

## Episode 10: San José's Housing Element

*Welcome to Dwellings, a podcast from the City of San José Housing Department, where we talk with experts about ending homelessness, building affordable housing, and exploring housing policies at the city and state level. I'm your host Alli Rico. On today's episode, I'm joined by Ruth Cueto, Planner for the City of San José Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement, and Kristen Clements, Division Manager for the Housing Department, to learn more about the Housing Element process, Fair Housing, and how the city of San José is planning for more growth.*

**Alli Rico:** I would love it if each of you would introduce yourselves and why tell us why, what drew you to working in housing? Why, why are you doing the things that you're doing?

**Ruth Cueto:** So my name is Ruth Cueto, I am a supervising planner in the planning division - Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement department. I've been with the city now, 14 years, um, working mostly land use, and now very specifically on planning, and I oversee the housing team within the planning division. Our focus is to help facilitate affordable and market-rate housing. Um, I'm a resident of San José have been here for almost 17 years now, I think. Um, and I would say that my interest in housing, um, took a windy turn. I think I've always been a planner by heart. I've always been interested in the built environment, sort of, you know, um, the political economy of spaces and that's my major and, um, you know, why communities were built out and they're built a certain way.

But I think more interestingly, like with housing, it's just that, um, maybe the last 15 years it was, you know, oh, there's a housing crisis. And it was what we see on the streets and homeless individuals. And as the years have gone by, it feels like it's affecting a broader spectrum of people where it's not just those that are unhoused, but, um, you know, um, moderate income earners that can't buy a house and they're moving to more affordable places, or, you know, the college student that can't leave home, even though they want to, but you know, this is where what's affordable or people who are couch surfing or families that are doubling or tripling up. It's just, it feels like it's the issue of our time. And, and I've, I've had the opportunity now to work specifically on housing for the last few years and with a planning perspective. So I just want to do my part and help the city achieve our goals and, you know, have people be in homes.

**Alli:** Kristen, do you wanna introduce yourself?

**Kristen Clements:** Sure. Hi, I'm Kristen Clements. I'm a division manager in the Housing Department in San José. And I've been with the city 17-plus years now, which is crazy because I came from the private sector and expected to be here five years. So, I've stayed because there's so much interesting work going on and really realized, you know, I used to work for a lender for affordable housing and a grant maker for affordable housing. And, you know, the city is such an interesting place because, um, you know, conversations with smart colleagues can really help, help feed my thoughts, um, and help make changes in our community. So I love working in San José, it's such a big community and so diverse and so interesting. My husband is from here, my mother-in-law lives here. And, um, and the more that I work here at, the more that I love this city.

So I got him involved in affordable housing and community development originally way back when I got out of college and I started working as a legal assistant and we were representing private companies. And I realized I was spending my nights and days, days, and nights and weekends, um, helping make other people more wealthy. And I thought, gosh, there's gotta be more important work out there, how I'm spending all my time matters. Right? So I wanna, I want to do it to fight for

something that is like so important to everybody, because housing is so fundamental to how people experience their lives. Right? You can't have good educational outcomes if your kids have to keep moving every few years and change schools, or every few months. You can't be healthy if you don't have shelter and you're on the street or you're couch surfing. It's just everything that COVID has shown us for the last couple of years already, just continues to prove how important housing is and that if that's not in order, other things are not going to go right in your life. And if you pay too much, you won't be able to afford food, and medicine to keep you well. So it's just fundamental work and that's why it's so driving to me in such a passion.

**Alli:** So we're going to talk about the Housing Element, which is a big process in California that every city has to go through. Let's just start with a basic question. What is the Housing Element?

**Ruth:** The Housing Element, uh, from a very kind of 30,000-foot perspective, it's, it's a housing plan. It's a policy document, and it's also part of a city or county or town's general plan. It's, it's kind of a chapter within the larger, uh, work of, um, that cities do and need to do when they plan and manage cities and towns over, you know, 10, 20 years. And so the update is required every, roughly every eight years by the state of California. And what it does is it creates a foundation for all of the policies and programs related to housing. So what are our goals? What's our vision and how are we going to ensure that we meet our housing needs? Um, for San José our housing plan is for the timeframe of 2023 through 2031. And, um, again, like I mentioned, it's going to be policies and programs and, um, with our collective vision and values for San José and, and housing. And, um, we will be determining housing needs, there's like six components to the Housing Element. A housing needs assessment, evaluating our past performance. Site inventory, so where we have capacity to build housing. There's a very strong section, we'll talk about this later, but it's community outreach and engagement, you know, how did we get to our final plan? And it's through community engagement.

