



October 6, 2022

To: East San Carlos Avenue, Montgomery, Cherry, and Hall Street Residents

From: City of San Carlos Community Development Department

The City of San Carlos is currently in the process of updating its plan to accommodate our community's current and future housing needs. This plan, called a "**Housing Element**," is required by the State of California to be addressed and updated every eight years. Under this requirement, San Carlos needs to plan for at least 2,735 new homes from 2023 – 2031. The City of San Carlos began the process to update the Housing Element in 2020. To learn more about this process, we invite you to visit the project website at www.SanCarlos2040.org.

At this time, a Draft Housing Element that outlines how the City will be able to meet the goal of 2,735 new housing units has been reviewed by both the San Carlos Planning Commission (on September 19, 2022) and the City Council (on September 26, 2022). A key strategy to meet San Carlos' housing needs requires increasing the allowable number of housing units per acre and related increases in allowed building stories and building height. The City cannot meet its housing needs without making these changes and must show the State Housing and Community Development Department that certain constraints and barriers to the creation of housing are being reduced.

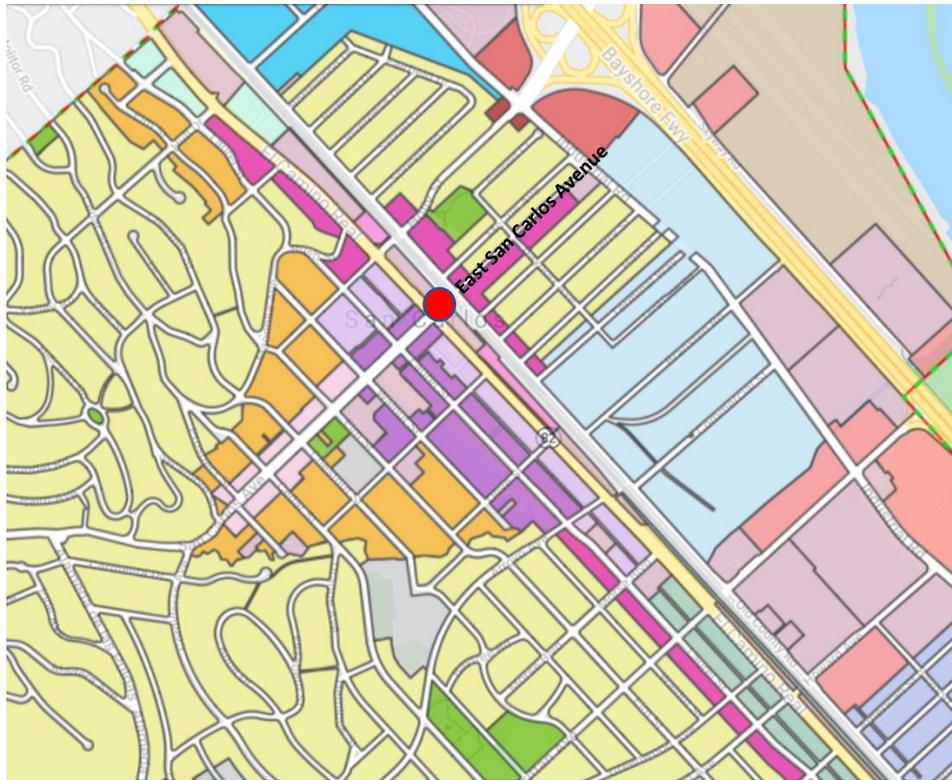
Following the September 26, 2022, City Council meeting, many San Carlos residents who live on or near East San Carlos Avenue, Montgomery, Cherry, and Hall streets submitted comment letters to the City's planning staff, Planning Commission, and the City Council, requesting clarification of proposed zoning changes along East San Carlos Avenue in the Mixed Use-Neighborhood Zoning District (MU-N).

The purpose of this letter is to:

1. Provide clarification on zoning changes along East San Carlos Avenue
2. Inform residents how they can get involved and provide constructive feedback on the look and feel of future housing developments
3. Invite residents to attend the Planning Commission Informational Session on Zoning Ordinance Amendments, scheduled for Monday, October 17, 2022

ZONING ALONG EAST SAN CARLOS AVENUE

The image below shows the location of the Mixed Use-Neighborhood (MU-N) Zoning District in hot pink. The San Carlos Caltrain Station is indicated by the red dot.



