stated that this Housing Element work will put a dent in the housing crisis in the City. Provided statistics about how homelessness in the City has grown by nine times over the past 10 years, increasing from approximately 30 persons to over 300, and 45% of renters in the City experience a cost burden which means they must pay over 30% of their income for housing.

Participant #2: Questions

- Q. How are you estimating development potential in terms of realistic capacity, so we actually see growth in our housing stock?
 - A. Staff responded that we are talking to property owners and developers, and looking at land value and vacancies, trying to be as accurate as possible.
- Q. How are the sites being distributed and how are you ensuring equal distribution?
 - A. While the corridors identified for the Corridor Study are in the more centralized part of the City, corridors are located in all Council districts in the City except for one. For the current draft Sites Inventory, the sites are pretty well distributed in all locations in the City.

Participant #3: Comment – Student – Stated appreciation for efforts to make Torrance more walkable. Referred to climate crisis as well as housing crisis, so likes the idea of locating new residential development on or near transit to support fewer cars. Favors mixed-use developments spread equitably throughout the City, which also encourages people to shop locally. Encourages revitalization of the City and neighborhoods by getting rid of large parking lots of which the City has too many.

Participant #4 – Questions

- Q. For the parcels the City has identified as needing changed from being zoned Light Industrial to Residential (referring to the Housing Corridor Study), how does that get accomplished? Does the City propose to use eminent domain or condemnation?
 - A. City staff responded that the City is using a public process to study the issues and will continue to involve the property owners as the process moves forward. The City

will initiate the required zone changes if the Council decides to do so. The City would create the standards that would streamline development as a part of the rezoning process. There are no plans to use eminent domain or condemnation.

- Q. How do we express how we feel about the proposed changes?
 - A. Staff encouraged the participant to write letters and continue to attend the workshops for both the Housing Element update and the Housing Corridor Study. The City will post a poll online to replace the polling questions that were to be used before the City experienced technical difficulties with the workshop this evening. Also, please **continue to monitor the City's Housing Element website** and the Housing Corridor Study website. Provide written comments to cddinfo@Torrance.gov.

Participant #5 – Comment - Thanked the City and consultants for the presentation. Urged City staff and team to reach out to affected homeowners. Stated that the participant is a leader of a religious institution.

Participant #5 Question

- Q. Asked for additional information about the ability of religious institutions to build housing on their parking lots; unfamiliar with this legislation?
 - A. Presenter explained that the legislation is AB 1851. It requires a City to allow religious institutions to build affordable housing on their existing parking lot without requiring them to replace any lost parking, as an incentive. Some cities are placing what is often referred to as a “**Congregational Overlay**” on these properties to encourage and incentivize this type of development and mentioned Pasadena as a recent example. In response to a follow-up question by another participant, the presenter clarified that parking can be reduced up to 50% for religious institutions if used for affordable housing, without have to replace the parking; the legislation does not require that institutions be allowed to reduce parking to zero.

Miscellaneous Participant Questions and Staff/Consultant Responses:

- Q. Will congregational housing units be paying property taxes?
 - A. **City staff will research the answer to that question and respond either online or at a future Housing Element workshop.**