Um, we need, uh, we would also have to have an analysis on constraints to building housing. So are there any laws or things outside of the city that just don't help when it comes to housing production? And then, um, I think the, the, uh, sort of the one piece that continues to live, you know, all eight years is the policies and programs or implementation work plan. So it's, these are the issues and this is how we're going to address them. That's uh, that's the component there. And something just to clarify is that while this is a plan, it's not necessarily, you know, cities, we're not really in the business of building housing, and the Housing Element doesn't require a cities to build housing. It requires us to plan for it. So we have to have the appropriate locations, policies, zoning laws, um, basically the, the framework so that we have something that supports it and that it doesn't inhibit production.

**Kristen:** And I wanted to add onto that. I mean, they say, if you don't plan for something, you're not really going to get what you are trying to get. The nice thing about the Housing Element, um, is a, that it changes over time, right? Because a community needs different things over time and you know, the way that our communities look today, it was a product of past decisions. So this is the state's effort to help communities be thoughtful about planning for housing and not just, "do you encourage housing?" It's, what kind of housing? At what kinds of densities in general kinds of locations? And then they also ask you to be more specific about what are the, um, as Ruth noted, what are the barriers to producing housing? And then what are the strategies that the city is going to use to try to overcome those barriers? So it's not just about the number of housing units we have to accommodate. It's also about, how are we going to make the housing that we have more accessible for the entire community.

**Alli:** Why do we have this process in California?

**Ruth:** I think it just speaks to how long and how important this issue of housing has been. And so Housing Element law was enacted in 1969, and that's when the state required all cities, counties, towns to, to have this Housing Element, to meet the needs of housing for everyone. And, um, the, the, the actual law itself, I think one of the first sentences says, "the availability of housing is of vital statewide importance." And if you look at any of the new state laws coming in, it always starts with that. It's like, housing is important and that's why we're making you do this. And that's why we need this. So, um, again, it's, I think pointing back to what Kristen said, it's important and we like to plan and we need to plan right. And if we don't have sort of things in order, then, then things don't happen. But yeah, I would say that, you know, that's why it's just, it's such a critical need and foundational to lots of things that, that happened to us is housing.

**Kristen:** Yeah. I was going to add too. It's not just the big cities that have to plan. It's all jurisdictions. So little towns, counties. I like this as a statement by the state legislature, really, that like, um, it, it is everybody's job to accommodate housing needs for our residents. And not just some places need to grow. Everybody needs to think about, how are we going to, you know, serve today's residents better, but also create opportunities for tomorrow's residents? Because everybody is going to have more housing over time. So I like that it's universal. And that the state continues to say, yeah, it's everybody's job. The state actually has its own housing plan too. Um, so it's such a big state, right? We have to like get universal buy-in for some strategies or it would be growing very strangely.

**Alli:** And who determines the housing allocations for, for every jurisdiction?

**Ruth:** So I think, what you'll hear us and, you know, when, when the listeners get involved and start falling in love with Housing Element, one term that they'll continually hear about is what we call RHNA or the Regional Housing Needs Allocation. So this number, where do we get it from? And how does that happen? The Regional Housing Needs Allocation identifies the total number of housing units for an area, for a region. For us, it's the nine, um, nine county Bay Area cities and counties. And, um, it is separated into four affordability levels. And it all starts with the state of California. Um, they determine the allocation for the regions, for our Bay Area. And in this case for this current Housing Element update, it's roughly 441,000 homes that the entire Bay Area needs to plan for. And they look at several things like jobs, uh, where jobs are, population, new jobs, where, you know, uh, population projections, when they determine that number. And then the region through, uh, the Association of Bay Area Governments, ABAG, another fun acronym. Um, through ABAG, uh, cities and counties and towns work with them to allocate their individual amount.

