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City of Sausalito Planning Commission
420 Litho St
Sausalito, CA

Subject: The Need for Thoughtful City Planning in the Proposed Housing Element Revision

Dear Planning Commission Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the ODDS and Housing Element revisions. To avoid redundancy, I have attached my previous comments—many of which remain unaddressed. However, the core issue of this unnecessary housing revision continues to be overlooked: **City Planning**.

Rather than a well-conceived approach to urban development, this process has become a reactive response to opposition from affluent neighborhoods unwilling to accommodate new housing. The city has failed to conduct a proper planning analysis that considers how smart housing policies can solve broader economic, environmental, and livability challenges. I urge you to approach this issue through a lens of **economic vitality, feasibility, resident benefits, and logical city planning**.

Understanding Sausalito's Urban Design

Sausalito's historical development centered around transportation—first the ferry, then the railroad, and later Bridgeway, our primary transportation corridor which extends the entire length of the town. Bridgeway remains the backbone of our city:

- **Primary fire evacuation route** with access to additional firefighting waterfront resources
- **Main transportation hub** for buses and ferries
- **Economic and visitor center** of Sausalito

The zoning along Bridgeway has long supported commercial and mixed-use residential development, encouraging **dense, urban vertical housing above businesses**. Within this zoning area are delivery trucks from the early hours of the morning, more traffic, dense buildings built with zero set back lines, and heightened noise during the day into the evening

Adjacent to this corridor is the mostly zoned **R-3 Buffer Zone**, an area designated for dense multi-unit properties, condominiums, and apartments. This zoning supports **walkability**, which, in turn, strengthens the economic viability of our downtown businesses. Within this zoning is

more dense urban-like living with less outdoor space, limited parking, and more intensified land use.

Beyond the buffer zone lies the **R-1 single-family neighborhoods**, offering a quieter residential environment, more outdoor space and less intensive land use.

The problem arises when residents fail to recognize the character of the neighborhood they chose to live in and/or purchase properties in. The Planning Commission frequently mediates disputes over parking, noise, protests for development approvals and construction—many of which stem from efforts of having converted multi-unit properties into single-family living, effectively reversing the intended purpose of these zones of dense housing and urban living.

The Decline of Downtown and Economic Sustainability

Historically, downtown Sausalito served both residents and visitors. While tourism was always a factor, local spending helped sustain businesses year-round. Over the past 25 years, however, downtown has become increasingly reliant on seasonal visitors, leading to:

- **A narrowing business mix** unattractive to residents
- **Declining interest from top-tier retailers** due to compressed sales seasons
- **Reduced discretionary income for landlords**, causing property neglect
- **Lower-quality visitor demographic** and further economic degradation

The situation is worsening. Ferry ridership is at an all-time low, with potential service cutbacks looming. Public infrastructure like **Yee Tock Chee Park is non-compliant with ADU regulations**, exposing the city to legal risk, and **the downtown pier has deteriorated with no plan for restoration**. This reflects poor governance and a lack of vision for revitalization.

A Path Forward: Smart Urban Infill

Rather than resisting housing mandates, Sausalito should embrace **City Planning** as a proactive tool for growth. The city's failure to comply with past housing elements and limited, to no, approvals of new housing, is no longer a secret. Previous strategies—alleging a miscount of live-aboards, retroactively legalizing amnesty ADUs, and “kicking the can down the road”—have only delayed accountability. Now, the current revised Housing Element relies on an **unrealistic proposal** to have it designed around city-owned land leased for production of “affordable” projects that will never attract financing. Even if the City offered properties with zero-dollar leases (and zero income to Sausalito) this scheme will not attract developers or financial institutional lending to build and improve “third party” land for development. This approach lacks feasibility and risks further legal challenges and Bad Faith challenges from HCD and others. It would not matter if the RHNA is 124 or 724, Sausalito has not approved new housing numbers to comply with any RHNA number

A practical, forward-thinking solution is to focus on **urban infill along the existing transportation corridor**, Bridgeway. This approach:

- **Reduces environmental impact** by promoting walkability and transit use
- **Lowens construction costs** due to existing infrastructure
- **Enhances fire safety** by developing in accessible, low-risk areas
- **Minimizes disruption** to existing single-family neighborhoods, parks, schools and city buildings
- **Preserves green space** and protects high-risk wildfire zones
- **Provides for Fair Housing** as housing on Bridgeway traverses the entire length of town, allowing for housing in all parts of town

Encouraging urban infill in these areas would also **revitalize downtown** by fostering a resident-driven economy, supporting local businesses, and generating year-round sustainable revenue for the city. Down zoning Urban Infill areas along the main transportation corridor is incomprehensively misguided.

The Planning Commission's Role

Sausalito has repeatedly failed to approve housing. **Every other city in Marin has approved and has allowed housing to be built**, while Sausalito continues to play “bad faith” dangerous games with HCD and the Department of Justice, leading to costly lawsuits and an increasingly tarnished reputation. The latest Sausalito report to HCD shows **ZERO housing approved in the last TEN YEARS for buildings with 2 or more units**. The current proposed Housing Element revision has only deepened community divisions, benefiting the wealthiest neighborhoods at the expense of sound planning.

Residents in the **commercial and R-3 buffer zones** should recognize that new dense housing aligns with their zoning and long-standing urban planning principles. However, concerns about housing development in **school yards** should be taken seriously, as such a change was never part of their original neighborhood planning.

As members of the **Planning Commission**, I urge you to uphold the responsibilities implied by your name—**to plan**. The city cannot afford another round of bad-faith proposals and reactionary decision-making. A clear, well-reasoned **City Planning** approach is the only way forward.

Sincerely,
Linda Fotsch