

This is a DRAFT report. The full report will be released at a later date. The highlighted sections of this report indicate where additional material will be added. The final report will also include an appendix with items including the full survey results, the slideshow, the list of groups included in outreach, and the full poll questions.

Housing Element Report
Cupertino Community Meeting for Inclusive Housing
May 23rd, 2022, 6:30-8 pm, hybrid (Zoom and in person)
West Valley Community Services, City of Cupertino, and EMC Planning Group

Overview

On Monday, May 23rd, 2022, West Valley Community Services (WVCS) partnered with the City of Cupertino and EMC Planning Group to hold a Community Meeting for Inclusive Housing. WVCS is a nonprofit organization that has been providing safety net services to low-income and homeless individuals and families in the west valley region of Santa Clara County, including Cupertino, for more than 48 years. Because of WVCS' connection to the underserved, underrepresented, and most in-need communities of Cupertino, the organization hosted this meeting to amplify the perspectives of those facing barriers, bring community members together, and facilitate dialogue between individuals with different levels of privilege in Cupertino, as well as those who wish to live in the city but are unable to due to the high housing costs.

The Community Meeting for Inclusive Housing featured two breakout sessions during which community members joined one another for dialogue, a panel of four WVCS clients who shared their experiences with barriers and housing, and a brief presentation on the Housing Element and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). The panelists had lived experience in areas including homelessness, affordable housing, neurodivergence, disabilities, veteran status, and discrimination.

Agenda

The agenda for the evening was as follows:

6:30-6:35 pm - Welcome

6:35-6:50 pm - Presentation on the Housing Element and AFFH

6:50-7:00 pm - Breakout Rooms #1

7:00-7:25 pm - Moderated Panel

7:25-7:40 pm - Panelist Questions From Audience

7:40-7:58 pm - Breakout Rooms #2, Exit Survey

7:58-8:00 pm - How to Stay Involved, Thank You, Closing Remarks & Goodnight

Panelists

The meeting featured four panelists, all WVCS clients. They represented a variety of experiences, and openly shared both these experiences and the connections between them and housing. Each panelist was compensated \$200.00 for their time and vulnerability.

Mair Dundon - Neurodivergence, affordable housing

Joshua Pringle - Homelessness, affordable housing, Section 8 voucher

Kim Hing - Disabilities, Section 8 voucher

Yavante' Nazareth Rose - Veteran status, homelessness, Section 8 voucher, affordable housing

All - Discrimination, poverty

Event Outreach

Extensive and comprehensive outreach was done in preparation for this event, with the goal of attracting as many community members as possible to ensure the meeting was inclusive, effective, and diverse.

Flyers were displayed throughout the city, including in Cupertino City Hall, the Cupertino Library, the Cupertino Sports Center, Quinlan Community Center, and local coffee shops. An email in anticipation of the event was sent to 21 local commissions and community groups and 14 clubs and groups representing a variety of identities and interests from De Anza College, a community college in the City of Cupertino.

As the event approached, outreach was amplified through additional emails to the city's email list of over 1,600 individuals, those subscribed to the Housing Element newsletter, and the community groups referred to above. In total, 111 individuals registered for the event.

Attendees

Because the event was hybrid, it took place in two locations: On Zoom and in person at Cupertino Community Hall. On Zoom, 64 individuals attended the meeting. In person, there were about 20 attendees in total.

Event Content

Opening Poll

The event was facilitated by Josh Selo, the Executive Director of West Valley Community Services.