So ABAG back in October, 2019, launched the housing methodology committee and it was made up of local officials, staff. In our case, we had staff from San José. Um, I think our deputy director sat on that committee, and the committee helps guide the development of the methodology that eventually gives us, you know, our allocation. And, um, I think it's important to note that the state law actually requires the methodology to use certain factors and, and objectives. When we come up with this number and, um, there's five objectives. One is increasing - the overall is to increase housing, supply and mix of housing types. So, you know, not just, you know, apartments or single-family dwelling units, you know, the variety of the gamut of it. Um, it's about promoting infill development and socioeconomic equity, protecting our environment, and encouraging efficient development patterns. They also promote, um, inter-regional relationship between jobs and housing because they, you know, they're, they work together. You know, if you have jobs, one place, you kind of want housing near it so that you reduce your, you know, uh, or help the environment and things like that.

Um, and then also helping to balance disproportionate household income distributions. And finally, we'll talk about later is the objective of, uh, furthering fair housing, affirmatively furthering fair housing. So going back to the committee, you know, they give each city and county their allocation and, um, the adopted methodology has allocated San José, 62,200 homes. And again, this is the homes that we have to plan for. So not that San José necessarily builds on their own. For those 62,200 homes, I know I can sound a bit overwhelming, but that's the process that we're engaging in right now that staff is doing the analysis for and seeking input from the community. And it doesn't necessarily have to be new, newly constructed homes. We can also, um, meet that goal through preservation of existing apartments, affordable apartments, you know, we could build in our urban villages. That's another idea. Um, we can count what we project to be, um, our count for the next eight years for ADUs or granny units. And then also what's already been existing, um, sort of approved projects that are in the pipeline.

**Kristen:** From the region, we also get an allocation of how many of those units can be market-rate and just, you know, whatever price point, but also the number of units that need to be developed as mostly restricted affordable. And when we say that, it means that the local government puts on recorded covenants onto properties. And often, usually it takes subsidy, definitely in our expensive market, it takes public subsidy of the local level or the state or the federal resources. And then, um, that prescribes what rents can be charged and also the incomes maximum incomes of the people that can live there. So part of that allocation of the 62,000 and change, um, will be for affordable apartments, could be affordable homes if someone can figure out how to make that work mathematically.

So they don't dictate the tenure or the type of unit, but, but the number. And again, that has some relationship to our current population, and also some, some relationship to, um, you know, what the conditions are in our own market now, in terms of how well everybody's housed today. You know, whether they're under housed or, um, that we see a lot of, um, overcrowding, and by overcrowding, what I mean is, more people end up living in a housing unit than it's designed for. So something like a two-bedroom unit is designed for one household, but when we see overcrowded conditions, we see, you know, two and sometimes three households sharing a two-bedroom apartment. And that's what we mean.

**Alli:** So you you're talking, the state dictates the capital-A affordable housing that we need to get subsidies for.

**Kristen:** Yeah, well, it also, it comes down through the jurisdiction, through ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. ABAG - MTC to gather, you know, through their methodology, they take that state allocation in the Bay Area, and then they further distribute it among the regions' jurisdictions, and that's what tells us how many affordable units that we need.

**Alli:** Okay, cool. So what does the upcoming Housing Element process look like for the city of San José?

**Kristen:** Just quickly and I'll hand it to Ruth. Um, the cycle is different than previous cycles and a couple of different ways. And one is that, this cycle thought more about, um, current housing conditions in the market than other cycles did. Other cycles had worked more with, um, projections of new people moving to the area or families growing, like natural growth. And really thought about the growth rate and, um, this cycle that's taken into account, but also, as I said, you know, for

instance, overcrowded housing conditions are also taken into account. So how well-housed we already are, or under-housed is also kind of part of this number and that's different.

The second big reason that we can talk more about is that the state also said, you know, this time again, it's not enough to think about total number of units. You really need to think about housing choices and, maximizing housing choices for everybody in the community and what the state did was, um, they codified what the federal government had laid out in 2015 about affirmatively furthering fair housing choices and how jurisdictions are actually legally on the hook to make sure that we do everything in our power to make sure everybody is housed, especially folks who are in protected classes. Um, so for instance, seniors or people who are disabled, people who are in large families and folks who may, you know, experience discrimination because of their race or ethnicity. There are a lot of protected classes, but anyway, fair housing at the state and the local level really works to remove barriers for people who are traditionally experiencing problems in the market. So what the state did was to say, hey, we liked what the federal government did in 2015, no matter what happens with that federal rule, we're going to bring that into California law. And we're going to have communities integrate into their planning for housing.

