



# City of Sunnyvale

## Agenda Item

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14-1012

Agenda Date: 1/30/2015

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### 2015 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

#### **NUMBER**

OCM 15-01

**TITLE** Explore Actions to Improve Affordability of Living in Sunnyvale and Surrounding Cities

#### **BACKGROUND**

**Lead Department:** Office of the City Manager

Support Department(s): Community Development, Library and Community Services, North Valley Workforce Services (NOVA)

#### **Sponsor(s):**

Councilmembers: Hendricks, Larsson

#### **History:**

1 year ago: N/A

2 years ago: N/A

#### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

##### **What are the key elements of the study?**

This study would explore with surrounding entities actionable items the City Council could implement or advocate for that would make it easier for individuals and families to make their home in the Sunnyvale area. Key elements would include a collaborative approach to engage surrounding cities, and a comprehensive list of options.

##### **What precipitated this study?**

This issue originated during Council's deliberations regarding the establishment of a minimum wage in Sunnyvale. While Councilmember Hendricks supported a goal of \$15 an hour by the year 2018, he also suggested a specific minimum wage by a targeted year was too narrow a focus in terms of the real issue at hand: total affordability of living in Sunnyvale and surrounding communities.

**Planned Completion Year:** 2015

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

##### **Cost to Conduct Study**

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Moderate

Amount of funding above current budget required: \$0

Funding Source: N/A

Explanation of Cost: N/A

**Cost to Implement Study Results**

Unknown. Study would include assessment of potential costs.

**EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS**

Council-approved work plan: No

Council Study Session: Yes

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Housing and Human Services Commission

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Position:** Drop

**Explanation:** In general, the more specific the focus of a particular study issue, the more successful staff will be in meeting Council's expectations. This proposed study is simply too broad and too vague to provide staff any guidance not already provided it by Council and the General Plan.

Staff agrees that the affordability of living in Sunnyvale and surrounding communities is a serious issue that deserves the Council and staff's attention. It is, however, a multi-faceted issue influenced by a variety of complex factors including (to name only a few) housing, education, transportation and employment. Much of the City's General Plan is devoted to these issues. It already identifies, for example, that "housing is one of the most difficult challenges facing cities in Silicon Valley. The need for more affordable housing is critical: its symptoms surface in the shape of congested highways, the needs of homeless people, an exodus of young people from the area, and the constraints faced by local businesses in attracting new employees." To address related issues, Council has already adopted numerous goals, including:

"to assist in the provision of adequate housing to meet the diverse needs of Sunnyvale's households of all income levels"

"to maintain and enhance the conditions and affordability of existing housing in Sunnyvale"

"to minimize the impact of governmental constraints on the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing"

"to provide adequate sites for the development of new housing through appropriate land use and zoning to address the diverse needs of Sunnyvale's residents and workforce"

"to promote equal housing opportunities for all residents, including Sunnyvale's special needs populations, so that residents can reside in the housing of their choice"

And to support these goals, Council has adopted policy documents to guide City staff in implementing the above policies. More specifically, the City's Housing Element and Consolidated Plan (for expenditure of CDBG and HOME funds) address affordable housing and set priorities and action items, which staff is actively pursuing, to respond to this problem. Additionally, staff continues to collaborate with the County and surrounding cities to respond to the lack of affordable housing and the difficulty for lower-income individuals and families to live and work in the community, which are widely recognized as regionally significant issues.

Similar to housing, transportation is afforded its own Chapter in the City's General Plan, and it too provides a great deal of policy guidance to staff

All this is to say that staff feels Council's general direction to pursue "total affordable living" in Sunnyvale is already quite clear, as is staff's ability to implement actionable items that support those policies.

If Council wishes to further explore policies affecting our local communities' total cost of living and affordability, staff would appreciate additional detail that results in a much more focused study. Absent more specific guidance from Council than is offered by the scope of this study, staff would find it very difficult to provide any focused policies to study or bring back for Council's consideration.

Prepared By: Robert A. Walker, Assistant City Manager

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