

Affordable Housing Survey

Executive Summary

County of San Luis Obispo
Planning and Building Dept.
Housing and Economic Development

June, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

The *All Things Housing Survey* was distributed to housing industry professionals (architecture, planning, building, real estate or other related fields), by the County of San Luis Obispo, prior to the Housing Policy Workshop. The survey is intended to facilitate a dialogue on affordable housing development, and to enlighten county staff about issues and potential solutions for housing development, from the perspective of professionals within the housing industry. Questions in the survey ranged from identifying what types of housing are needed in the County, to where housing should be built, to what impedes or incentivizes the development of housing, etc. The survey contained eleven questions total, with seven open-ended questions requiring written responses, three questions that requested respondents to rank several options, and one multiple choice question. 44 respondents participated in the survey. The results of the survey will be used to inform the County on the needs of its communities, as well as provide a launching point for further research and discussions about creating more affordable housing in the County.

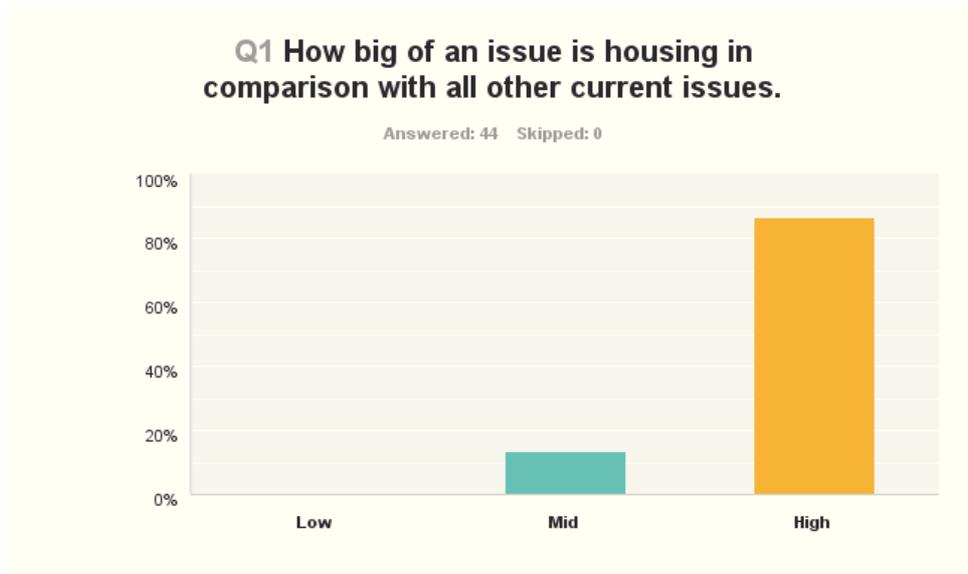
SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. How big of an issue is housing in comparison with all other issues? (Low, Mid, High)
2. What kind of housing will meet our county housing needs? (i.e. single family, duplex, large lot residential...)
3. Where should the housing be built?
4. What incentives work to develop housing?
5. What are impediments to housing?
6. Can you provide an example of how housing is developed elsewhere; new or different ideas?
7. Other thoughts on housing?
8. Is local government's role a barrier to housing development?
9. To what extent do the following types of land use and other regulatory actions by local governments help development of housing?
10. To what extent do the following types of land use and other regulatory actions by local governments help development of housing?
11. What other tools and strategies could local governments pursue that would enable the construction of housing? (please provide a brief description)

FINDINGS:

Question One – How big of an issue is housing in comparison with all other current issues?

This question sought to determine the significance of the issue of housing among other issues. Respondents overwhelmingly rated the issue of housing with a designation of “high” importance, with a total of 86.4% of responses, followed by 13.6% of respondents choosing a designation of “mid” level of importance.



Question Two – What kind of housing will meet our county housing needs? (i.e. single family, duplex, large lot residential..)

The purpose of this question is to find out what types of housing respondents of the survey see as needed, or lacking, within the county. In turn, the county can use this information to compare what is perceived as needed, to what is being produced, as well as identifying the best ways to facilitate the construction of the needed forms of housing. This question was in a short-answer format, therefore, responses were varied and some included multiple forms of housing within a single respondent’s answer. The results showed a strong desire for all types of housing, with a strong support for multi-family housing, followed by single family housing. Thirty-six responses described various forms of multi-family housing types, and twenty-six responses expressed a desire for various forms of single-family housing types. Results clearly favored a mix of density, ranging from low- to high-density in both multi- and single-family types, and specifically highlighted a need for smaller sized units and lots.

Question Three – Where should the housing be built?

Question three focused on identifying the areas within the county where housing units should be developed. The short-answer question yielded a variety of responses, with the most common answers describing sites in cities or near urbanized areas, followed by sites near employment centers, with specific attention to locating near existing infrastructure and services.