So there, it's [AB 686 is the name of the law](#). And it tells jurisdictions, and the state is giving guidance on exactly what does that mean? What should jurisdictions be planning for? How should we be thinking about the housing growth and not just that it exists, but also where it exists and what kinds of experiences people will have living in those neighborhoods? So this focus on fair housing integrated all throughout the Housing Element? The bones of it were there before it is much bigger of a focus this time.

**Ruth:** Part of the work is for us to do an analysis of fair housing, but it's also, we need to weave in, um, weave that concept into our community engagement and public outreach. We need to make a consistent, strong effort to reach people who are generally not at our meetings, who are protected classes, who are low income. And, um, we you'll find through our website sort of different opportunities, uh, that, that we're engaging in that work. But that's another way that we're sort of weaving in fair housing and, um, also just through our inventory, and to that point, another change through state laws has been, um, you know, in the past, when with a Housing Element, you submit a list of sites where you determine, okay, there's capacity for here, you know, four 50 units, 20 units, a list of sites.

And with this sixth cycle update, um, now we have to just do more analysis and it's not just simply saying there's an acre, I predict there'll be 30 units there. It's a lot more looking at historic trends. What are the constraints? What has your city built in the past? So a lot more analysis when we, when we're looking at sites and our understanding is that the state is taking the sixth cycle very, very seriously. And they're looking at everyone, you know, Southern California has, um, I think they're towards the tail end of their process and HCD, the Housing and Community Development division that oversees, um, our Housing Element update will be looking at ours and making sure that we're meeting all of the requirements for the state laws.

**Kristen:** Part of what they're looking for is that the communities don't say like, oh, we're going to look into this good idea, that the community literally says, we are going to do this good idea or this new strategy. And this is the timeline we're going to do it on. And so, um, they're looking for it to be very connected to the problems that we've got in the market. And so for instance, one of the things we have to analyze is, um, racial and ethnic segregation in our market. And, you know, are there areas of San José where it's a predominantly one or a couple types of people who live there? And if that's the case, even though it was totally unintentional, with individuals never, you know, meaning

for that to happen, that some patterns of where folks live it, it's a result of past policies and past decisions. And, and what is it that now that we've identified highly segregated areas, um, what is that we're going to do to overcome those issues? Because again, the, the city is on the hook legally to not just further fair housing, which is like, okay, if there was discrimination in the past, let's just stop that. That's what some folks think like, well, redlining used to occur and now it doesn't. So are we okay? Um, really what it looks at is regardless of intent, um, really what are today's conditions and, um, what, uh, what does the city affirmatively have to do to take steps, to change those conditions, so that the city as a whole and the housing market is more accessible to everybody.

So one of the things that the state has also told us, for instance, like we - as we think about where affordable housing should go, for instance, you know, we want to think about, are there places where a lot of residents live, where they might be being displaced because it's getting more and more expensive in their neighborhood, um, because big developments are coming in, or it's just one of the areas that's really hot for growth. And so that's a place where we're trying to fight displacement of existing residents, and that's one of the frames we have to think about. Um, but it, and it means that so therefore, where should affordable housing be built? The state says you have to build it where people may need it, where existing low-income residents already are, and try to keep them in their neighborhoods. But you definitely should be thinking about, where it already does not exist, and where can we enhance people's opportunities by giving them a choice to be in a different neighborhood? Um, if they'd like that, if they'd want to.

So it doesn't mean everyone can afford every price point, but it means that the city needs to try to plan for restricted affordable housing and housing of better densities in places that, um, you know, may not have seen that kind of building type before. And then it's our job to make sure it's still contextual, that it still fits into the neighborhood that it's still, um, serving the local residents and creating space for new residents. So fair housing is that both and strategy and. On the hook to do it.

**Alli:** Why, why is fair housing important to this process?

**Kristen:** I mean, I think, um, what we're trying to do, what planners do regularly, we try to make sure that our community has what it needs to serve all of its residents. That it doesn't just depend on how much somebody can pay or, you know, only planning for certain neighborhoods, our jobs to plan for all of them and to make sure that today's residents are accommodated, that tomorrow's residents are accommodated, and that they have the adequate choices about where to live. You know, if somebody is in a, in a neighborhood that is lacking infrastructure, do they really have enough choices about how to make their, um, their family's lives better, if that is the only possible place they could afford an apartment? No, not necessarily! They may want to expose their kids to a different school, or they may want to, um, you know, to try living in the suburbs somewhere; more suburban format. Um, and law tells us, federal and state law tells us that it's the city's job to make sure there are choices like that. So we have to be proactive in thinking about how to remedy the discrimination that's out there, uh, where folks may not be able to access all kinds of housing.

