

From: [Adrian Covert](#)
To: [City Council Public Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Housing Strategy Session Comments
Date: Sunday, May 31, 2026 11:03:35 PM
Attachments: [05.31 Santa Rosa Growth Strategy.pdf](#)

Greetings Mayor Stapp and Councilmembers,

Please see the attached letter from Santa Rosa YIMBY regarding the housing strategy session on Tuesday.

Best,

Adrian Covert
Local Lead
Santa Rosa YIMBY



**SANTA ROSA
YIMBY**

May 30, 2026

The Honorable Mark Stapp, Mayor
City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Re: Housing strategy as growth strategy

Dear Mayor Stapp and Councilmembers,

As Santa Rosa prepares to present voters with a proposed sales tax increase to resolve the city's budget challenges, the city must demonstrate to voters that it's also using every low/no cost policy tool at its disposal to increase revenues in ways that also address the city's three primary challenges: an affordability crisis that's driving families from the city; an enrollment crisis that's closing schools and negatively impacting educational outcomes; and a homelessness crisis that undermines public health and safety. Each of these crises are in one way or another downstream of a chronic shortage of housing at all income levels.

Santa Rosa YIMBY, an all-volunteer association of 470 Santa Rosans dedicated to building Santa Rosa into an affordable, vibrant, low-carbon city for all, recommends the following actions:

1. **Pass an SB 10 ordinance for CEQA-free up-zoning near transit and job centers.** SB 10 allows California cities to adopt by ordinance CEQA-exempt changes to local zoning to allow for up to ten units per parcel near transit and job centers. SB 10 ordinances offer a low-cost policy change that allows for new housing to maximize property tax revenue while minimizing new infrastructure liabilities.
2. **Pass an AB 1033 ordinance to allow sales of ADUs:** AB 1033 allows property owners to split ADUs off into new for-sale homes. The original home and property gets to keep its Proposition 13 tax assessment, but the new parcel would be reassessed and taxed on current market value upon sale. AB 1033 ordinances are a low-cost policy change that increases home ownership opportunities, and generates new property tax revenue while minimizing new infrastructure liabilities.
3. **Abolish parking minimums citywide:** Parking minimums are an antiquated 20th century urban policy that wastes land and promotes car dependence. When cities

mandate parking minimums, developers are forced to set aside land that could have housed people to instead house cars. Not only do we get fewer, more expensive homes, we also get increased space between new homes and places we need to go, which generates more traffic and more cars. That's why cities across the US like Hartford, CT; Buffalo, NY; St. Paul, MN, and others are repealing parking minimums. Santa Rosa already abolished parking minimums in the Downtown Station Area. Let's finish the job.

4. **Audit and sunset outdated housing regulations.** Santa Rosa should conduct a comprehensive audit of city ordinances to identify outdated requirements and regulations that impose unnecessary costs on housing development, and establish a formal process to sunset or remove provisions that no longer serve a demonstrated public purpose. Regulations account for nearly 25% of the cost of building a single-family home and over 40% of multifamily development costs, according to the National Association of Home Builders, and construction costs are at historic highs. Studies increasingly show how even well-intentioned policies like inclusionary ordinances can actually worsen housing shortages. A systematic review ensures that every requirement on the books earns its place by delivering real public benefit, not just adding cost and delay.
5. **Initiate a formal review of the long-vacant parcels and buildings.** Downtown Santa Rosa is littered with derelict buildings on high-value parcels, these include the lot at 3rd Street & Old Courthouse Square; the vacant bank at 3rd & Santa Rosa Ave; the vacant building at 4th & B Street; and others. The City should prioritize using a combination of carrots and sticks to compel property owners to either improve or sell these lots for activation.
6. **Create an objective design standard (ODS) "Fast-Track".** Subjective, "vibes-based" design reviews by planning commissions add months of delays and expensive architectural redesigns based on neighborhood complaints when speed and predictability are the #1 incentives for developers when choosing where to build in a shrinking market. Santa Rosa should fully transition its design review process to clear Objective Design Standards. If a project meets the height, setback, and material rules, it gets approved ministerially.

Santa Rosa cannot tax or cut its way to prosperity—the city must pursue smart population and economic growth by optimizing land use for affordability and revenue generation while minimizing the growth of new infrastructure liabilities. With industry headwinds on the cost of both materials and labor, it's more important than ever for Santa Rosa to make full use of its available policy levers to make itself the most competitive place to build housing in the Bay Area and Northern California.

Sincerely,



Adrian Covert

Local Lead

Santa Rosa YIMBY

From: [emwiig](#)
To: [City Council Public Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Housing strategy > growth strategy
Date: Monday, June 1, 2026 9:49:44 AM

Dear Mayor Stapp and Councilmembers,

As a Santa Rosa resident and homeowner, I'm writing to urge the city to use every low-cost policy tool available to address our intertwined housing, affordability, and homelessness crises — before asking residents to approve a sales tax increase.

Specifically, I'd encourage the council to consider:

- **Passing SB 10 and AB 1033 ordinances** to enable CEQA-exempt upzoning near transit and allow ADU sales, both of which generate new property tax revenue with minimal infrastructure cost.
- **Abolishing parking minimums citywide.** The Downtown Station Area already did it — let's extend that citywide and free up land for homes instead of cars.
- **Auditing outdated housing regulations.** Regulations now account for nearly 25% of single-family and over 40% of multifamily construction costs. Any rule that adds cost without clear public benefit should go.
- **Addressing long-vacant downtown parcels.** Properties sitting derelict on prime land should face real pressure to be activated or sold.
- **Transitioning to objective design standards.** Unpredictable design review adds months and cost. Clear, ministerial approval when a project meets the rules makes Santa Rosa more competitive.