There are **no** major zoning changes proposed for the MU-N Zoning District along East San Carlos Avenue. Height and setback requirements are proposed to remain as they have been since 2011.

Since 2011, the properties along East San Carlos Avenue have been designated as MU-N in the City's Zoning Ordinance. This MU-N zoning designation is found not only along East San Carlos Avenue, but also along Old County Road and along the west side of Laurel Street, south of Arroyo Avenue. There are also a few blocks of MU-N along El Camino Real.

The current Zoning Ordinance sets forth limitations for development in the MU-N zoning district along East San Carlos Avenue **which are different** and more restrictive than other areas of MU-N in recognition of the unique characteristics of this block. For East San Carlos Avenue, the following MU-N zoning applies:

- ✓ Maximum building height: 35 ft.
- ✓ Maximum building stories: two to three (a third story requires Use Permit approval by the Planning Commission)
- ✓ Side Yard Building Setbacks: 10 ft. from side property lines
- ✓ Rear Yard Building Setbacks: 30 ft. from rear property line

Following the City Council meeting of September 26, 2022, staff and the consulting team are now in the process of proposing **two** changes to MU-N zoning along East San Carlos Avenue as follows:

- **Remove the Use Permit requirement for the third story.** The 35 ft. height and all setbacks and landscape buffers would remain in place as stated above. *Note: A third story is seven feet more than the 28 feet two-story maximum building height for single-family homes in all nearby residential blocks.*

The City's Zoning Ordinance also regulates the number of housing units per acre. The City is proposing the following change to the number of dwelling units per acre along East San Carlos Avenue as follows:

- **Change the housing density maximum (number of units per acre) from 20 to 40 units to the acre.**

These minor changes are intended to show the State that the City of San Carlos is making an effort in all residentially zoned areas to remove barriers to new housing.

To learn more about all proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments to support new housing, please attend the upcoming Planning Commission Informational Session on October 17, 2022. Community members are invited to attend in person at City Hall (600 Elm Street) or via Zoom (link provided on October 17, 2022 Planning Commission agenda, which can be accessed at www.cityofsancarlos.org under "Public Meetings" located at the top of the webpage).

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY SITES

As part of the Housing Element, cities and counties are required by law to submit a list of sites that are viable candidates for new housing development over the next eight years. The State reviews these sites carefully to make sure there are no impediments to housing and that the sites could realistically be developed with new housing over the eight-year period. Two sites along East San Carlos Avenue had been identified as sites that could yield 79 units: 1031 East San Carlos Avenue and 575 Old County Road/1059 McCue Avenue.

In response to public comments made by East Side residents at the City Council Study Session on September 22, 2022, the City Council requested that staff remove these two sites from the list. Accordingly, staff and the consultants have removed these sites and instead will focus the State's attention on other sites in San Carlos that could support housing.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND INFORMED IN THE BUILDING AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

As a supplement to the General Plan Housing Element Update, the City of San Carlos is also working on objective design standards for new housing development. This work will get into the finer details of project design, including requirements for landscape buffers and architectural design features for all new housing in the city. This project is called the **San Carlos Objective Design Standards** project.

Please join us on Wednesday, October 19, at 6:00 p.m. for a virtual Community Workshop on the San Carlos Objective Design Standards. This workshop will focus on multi-family and mixed-use development projects and what design and landscape standards should be required for these types of projects. The City invites and encourages you and your neighbors to participate and share concerns, ideas, and feedback.

Please visit www.cityofsancarlos.org/designstandards to learn more, or scan the QR code below with your smart phone to learn how to join the workshop:



NEXT STEPS

The Draft Housing Element is legally required to be reviewed and certified by the State of California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). San Carlos Planning Division staff will submit the Draft Housing Element to HCD in mid-October, 2022. Thereafter, the City expects to receive a comment letter from HCD with instructions to modify, refine, and clarify the Draft Housing Element.

The Draft Housing Element is on track to be formally considered by the Planning Commission on January 3, 2023, and to be considered for adoption by the City Council on January 23, 2023.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this letter. Should you have any questions, please contact City staff at AdvancePlanning@cityofsancarlos.org.