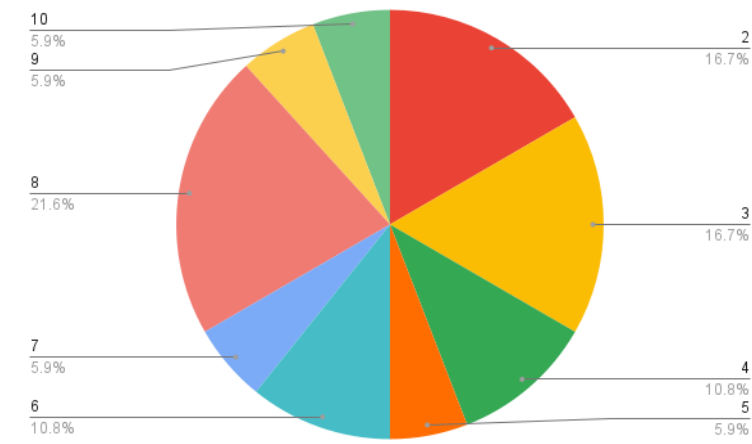
Upon opening the meeting, Josh led a three-question poll for participants to answer. In person attendees answered the questions on paper. The three questions were:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how strong of a sense do you think you have of other people's experiences related to housing?
2. Have you ever experienced housing-related challenges, such as housing insecurity, trouble paying rent, eviction, or homelessness?
3. How much do you know about Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)?

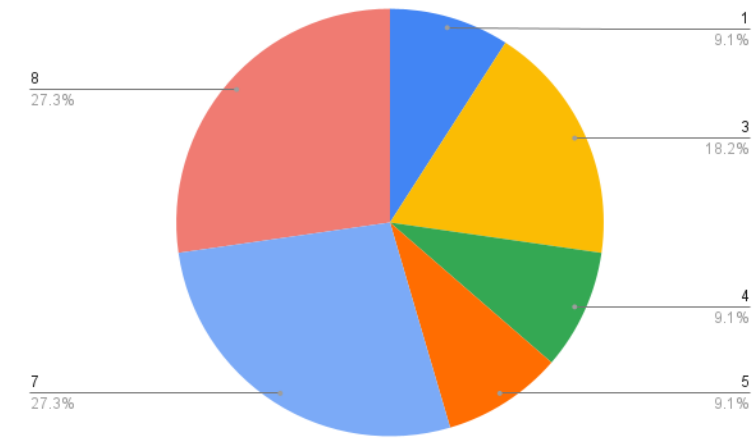
The responses were as follows:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how strong of a sense do you think you have of other people's experiences related to housing?

Zoom

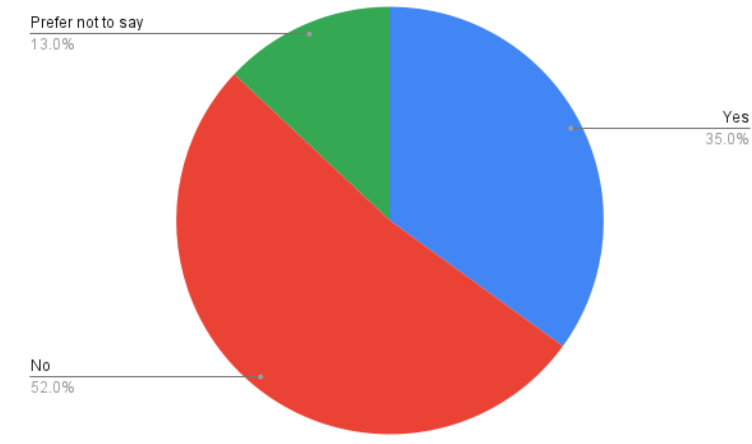


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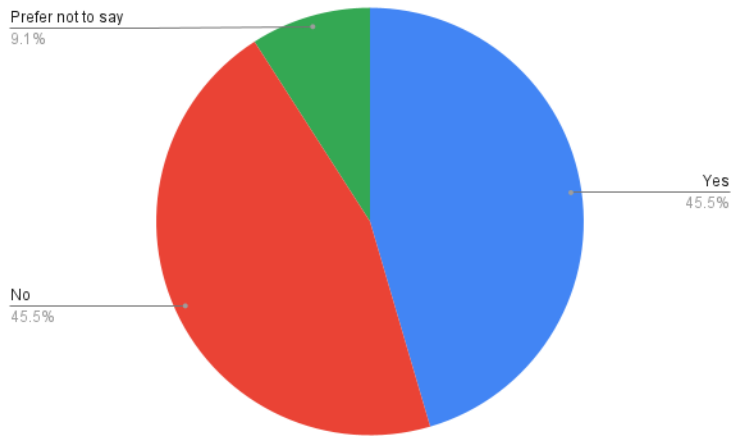


2. Have you ever experienced housing-related challenges, such as housing insecurity, trouble paying rent, eviction, or homelessness?

