



Highlights from Portola Valley's June 1 Community Conversation

On June 1, 2019, about 65 community members gathered at the Portola Valley Town Center to continue a series of housing conversations that began last spring. The conversation built off of the previous two meetings on March 3 and May 5 of 2018, where attendees shared their community values; four themes that emerged were the importance of the surrounding rural environment, emphasis on family connections, the desire to maintain a vital workforce, and the hope for creative solutions. Some specific areas of community interest, such as shared housing and accessory dwelling units, were found to align with the town's Housing Strategic Plan. More information on the community conversations can be found on the [town's website](#).

The June 1 meeting provided an opportunity for people who live and/or work in Portola Valley to become more familiar with the town's Housing Strategic Plan and share thoughts about its implementation. The session focused on three key strategies:

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – smaller units on the same parcel
- Affiliated Housing Program – faculty, employees, and key employers
- Town-owned Land

Out of the participants, many were long-time residents. The majority had not attended the prior year's community conversations about the Housing Strategic Plan, but many indicated that they have been at other town meetings about housing. Two presentations were each followed by facilitated table discussions to allow participants to talk together about their hopes and concerns for next steps on housing. Participant input was gathered via notes from the table discussions as well as individual input sheets.

I. Topics of Interest

The meeting presentations and discussion topics sparked conversation that included a wide range of perspectives. On the topic of housing overall:

- Many people shared community values that are consistent with past resident input, such as the desire to preserve open space and the "small-town, country-feel, and wildlife."
- Participants also expressed the desire for the Housing Strategic Plan to address town issues holistically and to take needs such as traffic, scenic corridors, trails, fire safety, and infrastructure into account.
- Several people expressed support for enabling local workers to live close by, whether in Portola Valley or in nearby cities.

Participants also gave feedback on specific housing strategies:

- There was widespread agreement that accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are a good way to add housing in Portola Valley “for working people as well as family members,” although some had different points of view about the appropriate size limit for an ADU. Also, many are concerned about how ADUs will be made available and affordable for local workers. “How can we ensure that ADUs or the like can be rented to town employees, teachers, firemen, first?” one participant asked.
- Many participants indicated interest in using town-owned land to provide housing, but there were concerns with funding sources and specifics, such as who determines who is eligible for the housing and the town assuming responsibility as a housing manager. Primary concerns were related to one of the locations being considered by a town ad hoc committee near Corte Madera School.
- Comments about Portola Valley’s unique Affiliate Housing Program included people who want to “encourage smaller dwelling units on Housing Affiliate land” as well as those who want to make sure that the town’s interests are well-represented in any negotiation.

Traffic and parking were often cited as concerns when discussing any future housing projects. Other topics of discussion included housing architecture, design and density, using Portola Valley’s town funds to support housing projects in nearby cities, affordable housing eligibility, and feedback on specific housing developments. A few participants suggested exploring eco-villages and tiny homes. Some others expressed strong interest in maintaining large home sizes and distance between residences and/or questioned the premise of the Town’s Housing Strategic Plan.

In the anonymous meeting evaluation, the majority of attendees agreed that they had received useful information. Some attendees indicated that they would have preferred a more traditional “question and answer” town hall format, but many more shared that they liked the table dialogue as a complement to the presentations.

“I appreciate the proactive approach to engage and educate the Portola Valley community.”

- Participant ”

Attendees at different tables acknowledged the town’s efforts in working to find housing solutions and convening residents.

II. Continuing Engagement

Community members expressed a desire to stay involved in housing conversations. Some hoped that a wider range of the town’s residents, including newer residents, would be included. Moving forward, people suggested that the town continue to use a wide array of communication methods, including postcards, newspapers, banners, social media, and smaller meetings in neighborhoods. Future communications from the town will continue to answer questions about what the decision-making process is for future initiatives, how that process is decided, and how people can stay involved.

Community members can sign up for emails about housing and other topics on the [town’s subscription page](#) or email housing questions to housing@portolavalley.net.