



Our Community: Housing and Our Future

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS, APRIL 2018

ABOUT THE PROJECT AND ABOUT THE MEETINGS

Housing in Redwood City is a high priority issue that impacts our entire community. To broaden participation in the conversation about housing and together explore housing issues and options, Redwood City was recently awarded a grant from Home for All.

Home for All is a community collaborative addressing the housing challenge in San Mateo County by promoting the preservation and production of all types of housing through sharing information, promoting innovation and convening the community.

With help from Home for All and consultant Common Knowledge Plus, Redwood City is conducting a wide range of outreach and engagement activities during the spring and summer of 2018. Working with cohosts and partners, the City's goal is to engage a diverse mix of people who live and work in Redwood City to develop shared understanding about this topic's many dimensions.

To launch its engagement efforts, Redwood City held two community conversations during April 2018. These meetings were designed for participants to share their first-hand experiences of the issue and to learn more about the City's role in housing as a prelude to providing more in-depth input on specific policies. During the first conversation, held on April 7, roughly 40 community members came together at Casa Circulo Cultural to share their perspectives. The Spanish-language conversation featured four tables with facilitated discussion, along with interpretation and headsets provided for English speakers. Participants were joined by City staff and members of the Redwood City Council, who attended as listeners.



The City's second conversation, on April 11, brought approximately 100 attendees to the Downtown library for an evening of dialogue in Spanish and English. The conversation featured a mix of residents, homeowners, tenants, building owners, developers and nonprofit leaders talking side by side. Facilitated small group discussions took place at 12 tables, with three tables conducting their conversations primarily in Spanish. In addition to City staff, several members of the Redwood City Council, Planning Commission and Housing and Human Concerns Committee also attended as listeners.

Due to outreach support from multiple partners, about half of the attendees were new to the issue of housing. Participants especially liked:

- The diversity in the room
- The meeting's less formal structure
- Talking to people of different backgrounds, "hearing different angles" of how the community is experiencing housing
- Council members and city leaders attending as listeners

"This format was very well received by the people at our table. Community and communication are the key to solutions."

2 MAIN THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS

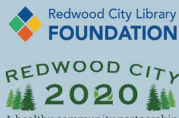
Through both conversations, it became clear that housing is a source of concern for many in our community. In the face of rising rents, people are anxious that they or those they care about will not be able to stay in the community that they love. At the same time, attendees expressed broad interest in possible housing solutions and a desire to continue the conversation. Participants would like to see our community:

- Increase housing security
- Create more affordable housing options for families, seniors and adult children
- Keep the diversity and connections that make Redwood City a great place to live
- Support local businesses and economic sustainability
- Pursue comprehensive solutions that also address issues related to housing

According to attendees, housing solutions will require:

- Increased collaboration
- Creativity and innovation
- Additional dialogue

CO-HOSTS:



www.redwoodcity.org/ourcommunityandhousing



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Community members would like to see Redwood City:

- Make more progress on the issue of housing
- Develop partnerships with community organizations, businesses and other agencies
- Ensure that housing efforts are as inclusive as possible
- Provide more information about affordable housing and communicate updates regularly

3 HOW ARE PEOPLE IN REDWOOD CITY IMPACTED BY THE CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION?

Some attendees were more directly impacted in their daily lives by housing costs than others, but all agreed that housing was a priority issue for multiple reasons. Prevalent comments included:

It's increasingly hard to afford rent, even for those who are working full time and have a job that pays well.

- The current housing situation is leading to "stress, anxiety and tension."
- "People are living in cars and campers."

The high cost of living is breaking families apart, forcing people to move away and making it difficult for people to build permanent ties to the community:

- "Every time it is more difficult to pay rent. More work and less time with my family."
- "It reduces my willingness to get involved in RWC if I'm worried that my landlord will increase rent next year such that I can't afford it."

Housing affects all residents, not just renters.

- "For renters, there is uncertainty, fear, and inability to save for their own home. For homeowners, they fear capital gains and increased property tax if they were to move."

Lack of housing security leads to "adversarial relationships" between landlords and tenants

- "People are afraid to ask for repairs."

4 HOPES FOR REDWOOD CITY

A common theme in both conversations was the value placed on diversity plus family and community ties:

- "All types of housing should be available for all types of families."
- "Kids should be able to live here as adults."
- "I hope that we find win-win solutions for an inclusive, diverse community with different incomes, professions, ages, and cultures."
- "We need to find solutions for affordable housing and transportation so that Redwood City can continue to be diverse and inclusive on many dimensions."

5 AREAS OF INTEREST

At both the April 7 and April 11 conversation, the City provided an overview of past and current actions related to housing. Most discussion tables agreed that multiple approaches were needed:

- "They all sound good – we need a variety of solutions."
- "Housing is needed at different levels, and to start integrating different populations."

The following housing solutions were of interest to many attendees:

- Building new affordable housing, especially near transit
- Preserving/converting buildings to be affordable
- Using City funds to buy property and provide affordable housing
- Partnering with large employers in creating more affordable housing
- Examples of solutions for smaller property owners/developers

Other ideas:

- Short-term emergency housing assistance
- Build housing on City or school district property
- Use taxes from Airbnb to help fund housing efforts
- Group purchases/communal housing: "co-living"
- "Creative solutions – creative use of space."

Frequently mentioned concerns included:

- Support for tenants as they face rising rents (people learned about the recently passed renter ordinances; some also mentioned rent stabilization/control)
- Property rights and acknowledgement of rising costs for landlords
- Support for renter/landlord education and improved communications/relations
- Traffic
- Parking

6 INFORMATION NEEDS

- Residents want clarity around how "affordable housing" is defined
- People need help understanding eligibility criteria
- Which units will be available for what income level?
- How many new homes are currently in development?
- What is happening with City partnerships, particularly with employers and other agencies?
- What services are available for people with near-term needs?



"Moving forward, continue to provide more information about options for those with immediate needs (now and within a year), mid-term solutions (1 to 2 years), and longer term 3+ years."

7 NEXT STEPS

Building on these two positive conversations, Redwood City's engagement efforts will continue. The Housing and Human Concerns Committee will host the next community conversation on May 22. Please join fellow community members to discuss affordable housing and provide input on how to use the City's affordable housing funds. The conversation will take place at Veterans Memorial Senior Center (1145 Madison Avenue). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; the conversation starts at 7 p.m. A light supper, and translation will be provided.

In the coming weeks, City staff, community partners and members of the City's Housing and Human Concerns Committee will also be conducting a series of "pop-ups" at locations throughout the community. These informal events will allow residents to provide feedback on what has been learned so far and to contribute their suggestions as to how the community can work together to address our housing needs.

In mid-May, the City will also be launching a housing survey. To help us keep the conversation going, please share the survey with friends, family, neighbors and coworkers. If you live or work in Redwood City, we are interested in hearing from you, go to www.redwoodcity.org/ourcommunityandhousing.