Zoom

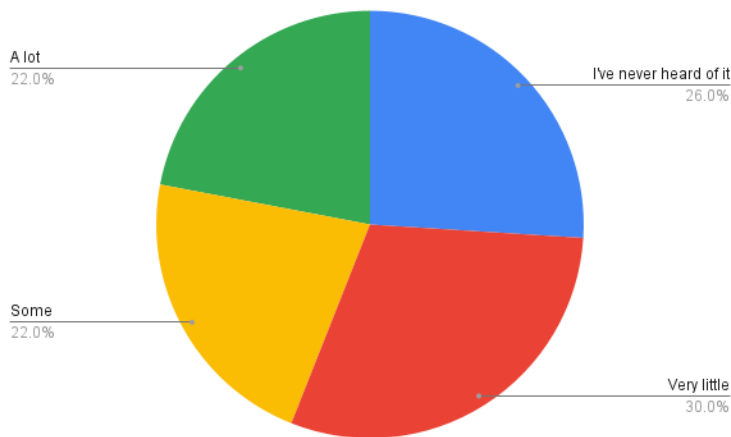


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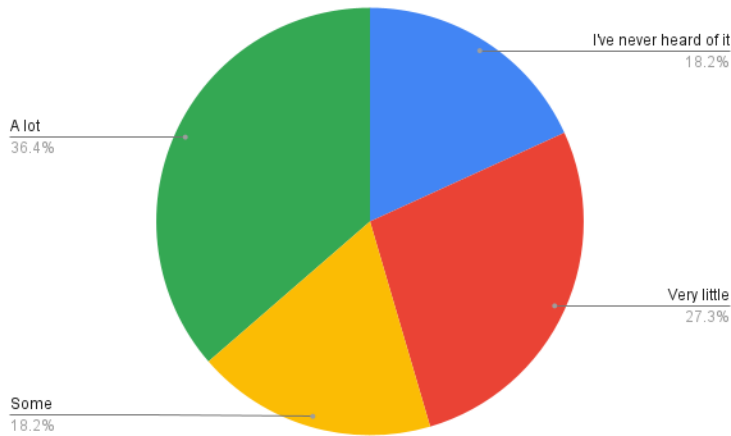


3. How much do you know about Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)?

Zoom



In Person



Presentation

After the poll was complete, Ande Flower and lea robinson from the EMC Planning Group team gave a brief presentation on the Housing Element and AFFH. The goal of this presentation was to ensure that everyone in attendance had the fundamental understanding necessary to fully participate in the meeting and to dive deeper into AFFH than in previous community meetings.

Breakout Session 1

Following the presentation, attendees entered breakout sessions. On Zoom, these took the form of breakout rooms, and in person, the form of breakout tables. Each breakout group had one moderator who took notes, facilitated the conversation, and ensured everyone had the equal chance to speak.

Attendees were asked to answer three questions in their breakout groups:

1. Your name and what brings you here tonight?
2. What do you think inclusive housing looks like in Cupertino? Who are some people that need to be included?
3. What questions do you want to ask the panelists?

