

Chapter 3

Community Engagement

Participation from a diverse cross section of the population is needed to adequately define the community's housing needs and inform effective housing strategies.

The Importance of Community Engagement

In preparing the 2023-2031 Housing Element, the City of Fremont endeavored to facilitate meaningful public participation from all segments of the community. Public participation is an important component of the Housing Element update process because a diverse cross section of the population is needed to adequately define the community's housing needs and identify effective housing strategies. The Housing Element has been informed by a robust public engagement process. Detailed meeting notes, staff reports, and outreach materials are provided in Appendix A - Community Engagement Documentation.

Community Engagement Efforts

Online Updates and Resources

- **Housing Element Update Website.** The Housing Element Update [website](#) launched in March 2021. The website is a centralized location where members of the public can learn about the housing element update process and discover convenient ways to provide feedback. The website was updated regularly as new feedback opportunities became available.
- **Housing Element Update Email List.** Concurrent with the website launch, staff also launched an email list for interested residents. The email list received updates on new educational information, community events, and opportunities to provide feedback. A total of five update emails were sent to a total distribution of 283 email addresses.
- **Housing Element Introduction Video.** On February 28, 2022, staff added a 10-minute YouTube video to the Housing Element webpage that introduces the Housing Element and the update process. The video has subtitles available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Punjabi, and Persian. It provides a simplified introduction to Housing Element, the RHNA assignment process, and the timeline for the Housing Element update.
- **Development Digest Articles.** The Development Digest is a monthly newsletter from the City's Community Development Department. The Development Digest is primarily targeted towards developers, builders, designers, and other residents who use the City's Community Development permitting services. The following Digest articles have been published regarding the Housing Element update process:

- March 2021 – Announcing the launch of the Housing Element website
- January 2022 – Update on final RHNA number assigned to Fremont
- March 2022 – Advertising upcoming presentations at Boards and Commissions
- **Fremont Connection Newsletter.** The City of Fremont’s e-newsletter, The Fremont Connection, provides a weekly email about the latest Fremont happenings, including upcoming events, public safety information, job openings, City Council news, community engagement opportunities, and more. It is primarily aimed at City residents.
 - April 1, 2021 – Announcing the launch of the Housing Element website
 - July 15, 2021 – Advertising the Housing Element website and informational materials
 - January 27, 2022 – Advertising upcoming Board and Commission meetings
 - March 25, 2022 – Advertising upcoming Board and Commission meetings
 - April 8, 2022 – Recap of Housing Element presentation to City Council.
- **City Newsletter Articles.** The City Newsletter is mailed to all residents in the City of Fremont three times a year.
 - Spring 2021 – Providing introductory background on the Housing Element process and directing residents to the Housing Element website for educational information.
 - Summer 2021 - Introducing the Housing Element process and directing residents to the Housing Element website for community engagement opportunities.
 - Spring 2022 – Update on RHNA assignment and community engagement opportunities.

Council, Board, and Commission Presentations

Staff visited seven City Boards and Commissions, as well as City Council, to present an “Introduction to the Housing Element Update” presentation. The presentation provided elected and appointed officials with background information about the Housing Element Update process, details on the City’s RHNA allocation, and the project timeline. At each meeting, the City solicited input and recommendations from Board and Commission members, as well as public commenters.

- Fremont Unified School District/City Council Liaison Committee (February 7, 2022)
- Human Relations Commission (February 28, 2022)
- CDBG Advisory Committee (March 16, 2022)
- Planning Commission (March 24, 2022)
- Senior Citizens Commission (March 25, 2022)
- Youth Advisory Commission (April 4, 2022)
- City Council (April 5, 2022)
- Recreation Commission (May 3, 2022)
- [additional meetings to be added throughout the review process]

Community Outreach Events

- **Project Team Office Hours.** Throughout the update process, the Housing Element project team has offered residents the opportunity to sign up for 30-minute one-on-one conversations to discuss the Housing Element update. Staff spoke with 11 residents through these office hour conversations regarding a variety of housing-related topics.

- **Housing Element Workshop Event.** The City partnered with Fremont For Everyone (FFE), Abode Services, and California YIMBY to host an educational event about the Housing Element update on April 27, 2022. Staff provided a short presentation introducing the Housing Element update and answered questions about the process. Staff also listened to presentations from Abode Services and California YIMBY about their suggestions for the Housing Element update process. Finally, workshop participants shared their thoughts on where they would like to see more housing in Fremont during small group break-out sessions that staff attended.
- **Fremont Street Eats Table.** Fremont Street Eats is a popular weekly food truck event held by the Fremont Chamber of Commerce every Friday from May through October. On May 13, 2022, staff had a booth at Street Eats to engage residents in the Housing Element update process. Staff shared a poster about the Housing Element update while tabling and spoke with interested residents.
- **Alameda County Assessor's Office Homeowner Resource Fair.** On May 25, 2022, the City provided a venue for a tri-city (Fremont, Newark and Union City) Homeowner Resource Fair, which was focused on how homeowners could add an ADU to their property. In addition to co-presenting ADU information, staff shared a poster about the Housing Element update and spoke with interested residents.