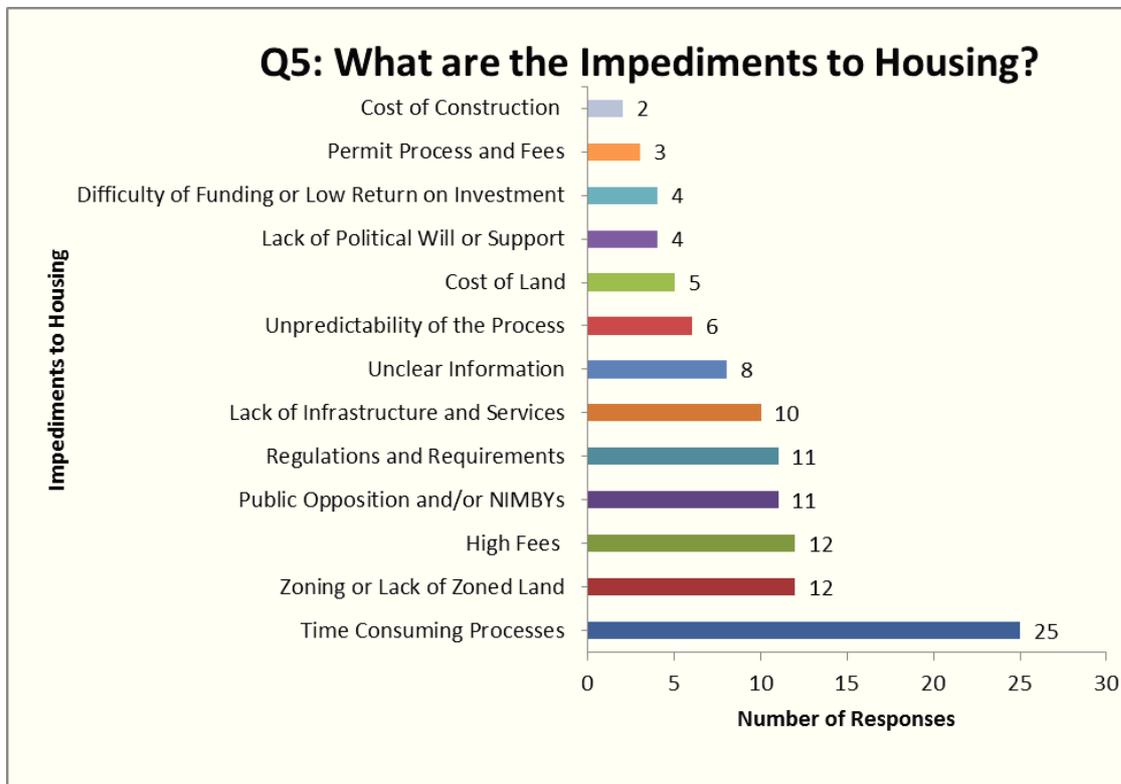
Question Four – What incentives work to develop housing?

The purpose of this question was to understand what incentives work to help develop housing. The responses are categorized into five themes. The themes include: process, fees, density/affordability, zoning standard waivers and miscellaneous. The process and fees had the highest amount of responses out of all the five groups. Below is a brief description of various recommendations for each theme:

- Process –incentives regarding expedited approvals, streamlining the process and more certainty in entitlement process
- Fees – propose reducing building and impact fees, as well as fee based incentives for providing affordable housing, deferred payment of fees, raising the in-lieu fee to incentivize the building of affordable housing rather than "buying out of the requirement"
- Density/affordability – increase density, allow smaller units, affordable by design techniques, density bonuses
- Zoning Standards waivers –waivers/reductions include: setbacks, parking, height and more flexibility for accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Miscellaneous – political will, reduced cost of infrastructure and land, development by right, and CEQA

Question Five – What are the impediments to housing?

This question is aimed at determining the issues that hold back the production of housing within the county. The short answer format allowed respondents to supply a multitude of ideas. The chart below shows a breakdown of the major themes revealed in the responses. The time consuming nature of the development processes, including, but not limited to, aspects such as development review, environmental review, entitlement, and public review, was clearly marked as the most concerning issue, according to the respondents. Other frequently mentioned issues include: regulations and requirements, public opposition and NIMBYs, high fees, lack of infrastructure or services, and a lack of zoned land, among other issues.



Question Six – Can you provide an example of how housing is developed elsewhere; New or different ideas?