Panel

When attendees returned from the breakout session, the panel began. The panelists first responded to eleven questions that had been pre-written and sent to the panelists ahead of time:

1. **ALL:** Tell us a little about yourself, one or two things you would like the participants to know about you, and why you agreed to take part in tonight's panel.
2. **ALL:** What is one thing you want tonight's attendees to know about you going into this panel?
3. **ALL:** What are some stereotypes you think people have about poverty, affordable housing, and homelessness?
4. **Mair:** You describe yourself as "neurodivergent," which is a term not everyone is familiar with. Can you tell us what it means to be neurodivergent, and how this relates to the term "disabilities"?
5. **Kim:** Kim, is there anything you would add from your own experience?
6. **Joshua:** What challenges did you face transitioning from being unhoused to finding affordable housing?
7. **Mair and Kim:** Now Mair and Kim, I want to ask you both, as people living with disabilities, are there any unique challenges you have faced when it comes to housing?
8. **Yavante:** Can you talk about your experience as a veteran and how it relates to housing? What was it like working to get and using a HUD-VASH voucher?
9. **ANYONE:** Can you share any experiences of housing discrimination you have faced in Cupertino? What does housing discrimination in our community look like, and how does this impact people across diverse identities, races, and abilities?
10. **ALL:** Is there one person, organization, program, or moment that was pivotal for you in your search for stable, affordable housing?
11. **ALL:** What is one thing you want tonight's attendees to take away from this panel?

Following the pre-written questions, attendees had the opportunity to ask the panelists questions. These were submitted through the chat for Zoom attendees and by paper for in person attendees. Any questions

asked by the audience that were not answered during the panel were responded to following the meeting and sent to attendees and on a document. The questions asked by the audience that were answered during the panel are:

1. After getting through your path to becoming housed, do you still feel today like your housing security is threatened, and in what ways? (Zoom) Related Que-Greatest Housing challenge you have faced and what do you think would have been helpful or supportive? (Zoom)
2. What price range is considered affordable housing in the bay area? It's hard to find any housing to purchase under \$500K in Silicon Valley (Zoom)
3. How do you define affordable housing? (this is from our breakout room but I want to make sure it gets asked) Does anyone know how much minimum wage would have to be in Cupertino in order to afford the average one bedroom apartment? (Zoom)
4. In person: How much of your current income do you spend on housing and what will define affordable housing for you? (in person)
5. Where do you think is a good place for homes relative to other parts of the community? For low income people? For neurodivergent/ disabled people? (In person)
6. As Cupertino looks to "affirmatively further fair housing" do you think it should take into account who cannot afford to live here? Or should it only focus on who already gets to live here? (In person)
7. The supply of affordable housing is already low since there is not enough funding to subsidize it. Now, some college students wish to have access to affordable housing too, since they chose to attend De Anza college rather than their own local college. The students are extremely low income too since they attend classes and study many hours a day. What do you think about that? (Zoom)
8. Could we ask the Governor to spend the billions of dollars in surplus in affordable housing? Otherwise, how do we get affordable housing? (Zoom)
9. What are some concrete examples of policies/actions that do affirmatively further Fair Housing, particularly in "High Opportunity" areas like Cupertino? (Zoom)
10. How did you maintain hope as you worked through the problem? (In person)
11. What has been the greatest housing challenge you have faced? (Zoom)
12. As Cupertino looks to "affirmatively further fair housing" do you think it should take into account who cannot afford to live here? Or should it only focus on who already gets to live here? (In person)
13. What is the amount of people per available homes? What is the breakdown of possible homes? (In person)
14. Where do you think is a good place for homes relative to other parts of the community? For low income people? For neurodivergent/ disabled people? (In person)
15. How much of your current income do you spend on housing and what will define affordable housing for you? (In person)

Each panelist participated fully, and all gave powerful, insightful, and enlightening responses. Some notable words from the panelists are below, though the full recording is the best way to understand the power of the panel.

QUOTES FROM PANELISTS

Breakout Session 2

When the panel concluded, attendees were sent into a second breakout session, responding to a new set of questions prompting them to reflect on the panel and what they learned. Before entering the breakout room, attendees were led in a brief exercise to reflect on the panel and ponder the questions. Moderators took notes in the breakout sessions to capture community feedback while maintaining privacy and anonymity. The questions for the second breakout session were as follows:

1. What impact did hearing from the panelists have on your thoughts around housing, the Housing Element, and representation?

