

Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Affordable Housing: Time for a Collaborative Approach

Report Date: June 24, 2022

Respondent/Agency Name: Town of Ross

FINDINGS

- We agree with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F9, and F10
- We disagree *partially* with the findings numbered: F8
- We disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation R1 will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.
(Please see attached explanation.)

Date: 9/9/22

Signed: P. Beach Kuhl
P. Beach Kuhl, Mayor, Town of Ross

Number of pages attached: 4

TOWN OF ROSS RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT
AFFORDABLE HOUSING: TIME FOR COLLABORATION IN MARIN

FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

F1. Marin County lacks sufficient affordable and workforce housing.

Response: Agree.

F2. Increasingly, individuals who work in Marin County cannot afford to live in the county, many of whom must commute from outside the county.

Response: Agree.

F3. Recent California laws provide new incentives for local governments to collaborate in developing affordable housing.

Response: Agree.

F4. The Regional Housing Needs Allocation allotments are widely viewed as unachievable for the county and many Marin municipalities.

Response: Agree.

F5. Failure to achieve Regional Housing Needs Allocation allotments will trigger loss of local control over housing development.

Response: Agree.

F6. There is new and increasing support and willingness to cooperate among elected officials for building affordable housing in Marin.

Response: Agree.

F7. A countywide approach to housing development would enhance Marin's ability to meet affordable and workforce housing needs.

Response: Agree.

F8. Large affordable housing developments in Marin require subsidies to be financially feasible.

Response: Partially disagree.

All affordable housing developments require subsidies regardless of size. In fact, smaller developments are more expensive, more difficult to fund, and cost more per unit than larger developments.

F9. Organizations with expertise and access to subsidies and other funding sources are successfully building new affordable and workforce housing developments in Marin.

Response: Agree.

F10. A countywide approach to housing development would enhance Marin's ability to secure funding for affordable and workforce housing.

Response: Agree.

RECOMMENDATION AND RESPONSE

R1. No later than December 31, 2022, the Marin County Board of Supervisors and Marin's city and town councils should jointly create a regional authority, or empower an existing authority such as the Transportation Authority of Marin, to coordinate affordable and workforce housing policy on a countywide basis.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The Town of Ross agrees that more collaboration on housing policy and funding would be beneficial and will likely result in more affordable housing in our communities. In fact, much work has been done to date, as described below, and additional opportunities are being developed. The Town of Ross remains open to additional collaboration and/or more formal arrangements in the future. However, forming a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with 12 jurisdictions would take a significant investment of time, funding and energy that would likely impair current housing efforts, and requires willing partners. Doing so by December 31, 2022 is not a realistic timeline, particularly given that each Marin jurisdiction is currently striving to meet statutory deadlines to submit their updated Housing Elements by January 31, 2023.

Below is a brief summary of existing and recommended new pursuits for strengthening interjurisdictional coordination and planning around affordable and workforce housing:

Existing collaboration

The Town of Ross participated in the Countywide housing collaboration, beginning in 2008 with the County's development of the countywide Housing Element Workbook, which provided a shared template, background information and model programs and policies for development of the 2009 Housing Element. This effort resulted in all Marin municipalities receiving certified housing elements, which in turn made more housing funds available.

In 2019, the Town of Ross began participation in a countywide working group of Planning Directors and planning staff to encourage interjurisdictional collaboration on housing issues and solutions, with a specific focus on responding to new state legislation to streamline housing developments. The working group established common goals and coordinated on housing legislation, planning, production, and preservation of existing affordability. The working group meets monthly and has evolved from briefings and discussions regarding state housing legislation into collaboration on projects to facilitate the development of more housing in Marin County. The working group applied jointly for SB2 planning grants in the summer and fall of 2019 and has started to collaborate on these grant projects, including Objective Design and Development Standards, an ADU Workbook and Website, and inclusionary housing program updates. The group received funds from ABAG to work collaboratively on shared Housing Element deliverables including translation dollars, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing products, visualizations, and a countywide website.

Future collaboration

1. **Commit to collaboration:** The County of Marin has taken on a leadership role, as evidenced in the County's draft 2023-2031 Housing Element which includes a proposed new program that would *"Collaborate with Marin County, cities and towns to address regional planning and housing issues"*. The Town of Ross is looking forward to continuing to participate in this regional collaboration led by the County of Marin.
2. **Implementation of Housing Element programs:** During implementation of the 2023-2031 Housing Element, the County, cities and towns will collaborate on program implementation, especially those related to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and tenant protections. This collaboration has already begun and will include:
 - **Model ordinances:** developing model ordinances to be considered by the Board of Supervisors and City/Town Councils.
 - **Outreach and community engagement:** Conducting shared outreach and community engagement.

3. ***Housing Element Collaboration:*** The County is planning to develop a deeper and more formalized collaboration with cities and towns on the Housing Element in the future. The Town of Ross is looking forward to the County's leadership on this valuable endeavor.
4. ***Funding collaboration:*** explore ways to more effectively collaborate on shared funding for affordable housing. This could include:
- *Inclusionary policies:* Developing more consistent policies to encourage and facilitate more affordable housing as part of new market rate developments and increase funding for affordable housing.
 - *Regional housing trust fund:* Consider the establishment of a regional housing trust fund which would make state applications more competitive and lower the administrative burden for cities and towns.
 - *The Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA):* Actively participate and support the efforts of BAHFA to raise funds to help address affordable housing and housing stability.