

Chapter 1: Public Participation

Summary

According to state law:

“The local government shall make a 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.” (GC §65583(c)(7)

The City of Lindsay has satisfied this requirement and has made diligent effort to achieve public participation of all economic segments of the community. The preparation of the Housing Element included the following citizen participation activities:

- On March 24, 2009, the City sponsored a community workshop to discuss the draft Housing Needs Assessment and to obtain community input for housing policy development. The city wrote, e-mailed, and/or telephoned all known local housing stakeholders, and provided public newspaper notice in the local paper (The Foothills Sun-Gazette). This workshop was attended by approximately 50 community members, including representatives from the following stakeholder groups: realtors, housing developers, small business, schools, property owners, renters, disabled, low-income, and farmworker interests. Spanish interpretation was available.
- On March 24, 2009, the City Council held a work session to discuss the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment.
- On April 13, 2009, the City presented findings of the Housing Needs Assessment to a local service group meeting (Lindsay Kiwanis). Twenty-two community members were in attendance, representing primarily professionals, property owners, retirees, and the business community.
- City Council work session on August 11, 2009.
- City Council public hearing on February 9, 2010.
- Public notices and announcements in English and Spanish.

Findings

As a result of community input, four major community-wide housing priorities became clear:

Community Image

Lindsay residents love their city and long to see a better future for their community. Community image concerns include:

- *Poverty:* There is strong community concern about continuing trends and perceptions of poverty resulting from significant recent construction of lower-income housing (such as recent tax credit financed apartment projects and Self-Help single family developments)

This is an issue of resource allocation and market perception. Residents are particularly concerned that this trend may be self-reinforcing and that City participation in such development should be carefully limited (perhaps when coupled with redevelopment and critical infill development projects).

- *Housing Rehabilitation:* Renewed emphasis is needed to rehabilitate and improve existing substandard housing.
- *Code Enforcement:* Residents need to take greater responsibility to care for their property. When they don't, the City needs to take aggressive code enforcement action.
- *Development Standards:* The quality and appearance of non-residential development affects the living environment. This includes roads, public facilities, commercial and industrial development.

Special Needs Housing

Housing for traditional special needs groups (elderly, disabled, farmworkers, and large families) is needed. Unique special needs groups in Lindsay have unmet housing needs as well. These include: the "housed homeless" (second and third family overcrowding of single-family residences), veterans, public employees seeking to live in town, and professionals seeking quality rental units.

Housing Market Issues

Current market problems (property devaluation, credit availability, income limitations) have constrained housing development at all income levels. Market inexperience with above-moderate income housing in the city limits hampers the ability of appraisers to make fair market comparisons. This in turn discourages development of this much-needed housing segment. Additionally, the ready availability of nearby rural estate housing and upper income housing in other communities serves to dilute market demand for in-town upper income housing.

Above-Moderate Income Housing

Expanded housing choice is needed to improve economic balance and housing opportunity. Lindsay needs greater housing choices for professionals, business owners, and affluent retirees who seek to live in town. These efforts must address community image and market issues, as discussed above.

Suggested Policy Directions

These citizen-driven priorities suggest certain policy directions for the Housing Element and City housing efforts:

1. Minimize City participation in the development of new large projects for lower income housing. The private and non-profit sectors are able to provide for this market need through existing incentives (tax credits, sweat equity, etc.). City participation in lower income housing development should further other important community goals, such as revitalization, redevelopment, and infill development (especially in and around the downtown core).

2. Focus City first-time homebuyer efforts on existing housing and limited infill redevelopment projects, to strengthen housing demand and preclude overconcentration of lower income housing in new developments.
3. Aggressively pursue housing rehabilitation programs, targeting the “worst of the worst” (e.g. those properties with obvious visible blight and construction/maintenance deficiencies resulting in life and safety hazards). Limited public funds should go where they will do the most good.
4. Target code enforcement efforts towards housing maintenance and overcrowding. Limited City enforcement resources should be allocated to where they will do the most good.
5. City assistance for new housing development efforts should focus on special needs groups and moderate income/above-moderate income households – those market segments not being addressed by private sector housing development.
6. The City should actively build market confidence in moderate and above-moderate income housing by assisting with small demonstration projects of new housing in the \$180,000 to \$280,000 price range.
7. City public improvement efforts should be targeted on those community facilities most negatively affecting community image (streets, schools, gateway commercial areas).