2. What barriers and unmet needs did you hear from the panelists? How did this make you feel? Some of the more outstanding notes gathered by moderators are below:

NOTES FROM MODERATORS

Additionally, participants were asked to complete an exit survey during their breakout session. This is discussed further below.

Ending Poll

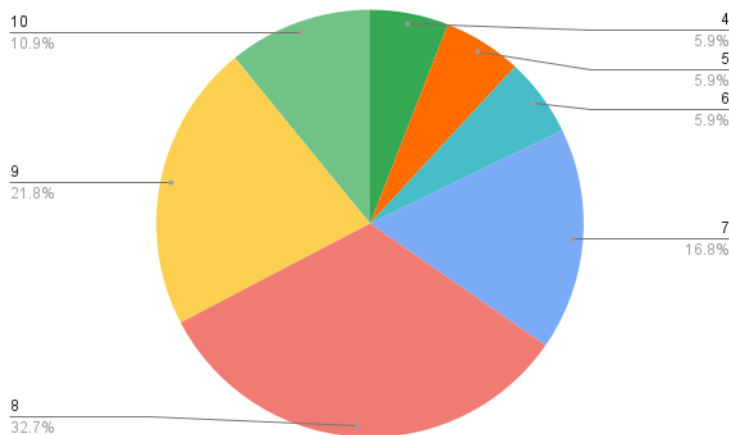
Before leaving the meeting, attendees were issued an ending poll. During this poll, they responded to three questions:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how strong of a sense do you think you have of other people's experiences related to housing?
2. How much do you know about Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)?
3. What is one thing you will do to get involved with the Cupertino Housing Element?

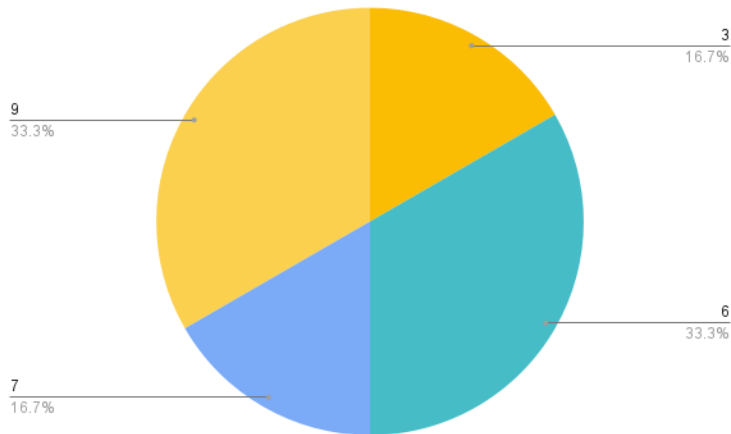
The responses were as follows:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how strong of a sense do you think you have of other people's experiences related to housing?

