

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

Board of Supervisors to Study Affordable Housing Options *Recommendations include tiny houses, rent stabilization*

Prompted by the current affordable housing crisis in the community, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors is convening a March 17 study session on affordable options aimed at keeping current occupants in their homes and adding to the available stock.

County staff will recommend several possibilities for the Board's consideration including establishing a countywide tenant's rights education and assistance program, exploring potential rent stabilization, promoting second units, amending zoning regulations and developing pre-approved plans for tiny houses.

San Mateo County has already contributed to the development of 1,554 affordable housing units, grants developers density bonuses for affordable units and, in 2013, created an Affordable Housing Fund that has awarded \$18 million to date. The upcoming study session is an opportunity to ask what else the County can do to make housing affordable for all community members.

"San Mateo County is committed to looking at ways to create housing through making better use of existing facilities, by supporting organizations and agencies that are building housing and to find opportunities for shared housing," said Third District Supervisor Don Horsley who, along with District Four Supervisor Warren Slocum, is co-sponsoring the study session.

In San Mateo County:

- Rent for a two-bedroom apartment has increased 51 percent over the past four years;
- Average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is now \$2,648, or nearly \$32,000 annually;
- HIP Housing reports having 10 individuals interested in shared housing for each one offer.

Slocum, calling the County's housing shortage "at a crisis point," said there is no magic solution but progress is possible.

“We must look at all of the options working elsewhere, do whatever we can by working collaboratively with our partners to increase the number of available affordable units, consider policies that will reinforce our safety net and be open to new ideas that have not been tried,” Slocum said.

In advance of the study session, County staff is asking the public and stakeholders to review its white paper detailing steps already taken and recommending ways to prevent displacement and promote affordable development in San Mateo County. The document, written in response to a Board request last October, is available at <https://housing.smcgov.org/affordable-housing-white-paper>.

Horsley is encouraging the public to read the white paper and participate in the discussion about housing.

“Maybe the public will have some good ideas that we haven’t thought of yet,” Horsley said.

While some proposed actions could be implemented soon, others will require more research, input or even a California Supreme Court ruling. Any policies ultimately adopted will only apply to the county’s unincorporated areas although they could act as a template for cities to emulate.

The Board of Supervisors’ study session is 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 17 in Board Chambers, 400 County Center, Redwood City.