



STAFF REPORT

City Council
Meeting Date: 4/13/2021
Staff Report Number: 21-079-CC

Informational Item: Housing element advisory committee formation update

Recommendation

This is an informational item and does not require City Council action. Staff will return to the City Council April 27 for a broader discussion on the housing element update. The intent of this information item is to keep the City Council and members of the public informed about the formation of a housing element advisory committee and the forthcoming selection process.

Policy Issues

The components of the housing element update will consider a number of land use, environmental and housing policies.

Background

The City is beginning its housing element (2023-2031) update effort. On March 23, 2021, the City Council authorized the city manager to negotiate a scope of work and fee and execute an agreement with the M-Group to lead the housing element update and related work. The City Council identified this project as a priority and has dedicated staffing and consultant resources to complete the multicomponent project by December 2022. Given the complexity and importance of the subject matter, the City Council has stressed the importance of community engagement, particularly with underrepresented populations. The process must be inclusive at all stages of the project to help ensure that all voices are heard. Like many past projects with citywide significance, the housing element update's scope of work also identifies the creation of an advisory group. While past advisory groups have been identified by various titles such as an Oversight and Outreach Committee (Transportation Master Plan), Advisory Committee (general plan) and Steering Committee (last housing element), their general purpose has been to help guide and provide feedback on particular topics or key decision points during the process and to serve as ambassadors of the project. With a strong emphasis on creating an inclusive process, staff recommends the formation of the Housing Element Community Engagement and Outreach Committee (CEOC) with its primary focus on engagement and outreach. The creation of this group is a critical first step in the process. Given the necessary time for recruitment and the time-intensive nature of housing element process, staff is recommending to commence recruitment following the April 13 City Council meeting. More details about the proposed advisory group is discussed in the Analysis section below.

Analysis

Housing Element Community Engagement and Outreach Committee Composition

To encourage public participation and reach the diverse populations that represent Menlo Park, staff

recommends the formation of the CEOC. This group is anticipated to be a 10-member group, comprised of Menlo Park residents who currently do not serve on the City Council, Planning Commission or Housing Commission. Because the City Council, Planning Commission and Housing Commission will have their own formal roles in the process, the goal is to open the CEOC to Menlo Park residents who currently do not have an official voice in the process. Separately, the City Council could consider establishing an ad hoc City Council housing element subcommittee if the City Council, itself, desires more direct involvement throughout the process. The City Council subcommittee could be formed concurrently with the CEOC. Ideally, the composition of the CEOC would reflect the City's different City Council districts and also represent a diversity of interests, expertise and characteristics, including gender, age, race, ethnicity and residential tenancy (renter or homeowner.) Staff believes focusing on community engagement and outreach will be the most productive and beneficial use of the advisory committee's time. As members of the community, each member will be able to share from their experiences and collaborate on how best to connect and learn from stakeholders in the community. Through broad outreach, we will be able to help inform the community about the project, and through meaningful engagement, the consultant team, staff, Commissions and ultimately the City Council will be able to learn from the community about what matters to them.

The CEOC would be a Brown Act body and is anticipated to have monthly meetings between May/June 2021 and November 2021, and check-in meetings as needed through the 20-month process. Meetings would likely occur Thursday evenings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to avoid potential conflicts with other City Council and Commission meetings. It is anticipated that the meetings would occur remotely at first, but could transition to in-person sessions as it becomes safe to do so. However, depending on input from the CEOC on the community engagement plan, the schedule could be modified. A more-detailed project timeline is being developed and will be shared as part of the April 27 housing element discussion. In addition, the CEOC members are expected to be ambassadors of the project and would be encouraged to attend other public events. As directed by the City Council, the Committee members will be required to complete a real property disclosure form. As part of the application process, all prospective applicants will also be asked if they own property in Menlo Park, in addition to their main residence.

CEOC roles and responsibilities

The CEOC's overall purpose is to assist the City in ensuring a broad and inclusive community outreach and engagement process. Members will have an opportunity to help guide and provide feedback on the types and frequency of activities/events/meetings and the strategies and methods for communicating with the various stakeholders in the community. The committee would not provide policy guidance, though members are welcome to participate in planned events and meetings as individuals.

The primary responsibilities of the group would be to:

- Serve as an ambassador of the project and encourage people to participate in the process;
- Help guide and provide feedback on the community engagement plan; and
- Serve as a community resource to provide information to and receive input from the community on matters related to community engagement and public outreach.

The primary responsibilities of each member would be to:

- Identify effective ways to inform and engage the various stakeholders about the project;
- Commit to constructive dialogue, mutual respect and collaboration; and
- Share local knowledge.

Recruitment

The goal is to form a 10-member committee. Staff does not recommend more than 10 members given the

logistical issues, efficiencies in meeting management, and focused mission of the group. To be eligible to serve on the CEOC, the following criteria must be met:

- Resident of Menlo Park;
- Eighteen years and older; and
- Not currently serving on the City Council, Planning Commission or Housing Commission.

Interested applicants must complete an application, which will include both standard and demographic data questions, including:

- Name
- Address
- Age
- Person of color
- Housing tenure (renter or owner)

The intent of the additional demographic data is to assist the City Council in selecting a diverse group of residents to serve on the CEOC, although there are no formulas or ratios, except each City Councilmember would appoint one member from their district.

The application (in English and Spanish) is expected to be available on the City Clerk's webpage (Attachment A) by April 16. Staff plans to coordinate with the city clerk and the public engagement manager on advertising the recruitment. City Councilmembers and members of the public are also encouraged to share this information with their networks. The packet of applications would be posted on the website and distributed to the City Council for review and selection in May. The first CEOC meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 27.

Selection process

As noted earlier, each City Councilmember would appoint one member to the committee for total of five members of the 10-person body. In its appointment, each City Councilmember should consider the following factors for each candidate:

- Ability to fully participate and meet the CEOC's responsibilities;
- Characteristics to help achieve a diverse group of individuals; and
- Responses provided to questions about their interest to serve.

Depending on the applicant pool size and resident location, there are various options to select the remaining five members of the group. It is anticipated that the five additional members would be selected at random by the City Council. To help ensure a geographic balance, applicants would be categorized by districts. If there are no or a limited number of applicants for a particular district, a person would be selected amongst the pool of applicants, but no more than three members shall be from any one district. Staff believes this process helps create an independent and representative process. Alternatively, the City Council or those members appointed by the City Council could also appoint the remaining members of the CEOC, if directed by City Council. The final selection methodology will be presented along with the pool of candidates to the City Council in May, at which time the City Council will be officially forming the CEOC.

Timeline and next steps

Staff is scheduled to return to the City Council on April 27 to provide a more formal introduction to the housing element update, seek input on the givens or principles of the housing element and to establish a common understanding of the goals and outcomes.

Impact on City Resources

On November 10, 2020, the City Council authorized up to \$1.69 million for the preparation of the Housing Element, including consultant services and partial funding for two full-time equivalents for the fiscal year 2020-21. On March 23, 2021, the City Council authorized the city manager to negotiate a scope of work and fee and execute an agreement with the M-Group for a fee, not to exceed \$982,000.

Environmental Review

This action is not a project within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §§ 15378 and 15061(b)(3) as it will not result in any direct or indirect physical change in the environment. As part of the housing element update process, an environmental impact report (EIR) will be prepared.

Public Notice

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

A. Hyperlink – City clerk’s advisory commissions and committees webpage: menlopark.org/commissions

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