Zoom

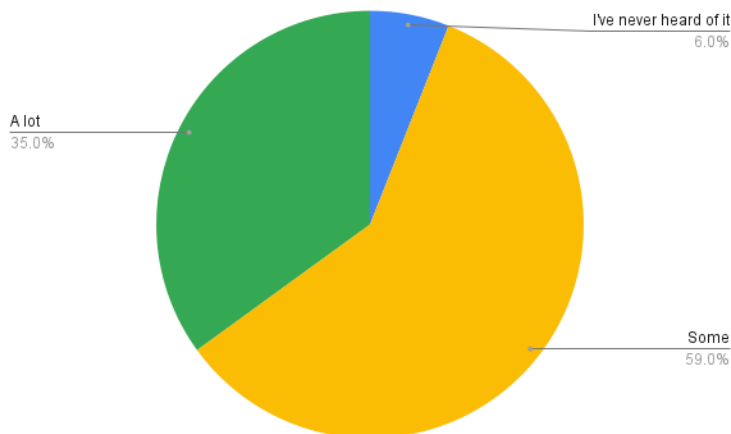


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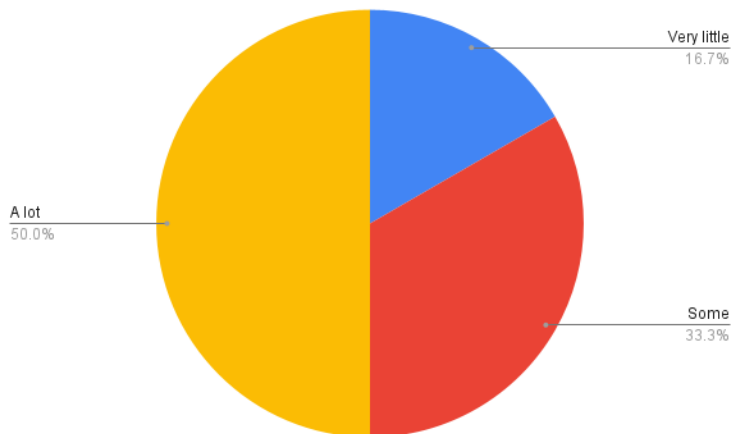


2. How much do you know about Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)?

Zoom



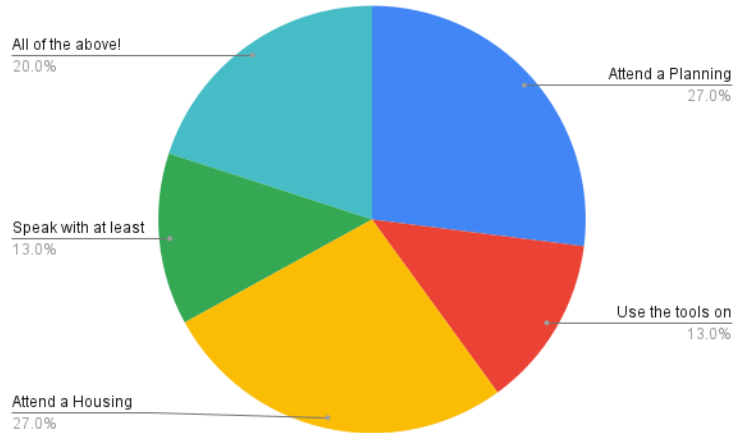
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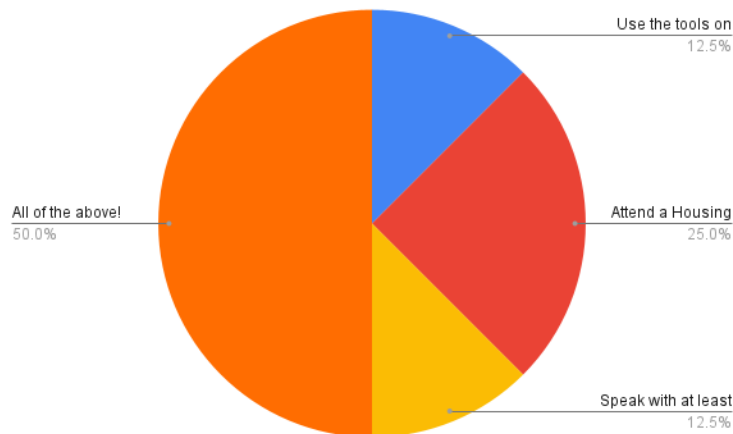
3. What is one thing you will do to get involved with the Cupertino Housing Element? (*Attend a Planning Commission or City Council meeting; Use the tools on the Housing Element website;*

Attend a Housing Element community meeting; Speak with at least three friends/neighbors about the Housing Element; Speak about the Housing Element at a public meeting; All of the above!)

Zoom



In Person



Conclusion

Following the ending poll, attendees were encouraged to stay involved and were informed about upcoming Planning Commission meetings and tools on the Housing Element website. They were wished a good night, and the event came to an end.