Outreach to Developers

- **AC Collaborative Developer Panel.** On November 29, 2021, City staff, in partnership with the Alameda County Housing Collaborative, held a developer panel featuring both market-rate and affordable housing developers. Developers spoke about policies and programs that they felt were most effective at stimulating housing production.
- **ADU Developer Focus Group.** On April 15, 2022 the City held a focus group with local ADU developers to better understand the constraints to ADU development in Fremont. A total of eleven designers, representing six different developers, attended the conversation.

Outreach to Housing-Focused Community-Based Organizations

- **Community-Based Organizations Panel.** On April 25, 2022, City staff, in partnership with the Alameda County Housing Element Collaborative, held a panel with representatives from seven local-community-based organizations (CBOs) with a focus on housing issues. Participating CBOs' clientele included members of protected classes, including immigrants and non-English speakers; households with special needs, including persons with disabilities and seniors; and persons who are experiencing fair housing issues. The discussion focused on identifying key barriers and obstacles to fair housing, strengthening outreach around fair housing and promoting solutions to address fair housing issues.

Outreach to Low-Income Residents

Section 65583 of the Government Code states, "The local government shall make diligent effort to achieve public participation of all economic segments of the community in the development of the housing element, and the program shall describe this effort." Recognizing that lower-income residents may have limited accessibility to Board and Commission meetings due to schedules, language barriers, and technology issues, staff brought community outreach directly to residents. Specifically, staff held four separate listening session events at homeless shelters and affordable housing developments:

- **Listening Session at Sunrise Village Shelter.** Sunrise Village is a homeless shelter for families with children and individuals in South Fremont. On May 18, 2022, staff visited Sunrise Village to provide residents with an introduction to the Housing Element Update and hear their feedback on affordable housing and homelessness priorities. The session was conducted concurrent with evening childcare activities at the shelter so that parents could attend. Approximately 10 residents attended. The event was conducted in English.
- **Listening Session at Pauline Weaver Senior Apartments.** Pauline Weaver Apartments is an affordable housing development for seniors in South Fremont. Staff visited the complex on May 2, 2022 to provide residents with an introduction to the Housing Element Update process. Staff returned on May 23, 2022 to conduct a listening session to hear residents' feedback and input regarding affordable housing development in the City. Approximately 10 residents attended. The listening session was conducted primarily in Mandarin Chinese.
- **Listening Session at Cottonwood Place.** Cottonwood Place is an affordable housing development for seniors in Centerville. Staff visited Cottonwood Place on May 4, 2022 to provide residents with an introduction to the Housing Element Update process. Staff returned on May 25, 2022 to conduct a listening session to hear residents' feedback and input regarding affordable housing development in the City. Approximately 12 residents attended. The listening session was conducted primarily in Mandarin Chinese.
- **Listening Session at Oak Gardens.** Oak Gardens is an affordable housing development for seniors, with services intended for seniors who are Deaf and/or hard of hearing. On June 21, 2022, staff visited Oak Gardens to provide residents with an introduction to the Housing Element Update process. The event was conducted in English, Mandarin, and ASL.

Community Engagement Themes

Several themes were identified through the public engagement process that capture the community’s vision for meeting its future housing needs. Comments and recommendations related to these themes were integrated into various components of the Housing Element, as summarized in the table below.