We can't just tax or cut our way to a healthy city budget. Smart growth is the path forward, and these are concrete steps we can take right now.

Thank you for your service to our community,

Evan Wiig

501 Shortt Rd., Santa Rosa, CA

Fred Allebach

5/31/26

Public comment, 6/2/26 Santa Rosa city council meeting, Santa Rosa Housing Strategy item

A recent Grand Jury study of Affordable Housing listed pertinent housing challenges in Sonoma County. Here's a few of my suggestions based on the listed challenges.

High Housing Costs and Income Mismatch

The City needs to raise the minimum wage to keep pace with high rents, high housing costs and a rising cost of living. If it is acceptable for the landlord cohort to claim high rents are justified then it is equally and perfectly acceptable for the City to stand up for residents and claim that a living wage is justified to pay such rents. New city policy: minimum wage is tied to meet whatever 30% of median rent on an annual basis.

Shortfall in Affordable Housing Supply

The City needs to double and triple down to pave the way for more 100% AH projects with an intentional policy to incentivize what's wanted and disincentivize what's not wanted, i.e. market rate single family homes. Focus and steer the market. Example: "we want more 100% AH projects and we are prepared to incentivize this with a radical incentivization program: fee and regulatory breaks, land use and zoning changes, UGB expansions, and we will put onerous fees on single family homes to discourage the market from seeking to produce them."

Rising Construction Costs and Land Scarcity

For rising costs, incentivize and pre-approve kit and modular homes, get outside the box. For land scarcity, target lower-assessed value lands outside the city UGB and sphere to be annexed as 100% AH exemptions to the UGB law. Quality of life will suffer if the city tries to stuff more and more people onto Santa Rosa Ave. Get AH developers to focus on cheap land adjacent to the city and plan to annex it with 100% AH projects. Santa Rosa is already sprawled, sprawl a little more to get the AH we need.

Complex and Lengthy Entitlement Processes

The city has to be sensitive to neighbor's concerns but also not allow current residents to stall forever and to burn the bridge to all new people and needed workforce.

Financing and Funding Barriers

There seems to be plenty of donors who pony up to buy open space parcels, the City can open a sexy new line of donor appeals: *support sustainable housing* and have a project named after

you! Get the donors to focus not just on the environment but on social sustainability too; the City can make the full cost accounting, triple, bottom line argument to donors.

Community Resistance and Political Constraints

This is a finesse job that the current Council has done a good job on in my estimation: approving projects and also being sympathetic to community concerns.

Need for Strong Leadership and Community Will

City leadership could be stronger in pushing for lower-income AH and overall equity. Use the SSRSP process as a way to turn a new leaf and get more assertive to advocate for the little guys who are suffering the most. For community will, allocate some staff time to enlist local social justice outfits to show up and support progressive policies. The City needs to show it is moving seriously to address the most needed types of housing. Social justice people won't show up to support market rate projects. Amp up the social justice profile of the City, let's see some more air time.

Demographic and Social Impacts

Housing crisis issues are serious and affect 40% of low-income city residents. The lack of affordable housing leads to displacement of vulnerable populations, declining school enrollments, and reduced diversity. Essential workers are forced to live farther away, undermining the local economy and community fabric and making for higher City VMT and GHG footprints. This is all real and important and deserves a top five place in City goals and actions.

Example Implementation:

Healdsburg and Rohnert Park are cited by the Grand Jury for exceeding RHNA goals by using land banking, inclusionary zoning, and innovative financing, while conducting extensive multilingual outreach to build support.

Conclusion: Affordable housing challenges in Sonoma County are multifaceted, involving economic, regulatory, political, and social barriers. Addressing these requires coordinated strategies, strong leadership, and sustained community involvement, as demonstrated by the contrasting but successful approaches of Healdsburg and Rohnert. IMO, Santa Rosa is doing well but could do better and raise the profile of AH issues to top five status. Set some audacious goals and go for it!

Fred's grab bag housing comments

It's obvious that reliance on the market without intentional steering creates more inequity; housing production by income category shows market rate housing far outstrips the rest. Business as usual in this respect is not cutting it. Reliance in the market for salvation is not

working. Let's add some municipal socialism to the mix; we need to adapt, be pragmatic, and do what works to support our little guys.

I have a sense of always having to struggle to put equity issues on the table as a City priority, COL, DACs, segregation, cost burdening are top serious issues. Let's get council direction to really zero in and address these top inequity issues.

I did a RHNA production study previously sent to staff and Council, Santa Rosa has a substantial long-term Very Low-income housing deficit. Unit production at this end of the spectrum need to be addressed with urgency.

If staff time is taken up by dealing with state housing laws, let's get a payday from this anyway; the Council should approve the SB-10 and AB 1033 laws for Santa Rosa and do it ASAP.

Allow 2% of all planner's and all of city staff's time for developing of novel ideas and innovations that might help City AH production and overall efficiency and adaptiveness. You have highly trained staff who got into planning to make a positive difference, not just to follow orders and do what they are told. Develop a program and a process that allows staff to give improvisational feedback and ideas that will meet General Plan goals.

From: [colleen oneal](#)
To: [City Council Public Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] More Housing
Date: Monday, June 1, 2026 3:14:25 PM

Councilpersons: I strongly urge you to consider the policy changes needed to support more housing being built in Santa Rosa. New construction of single family dwellings should no longer be encouraged, or allowed. The shortage of affordable housing in Santa Rosa has most definitely contributed to homelessness, school closures, etc. Please do the right thing. Do everything you can to support affordable housing.

Thank you.

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Colleen S. O'Neal
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