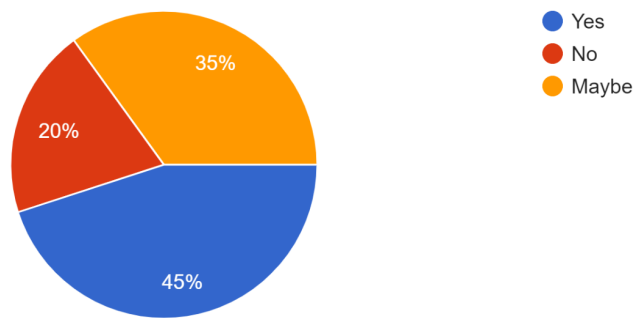
Feedback

Exit Survey Results

During their second breakout session, attendees were allotted time to complete an exit survey. The goal of this survey was to better understand and capture what they learned from the event, how they felt following the panel and community dialogue, and what has shifted in their views toward housing and our less privileged community members. Additionally, participants were asked for ideas and strategies that they believe could be deployed to make Cupertino more inclusive, providing insight that can be turned into policies. Some of the results from this survey are summarized below:

Did this experience bring about surprising feelings for you?

20 responses

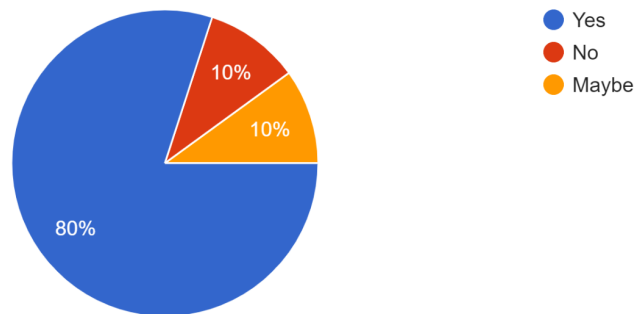


Can you share what feelings you've had during this meeting (optional)? (*Some responses below*)

- Empathy for the homeless people who shared their stories.
- I've been very quiet about local civics in the last two years, and this is definitely activating me again - I want to build an equitable and accessible community.
- I was not familiar with the experiences of the unhoused and low income seeking housing in Cupertino. While I felt that my housing situation was unideal growing up, I didn't think about the more dire situations others can face.
- I was surprised how the panelists stories haven't really been part of the housing conversations I'm part of. We definitely need to make it easier for people of all backgrounds to share their stories, particularly BMR residents, low income residents, renters, disabled people.

Did you learn new information or learn about housing from a new perspective?

20 responses

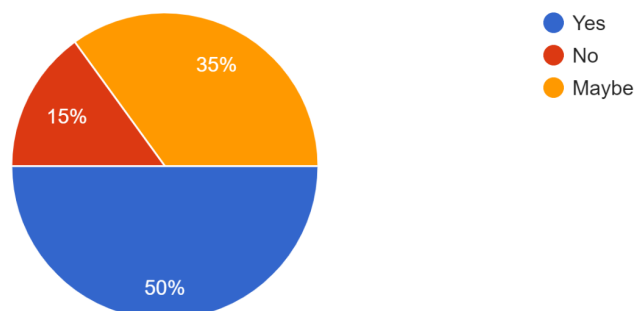


Can you share what new information or perspective you've gained during this meeting (optional)? *(Some responses below)*

- Learning about AFFH, and some of the work that WVCS does.
- the impact of a low credit score on the ability to secure housing despite having the income to pay the rent; also I hadn't considered that being neuro-divergent could impact the ability to secure housing
- Great perspectives about different aspects that I hadn't considered - credit rating, assumptions and ways to be involved
- The difficulty for unsheltered people to do basic tasks: use computer, transportation, find a safe place. From panelist and long-time West SC Valley resident Kim: Anger that development projects provide so few BMR units, or pay in-lieu fees and develop no BMR units, or provide smaller units with sub-standard materials for BMR units.
- I was interested that the panelists focused on the processes that surround affordable housing almost as much as the basic lack of affordable housing. That seems like something that could be improved.