Table 3-1. Themes from Community Outreach

Comment	Where Heard	Where Addressed
<p>Engagement Theme #1. Lack of Affordability is Biggest Concern. Among all groups consulted, housing affordability was the largest and most often heard concern. There was a feeling that Fremont is a very desirable place to live, and that resultantly affordable units often see more demand than those in other jurisdictions. There was consensus that the City needed to increase affordable housing production in order to meet the housing needs of the community.</p> <p>There was also a specific concern about “missing middle” housing affordable to those making moderate incomes. There were differing opinions about whether the City should provide a direct subsidy to moderate-income housing or rely on the market to produce “affordable-by-design” units like ADUs, small apartments, and small lot homeownership units.</p>	<p>Boards: Human Relations Commission, Planning Commission, Senior Citizens Commission, Youth Advisory Commission, City Council</p> <p>Events: FFE Workshop, Sunrise Village Listening Session, Pauline Weaver Listening Session, Cottonwood Place Listening Session, Office Hours</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 5, 7, 8, 12, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 41, 44, 47, ,48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65</p>
<p>Engagement Theme #2. Desire to Try Innovative Solutions to Increase Affordable Housing Production. Many expressed concerns that small, measured changes to increase affordable housing production were not adequate to meet the huge need in the community. Zoning modifications to increase feasibility of affordable housing (especially outside of TOD areas) and process streamlining were discussed. Additional methods of providing local funding for affordable housing, such as a bond measure or parcel tax, were also raised.</p>	<p>Boards: Planning Commission, Senior Citizens Commission</p> <p>Events: Developer Panel, FFE Workshop, Sunrise Village Listening Session</p>	
<p>Engagement Theme #3. Unbundled Parking and Lower Parking Minimums in TODs. There is an interest in re-evaluating parking standards within transit-oriented development districts to further lower the</p>	<p>Boards: Planning Commission</p> <p>Events: FFE Workshop</p>	<p>Implementation Program: 34</p>

<p>minimum parking requirements. There was also a desire for more unbundled parking generally. It was identified that unbundled parking is an equity issue because low- and moderate-income families without a car are unlikely to pay the rent premium for an included parking space that they don't need. These families may then choose not to live in Fremont if this is the only option available. There need to be more opportunities for families with no car or one car to live in the city without having to purchase extra, unneeded parking.</p>		
<p>Engagement Theme #4. Expand Housing Opportunities Throughout the City. There were a number of ideas put forward about how to encourage housing within existing single-family neighborhoods in the city. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for 6-8 units per property in single-family neighborhoods • Providing pre-approved duplex plans for SB 9 projects • Upzoning single-family areas within or near TOD areas • Encouraging more ADUs <p>There was also an interest in providing more housing opportunities within Town Center areas that are not designated TODs, including Niles and Mission San Jose.</p>	<p>Boards: Planning Commission</p> <p>Events: FFE Workshop, Office Hours</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 5, 7, 8, 9, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 51, 64</p>
<p>Engagement Theme #5. Provide More Opportunities for Community Input. It is clearly important to the community that new housing reflects the City's shared values, particularly about sustainability. There was desire for allowing the community to provide more input on future projects and policies, without creating additional hurdles for affordable housing developers. Residents of affordable housing projects also wanted more methods to provide input on the amenities, design, and programming available in both current and future developments.</p>	<p>Boards: City Council</p> <p>Events: Sunrise Village Listening Session, Pauline Weaver Listening Session, Office Hours</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 21, 30, 37, 40, 41, 42, 61, 66 78 79</p>
<p>Engagement Theme #6. Promote the Importance of Housing to the Community. It was expressed that the City</p>	<p>Boards: Planning Commission</p>	

<p>should actively promote the benefits and importance of housing to the public.</p>	<p>Events: Street Eats Table</p>	
<p>Engagement Theme #7. Address Specific Challenges for Families. People with children, and particularly single parents, identified that it was harder to find affordable housing as a family than as an individual without children.</p>	<p>Boards: Senior Citizens Commission</p> <p>Events: Sunrise Village Listening Session, Pauline Weaver Listening Session, Cottonwood Place Listening Session</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 2, 4, 13, 54, 60</p>
<p>Engagement Theme #8. Provide Multiple Options for Senior Housing. It was identified that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution for senior housing. Some seniors in the community are still raising or living with their children. Others may be living alone. Yet others may have medical needs or disabilities that require assisted living. The community identified the following housing strategies to meet the varying needs of seniors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated affordable and market-rate senior housing • Accessory dwelling units • Additions to existing dwellings to accommodate larger family sizes • Assistance with accessibility improvements to “age in place” • Home matching/sharing programs • Assisted living and residential care facilities 	<p>Boards: Senior Citizens Commission</p> <p>Events: Pauline Weaver Listening Session, Cottonwood Place Listening Session</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 3, 7, 51, 65, 78, 79</p>
<p>Engagement Theme #9. Implement Simple Process Improvements. Developers expressed that simple process improvements to increase the speed of permitting could facilitate the creation of additional housing units at a faster pace.</p>	<p>Boards:</p> <p>Events: ADU Developer Focus Group, Developer Panel</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 31, 37</p>
<p>Engagement Theme #10. Provide Clarity in the Development Process. Developers expressed that being clear and precise about development rules, expectations, and process facilitates the development review process</p>	<p>Boards:</p> <p>Events: ADU Developer Focus, Developer Panel</p>	<p>Implementation Programs: 4, 17, 18, 21, 40, 41, 42, 43</p>