And again, California actually says to think about people's experiences in more kinds of protected classes than the federal government tells us to. So in California, you know, people, um, are protected on the basis of their race, of their ethnicity, their religion, what sex, what gender they are, whether they're married or they're single, um, you know, where they come from, um, whether they have a large family or a small family, um, whether they need special accommodations because they might have a disability and they need a certain kind of apartment, or proximity to transit, for instance. There are lots of characteristics that are protected under law. And so we want to make sure that we don't have anything systemic going on in which, you know, people cannot access

opportunities, um, in kind of a regular pattern of a way that would be horrible. That would mean we weren't doing our jobs right.

So we're trying to think about also, you know, if there are wealth gaps, with people of different backgrounds, for instance, it's something we have to think about. Like how do we help create home ownership strategies for people who have not been able to buy before? Because we saw in the last recession, lot of folks lost their homes, but that wealth gap, that results, it's just, it's huge. And it was disproportionately... people who were hurt long-term tended to be more people of different ethnicities and backgrounds, people who are black and Latino, um, in particular had really bad outcomes from the last recession. So how do we help folks think about, you know, getting opportunities to buy houses, um, buy apartments, condos when they haven't had that in a while or their wealth gap clearly shows that there's something systemic going on. We have to help remedy that.

**Ruth:** To me, when I think about, you know, this work and looking at the state laws and how, how we're going to achieve this it's, um, I think it comes down to reducing disparities so that people all across California and across our city in particular, um, they just have better outcomes when it comes to health. When it comes to jobs, when it comes to education and opportunity, and we, we want to provide people with choice, but in the end, it's, it's better outcomes. And I think it's just timely given everything that, um, you know, our country has been going through the last two years and having these discussions about discrimination and racism and, uh, land use. And, and here we are, and it's the state telling us, you guys need to do this. And so, and they're giving us guidance, which is great, but, I think it's a good opportunity to hear from people and to get the community involved and get their thoughts and, and have honest conversations about how are we going redress and fix what local policies and governments have done in the past. And how do we move forward so that we have, you know, uh, San José for everyone.

**Alli:** I feel like one of the big conversations the last two years has really brought up is like your zip code has such a huge impact on like basic health outcomes of your life. And so the idea of the land use just changes from zip code, zip code and, that thing that like so many people don't even think about, how the land is being used is going to drastically impact like your lifespan or whether or not you have asthma or whether or not you lose your sight at a certain age. Like, it's really good to hear that the state is finally like, "and this is going to be part of the planning process. You have to deal with these systemic issues that we haven't dealt with yet.

**Ruth:** Yeah, definitely. I'm sort of thinking back to your original question, you know, like how, how are we here now in housing? And what's kind of impacted our interest in this? And, and I can tell you when, um, for a while my family lived in South Central, and my parents worked like downtown-ish and it was, um, there was a bus line that would take me through from my neighborhood to downtown LA and as a child, it felt like literally two different worlds because you were, hop on the bus and you see like liquor store, liquor store, burnt out liquor store, this and that. And you know, just like the blight in the neighborhood. And as you get closer to downtown, it's shiny, you don't see the liquor stores. And I used to think, I used to think I lived like 50 miles away. I lived about eight miles away from downtown. It was different zip codes. And it was just like, to me, it was like night and day. And I feel like that's probably where my interest in planning came from. It's like, there's a built environment and it's this way for a reason. And why is that? And how can we fix it? So that's our, our task here come up with some good solutions with the community.

**Alli:** Yeah, definitely.

**Kristen:** Yeah. And I was going to say, you know, the federal administration in 2015 was the Obama administration. We've had fair housing laws on the books for decades, but yet we still have these really different outcomes for people depending on where they live. And it was the Obama administration that finally said, um, you know, you have to be a more proactive and be, really look at the neighborhoods that to make sure they've got adequate investments. Right? Like you shouldn't be seeing radical differences between neighborhoods, like who had road upgrades, and then others that didn't - over the long haul. You know, we got a lot of roads. It takes years to pay for them all, but I mean, like there shouldn't be systemic disinvestment in places. Um, you know, where you live is so closely tied to, um, the schools that your kids go to and the educational outcomes. I'm thankful that I accessed a public school education that got me into the places I wanted to get to after that. And that's, it's so not something to be taken for granted. Right? Like, it's just, if you live in certain places, rather than others, you know, your school outcomes may not be as good. It's just true.