Has something shifted or changed for you in your understanding of local impacts of the housing crisis?

20 responses



Can you share details about how this experience has changed your understanding of local impacts of the current housing crisis (optional)?

- The shortage trickles down into a thousand tiny miseries.

- I was surprised at how many folks are here and fired up about accessible housing in a city like Cupertino. I had honestly felt like Cupertino is a lost cause in ever becoming an accessible city, and it's good to see there's a spirit to change things.
- a reminder that we rely on people in our community to do low income jobs, they have just as much right to live here as those who have sufficient income
- Yes, just in the sense that the needs were dire, but the panelists drove home the point that the pains of the housing crisis are not shared equitably, and the difficulties of finding housing are regressive, in that they disproportionally impact those in lower incomes, or disadvantaged backgrounds
- We need to center the experiences and needs of those most impacted by the housing crisis.

What is one way you think you could contribute to meeting AFFH requirements, and/or to the Housing Element process in general (optional)?

- Participate in more meetings like this to ensure that the voices of all people in our community are heard and considered
- Conversations and helping people get to services
- Continue to be involved in the Housing Element process
- Getting more people who work here but can't afford to live here to participate
- Talk to my friends/neighbors about it. Meet people who have different housing situations from me.

Do you have ideas or strategies about addressing the conditions some of the panelists face or have faced (optional)?

- We need to work together on this issue
- Build more housing, especially middle housing that isn't just single-family homes! Rent ceilings, financial support for new homeowners, ending application fees and credit checks.
- Waiver of application fees by the City in BMR units; removal of parking requirements, height restrictions, and any other municipal policies affecting the unit economics that make more affordable housing projects feasible, advocacy for a rental registry and work regionally by the City in streamlining the application processes and varied assistance programs offered to lower-income individuals.
- I'd be curious if we could have more communal conversations with people with lived experience as most folks really don't have access (that they know of) to have these discussions. Central database of opportunities. Trauma-informed practices throughout the process.
- I wish we had a program to screen applicants for housing and match them with older folks who are sitting on too big a home. Maybe renters could offer assistance to defray their rent
- Create a common housing applications with fee waivers. Policy that prioritizes affordable housing over luxury housing
- Housing Commission should have a required tenant representative
- We need to make affordable housing actually scalable, which means upzoning and rezoning!

Summary

This hour-and-a-half hybrid community meeting was successful for multiple reasons. First, it brought up participation in the Housing Element process in Cupertino to a significantly higher number. This meeting drew community members in and allowed them to engage in meaningful dialogue with their neighbors and other members of the community.

Second, the survey results demonstrated that this meeting will keep people engaged. 50% of Zoom and 20% of in person attendees responded that they would do “all of the above” options to get involved with Cupertino’s Housing Element. All participants committed to do at least one thing to engage with the Housing Element. This meeting generated engagement beyond the hour and a half that evening; many attendees will stay involved, and this meeting helped build momentum as the City moves through the Housing Element process. In the exit survey, participants wrote about their new desire to participate in the process and to be a part of the change happening in Cupertino.

Third, the meeting centered the voices of those with lived experience, and many attendees also had lived experience related to housing. This dialogue and listening was important because more privileged community members rarely get to hear from WVCS clients and others who have faced significant barriers to housing. Amplifying the experiences, opinions, and passions of WVCS clients changed the perspectives of the participants, shifting the way they understand affordable housing and areas such as homelessness, neurodivergence, and discrimination.

This was the first of three community meetings. The two to follow will have a similar format, with a stronger focus on breakout sessions, as participants and moderators found these to be particularly valuable. We will continue to center the voices of individuals with lived experience and to bring the community together to discuss and learn about housing in Cupertino.