Question six was intended to provide county staff with examples of housing development methods or ideas that may have been used in other places. The ideas and methods could then be explored and potentially adapted to housing development in the county. Respondents provided an assortment of general concepts and specific localized ideas. Examples of responses are sampled below:

- Annual transit/bus passes for residents in exchange for a great reduction in required parking, eg. Seattle
- In San Diego, the building department adopted a less restrictive code to allow old hotels to convert into senior housing. It saved developers money which allowed them to build the projects feasibly. Our county should adopt an ordinance that reduces building costs for workforce housing. Current code is so expensive to build that housing cannot be built affordably. The equation is simple... if the County creates certainty in processing, and less costly building parameters, developers can make a profit building even workforce housing.
- Santa Monica has a new project 500-800 units from affordable to 5Million dollar ocean view units. Getting all kinds of good reviews affordable 100% with a 15 year waiting list...
- Junior ADU's in Novato
- Take a look at the Sonoma Mountain Village project in Rohnert Park. There's a balance between low, middle and higher income housing all within a walkable community

Question Seven – Other thoughts on housing

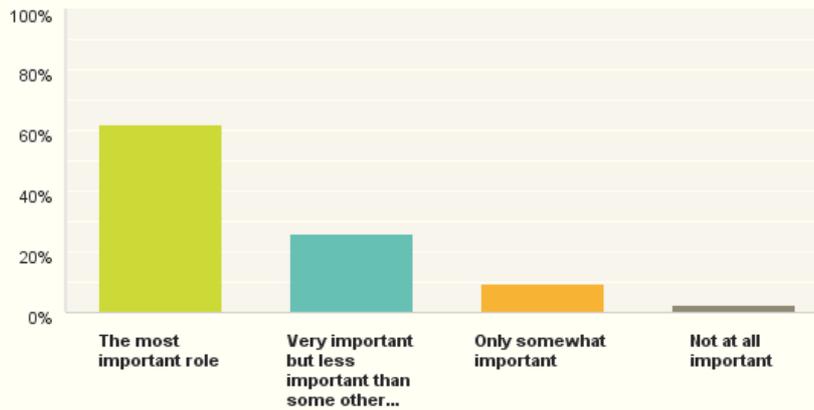
This question intended to provide a space for additional comments relating to housing from respondents. Respondents provided a range of thoughts on the topic, expressing a strong concern over the need for more housing. Comments also stressed the issue of high fees and lengthy timelines, as well as creating more zoned land to aid more development, and improving the public perception of development.

Question Eight – Is local government's role a barrier to housing development?

This question is meant to determine how the respondents view the role of local government in the development process. Answer choices included: the most important role, very important but less than some other, only somewhat important, and not important at all. A majority of respondents claimed that the local government's role was the most important when it comes to the development process.

Q8 Is local government's role a barrier to housing development?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 2



Question Nine & Ten – To what extent do the following types of land use and other regulatory actions by local governments help development of housing?

Questions nine and ten both asked respondents to rank land use and regulatory actions on a scale of helpfulness: Not Helpful, Small Help, Moderate Help, Large Help, No Opinion. The results will assist county staff in determining whether industry professionals agree or disagree with various actions. Out of the combined actions listed under questions nine and ten, the top ten actions that were ranked as the most helpful include:

- Make development review process more consistent/predictable
- Improve coordination of departments involved in review (e.g. concurrent review by multiple departments)
- Reduce number of public hearings needed for plan approval
- Zone more multifamily land
- Zone land for higher density development
- Affordable Housing overlay to streamline permit process in specified zoning districts
- Streamline CEQA for affordable housing
- Create "one-stop" permitting center for all questions/submittals
- Flexible standards for lot size, setback
- Flexible standards for building size, footprint

The least helpful actions according to respondents include: In-lieu-fee payments to assist the building of affordable housing; Inclusionary zoning encouraging (not requiring) a certain % of affordable units; Inclusionary zoning requiring a certain % affordable units.

Question Eleven – What other tools and strategies could local governments pursue that would enable the construction of housing? (Please provide brief explanation)

The final question asked respondents for any additional tools or strategies local governments might use to support the construction of more housing and provide the county with a pool of potential options to consider adopting. County staff selected several of the suggestions to look into further, such as:

- Allowing ADUs in more zoning districts, relaxing standards for more flexibility
- Creating incentives to build smaller single family units
- Giving conditional use permits to industrial and business properties to facilitate mixed use housing in existing business parks
- Creating a minimum density to facilitate increased density within community boundaries

CONCLUSIONS:

The All Things Housing Survey has helped the county to better understand the housing issue from the perspective of those directly involved in the housing industry. The survey provides a wealth of information on the needs of the community including what types of housing are needed, where it is needed, and what kinds of incentives and regulatory actions facilitate or hinder the development of more housing in San Luis Obispo County. The survey is also valuable in providing ideas and methods for the county to explore as possible aids for the development housing in the future. The results of the survey will be used to support further research into tools and actions that can aid in the production of housing. Ultimately county staff will determine the most feasible options and incorporate them into a staff report for the Board.