Right. So then like, does that wall off opportunities for you for the next step? My dad always said, act today, so that you've got the next step open to you if you want it. Right? And so we're just trying to help people have that next step open to them a little bit more clearly and a little bit better by being thoughtful about where and how we plan for them to live.

**Alli:** Speaking of that, how is the, this Housing Element cycle going to specifically impact the residents of San José today?

**Ruth:** Um, well, you know, it, I think we've, we've touched on this point. It's, it's a policy document and I think it's a policy document that we hope will embody the values and the vision that we have collectively to address housing needs. And as, um, Kristen has mentioned before, where, where we call home, it has fundamental and very far reaching impacts on our lives and our futures. Um, your home provides you a sense of belonging, of community. And, and on the other side, it's like, how do you access, you know, opportunities and, and things like that? In terms of what we, we will like the final product of a Housing Element, there'll be policies and planning efforts. And, and we hope that that will translate to the ability of families to access neighborhoods with opportunity, or if they, uh, where they want to stay, where they are now, like, how do we reinvest? And we continue to invest in existing communities that need, need our support and our help.

**Kristen:** I just want to add, like, I would like my son to be able to live in the Bay Area someday. I've got a 14-year-old and you know, like, I don't think he wants to live in a backyard unit, even if we were able to afford to build one, like he wants to be able to get an apartment. He thinks, you know, the city's pretty cool. Um, I would like him to move home someday after he moves away. But you know, the, you know, the challenge is like, there are lots of reasons why California has underbuilt the amount of housing we need over the last decades, compared to the demand we've got. You know, it's a great place to be here in the Bay Area, but it shouldn't be only for wealthy folks to be able to live here. Right? So we have to just think through like, how can we... How can we get more units on the ground? Because that means that, um, there'll be better competition for rents and for prices in the market. Right? It might help everybody afford things a little bit better, um, long run, but we just, we need to be able to like, house our own folks here.

And then, you know, our businesses here, we are in the vibrant place in Silicon Valley, right? Like we have folks coming in from all over the world with new ideas about how to do things better. And that's one of the reasons we're majorly successful here. Um, they've gotta be able to be here as well. Like the biz, the folks that we need to work at businesses, both like, you know, international. And also my local cafe. Um, I, I don't want my waitress having to come in by bus by an hour and a half. I



want them to be able to live somewhere nearby, so they don't quit and then leave. So it's just a, it's about planning for a breadth of choices, um, in our market. And that's what we need to do. Yeah.

**Alli:** Yeah, a vibrant future. So what happens if, uh, a city doesn't reach their mandated housing goals?

**Ruth:** Well, I mean, if you, if we don't reach our goals, um, there's not necessarily a penalty. I mean, our Housing Element is going to talk about our plan to meet those goals. And every year we have an annual report that goes to the city council and we talk about, you know, whether we've met it, are we building enough low-income, very low-income, market rate housing. But if we do not, you know, submit a compliant plan by January 2023, that's the deadline for this Housing Element update. If we, if we submit something and it's not complying with state law, there's lots of consequences. One of which is that we can be sued. And we can be sued by housing organizations, by developers, by the state, and, uh, that could mean facing really big fines. A court can fine us \$10,000 a month or something like that. Um, we can have our local land use authority taken away from us as well when we don't have a compliant Housing Element. And, uh, it also limits our ability to deny certain projects, certain housing projects. I'd also say, uh, we, we lose out on funding as well, and maybe Kristin can talk a little bit more about this, but, you know, completing a, you know, good solid A+ Housing Element helps us with funding applications from the state. Um, Kristin, I don't know if you want to give some, some more on that one.

