

ABAG Allocation Revisited

By Cathy Tyson

Back in December, this newspaper reported on the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of very low, low, moderate and above moderate income housing units for 2007 – 2014.

At the January 14th City Council Meeting, there was significant concern among Council Members about the methodology used by ABAG to determine Lafayette's allocation, a total of 361 units.

"The goal is to show that there is sufficient land in place to accommodate these numbers and that Lafayette's own rules and regulations don't provide any hurdles for developers to make these types of units available," stated Niroop Srivatsa, Planning and Building Manager. The downside of not having a state certified housing element is that Lafayette may be further down the list for consideration

when making grant applications, but the City isn't penalized.

ABAG Senior Planner Christy Riviere said, "Allocations are based on projections done every two years." A wide assortment of cities participate as part of the allocation committee, trying to find a balance considering economics, demographic trends, and transit.

Lafayette is not the only city that is unhappy with its allocation. Palo Alto, Emeryville, Mt. View and Berkeley are all officially appealing the ABAG numbers. Vice Mayor Don Tatzin commented, "They (ABAG) have been very tone deaf on this issue. The numbers they use are predicated on the housing market, which is changing rapidly. They need to be updated to reflect reality."

Lynn Hiden of the Lafayette Homeowners Council stated, "We need...to see that the disastrous and clumsy methodology passed by ABAG that resulted in so many un-

realistic allocations to so many cities gets changed." She continued, "We believe that the ABAG Board in no way comprehends what it has created and its resulting impacts. Like Palo Alto, we believe that if ABAG adopts more realistic and achievable RNHA goals, cities will be able to focus on actually providing adequate housing for a diverse population, a truly laudable goal."

If Lafayette officially appeals the allocation, the City would preserve its ability to litigate. However, as Planning and Building Services Manager, Niroop Srivatsa noted in an earlier article, there needs to be a technical reason to appeal, and staff doesn't believe there is a technical reason.

In the end, Council Members agreed to send a letter noting the non-response of prior letters, and asked for ABAG to review their methodology and subsequent allocation.