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March 31, 2025

Sebastopol City Council
Sebastopol Youth Annex
425 Morris St, Sebastopol

Item 1: City Council Goal Setting Workshop

Dear Mayor Zollman, Councilmembers, and Staff,

We appreciate the work the Council and staff have done over the past year to keep housing progress moving in a challenging environment. The addition of 46 new units in your most recent Annual Progress Report represents over 22% of Sebastopol's RHNA target and is an important step toward addressing local housing needs. These incremental gains matter, and we're encouraged to see the City continuing to prioritize this work.

Thank you for making your goal-setting process public and transparent. This openness provides a meaningful opportunity for community members and partners to better understand the City's priorities and engage constructively in shaping them. As you move forward in setting the City's goals, we want to express our support for several of the staff-recommended priorities. In particular, we encourage you to:

- **Prioritize the continued discussions and ultimate adoption to consolidate the Planning Commission and Design Review Board.** This reform is a key strategy outlined in our [Housing Action Plan's Fast & Fair](#) recommendation, designed to streamline housing approvals.
- **Advance work on an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD),** in order to strengthen long-term financial stability and support future housing infrastructure.

The goals outlined are reasonable and closely aligned with those adopted by other jurisdictions across the county. **We believe housing clearly fits within the framework being developed.**

We also encourage the Council to **seriously consider the zoning reform proposal introduced by Planning Commission Chair Paul Fritz**, which was formally presented during the Commission's February 11 meeting. The proposal includes targeted changes to the zoning code that would allow for more homes in walkable, historic-style neighborhoods, many of which are currently legal non-conforming and cannot be replicated today. These reforms are already under Planning Commission discussion, and present a meaningful opportunity to support thoughtful infill aligned with Sebastopol's character and values.



That said, **the most urgent**
Housing Element implementation
deadlines for state-prioritized programs, including the Workforce Housing Overlay

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Sebastopol has missed key
deadlines for state-prioritized programs, including the Workforce Housing Overlay

Zone, zoning code updates, and by-right housing provisions. We understand that staffing challenges and capacity limitations have led to delays, but the stakes are now increasing.

Cities that fall out of compliance risk not only the loss of state grant eligibility and their Pro-Housing Designation, but also exposure to legal action and the Builder's Remedy, which limits local discretion over land use.

Additionally, we encourage the Council to consider the fiscal benefits of reducing housing scarcity. If homes were not so scarce, we would see higher vacancy rates and more movement in the housing market, sales and purchases that would trigger property reassessments and generate increased property tax revenue. In a time of fiscal challenge, this could be a meaningful and sustainable source of local revenue.

Our intent in raising this is rooted in collaboration and a desire to see Sebastopol succeed. There's still time to regain momentum, and Generation Housing is here to help ensure the City can meet its goals and maintain local control.

Thank you again for your service and leadership. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure Sebastopol remains a place where people of all incomes and backgrounds can find a place to call home.

In partnership,



Stephanie Picard Bowen
Deputy Director, Generation Housing