**Kristen:** Yeah. You know, I just found a memo that we had done, the city had put together six years ago, trying to quantify how much money just the city got. Nevermind the projects that went up in the city that we were supportive of too, like the restricted affordable housing, like the city would put in money, but then the developer would also apply to the state and get additional funds. Just the money that the city got for different programs. Like parks, improving infrastructure in certain areas near affordable, uh, to do planning better, to do home buyer programs. Um, six years ago that was over \$100 million dollars. It was over \$106 million that had we not had a complainant Housing Element, we absolutely could not have been applied for, nevermind gotten. Um, I know the state funding programs for affordable housing. They're moving much more towards identifying communities that are doing a good job in housing and incenting them, um, through things like, well, every project in your jurisdiction would get an extra point in the competition for instance. Just for affordable housing market rate housing, kind of infrastructure related again, parks. So my guess is it's hundreds of millions of dollars. That's at stake for the city to access – or not. We're gonna cause we're, we're good. We always do a Housing Element. We always submit on time. We always do a good job with this. So, you know, I think it's a great opportunity for folks to, to get involved and give your feedback of what you think needs working on. And you know, how people like you should be better served by the housing market. That's what we're here to listen about.

**Alli:** So how, how could people that are listening, get involved with the Housing Element process? This is, this process is just kicking off, but it's like an eight-year thing. What, what would you recommend for residents to get more involved?

**Ruth:** I would strongly recommend folks jump onto [our website](#). Um, and I'm sure you'll put this in the notes, but it's, [sanjoseca.gov/housingelementupdate](http://sanjoseca.gov/housingelementupdate). And there you'll find, you know, you can sign up for email updates. You can check our list of any upcoming community meetings or events or check out our, our past meeting recordings. Um, find our email address as well to communicate with us. If you have questions or concerns or need some help with information. We also have our past, um, Housing Element, update plan posted on the website as well. We will have a few surveys on there and we really appreciate, um, folks going there and filling them out. We'll have them, um,

trilingual, Spanish, English, Vietnamese. I would also recommend folks check out the [Let's Talk Housing Santa Clara County website](#). Um, as we mentioned earlier, you know, the entire state is doing this work and, in our region, lots of cities are doing it. And in Santa Clara County, every city in the county are having these conversations and planning their Housing Element. So I would recommend, um, [letstalkhousingscc.org](#), so you can learn about what other cities are doing as well. And then there's, uh, there's other, um, information there as well on just FYI, you know, frequently asked questions, Housing Element 101, things like that.

**Kristen:** We're going to have lots of different, um, venues and we're going to do pop-ups at public events. Ruth's in the planning department and I'm in the Housing Department, but we've never worked more closely. We are doing outreach specifically on, um, our Assessment of Fair Housing and, um, and the Housing Department is doing events just on that. We'll be doing small focus groups. We'll be doing some like themed, kind of medium-sized gatherings and then we're going to be doing more public events, um, more public meetings, where we take in more public comment on, you know, the strategies that we're thinking about, um, and putting it out there and that'll, that'll be through this spring. So like these events, we're in this phase right now of trying to educate folks what we're working on. And then we're going to be doing more about daylighting the problems that we've heard, which we've already started to do. And then what are the strategies that we're taking from that and need to put into action, getting feedback, and you know, like thoughts about what we are missing there.

And that's going to go all the way through next year. So really this fall and next spring, really kind of heavy community engagement. And then we're going to have these formal public hearings where the city council ends up approving not just the Housing Element that we'll submit to the state by the end of next year, by the end of 2022. But also we're going to have a separate Assessment of Fair Housing plan, which almost all of it will end up in the Housing Element, but we might, you know, tweak it a little bit and have it in our standalone plan. Um, so that we can also show like who we are outside of the state's framework and what we were thinking about, um, without the state's kind of massaging of language that we need to do sometimes. So we'll end up with two products, both go into council late in 2022, but lots of meetings before then. Um, so yeah, we really encourage people. We, we can't do this without you. It's. Public feedback is one of the things the state absolutely looks for and checks on whether we've done a good job, trying to get everybody's voices and input. So really need that feedback.

*Thanks again to Ruth and Kristen for joining me on today's episode. To learn more about the Housing Element process and to get more involved, please visit our website at [www.sanJoseca.gov/housingelementupdate](http://www.sanJoseca.gov/housingelementupdate).*

*Thanks for listening to Dwellings, the City of San José Housing Department podcast. Our theme music is "Speed City," composed and performed by Ettaine Charles. Thanks to San José Jazz for letting us use your music.*

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[housingcomms@sanJoseca.gov](mailto:housingcomms@sanJoseca.gov). Our artwork is by Chelsea Palacio. Dwellings is produced by me, Alli Rico, and Jeff Scott of the Housing Department.