

# Shape Our Fremont

*Where Fremont residents can learn about shaping proposed housing developments...*

## What's Driving All This Housing Development?



Residents often ask why so many new houses are being built in Fremont and why they are being built where they are. Here's our understanding of the whys and wherefores.

811 new residential units - 152 houses, 246 townhouses and 413 apartment/condo units - in sixteen developments have been approved since February 2013. There are 433 more units currently being considered and nearly 5,000 more are in the pre-application phase. Eight of the approved developments were old homesteads and four were previously church properties.

### The State's Push

The state mandates that cities add housing units if they want certain state funding. If a city doesn't need the state funds, it can choose not to abide by those mandates, but The City of Fremont is not one of them.

The State of California sends housing need estimates to each state regional Council of Governments. This allotment is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation or RHNA Numbers (pronounced Reena.) The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) covers Alameda County which in turn covers The City of Fremont. Each city is assigned its share of the housing needs based on projected local job and household growth. The housing allotments are divided up by income level needs - both 'affordable' and market rate units.

The state encourages infill of underdeveloped or 'skipped over' sites that are already served by infrastructure. It strongly discourages the conversion of open space or underdeveloped land on the fringes of the city to urban uses.

### The City's Pull

Where does the state get its data on a city's available land, projected local job and household growth? The city submits those numbers through reports and its General Plan.

When Fremont decided to become "strategically urban", it changed its housing growth plans. The 2011 General Plan added Urban areas of very high density such as in the new Downtown City Center and along the Fremont Blvd. spine.

The city has promoted itself as "Silicon Valley East" and wants to be a place that attracts both jobs and the housing for those employees. It has created the Warm Springs - South Fremont special plan which calls for 4,000 housing units in the area near the Warm Springs BART station.

It also defined Transit Oriented Development (TOD) areas which "will generally have more intense development". These TODs extend in a half-mile circle around the three BART stations and the Centerville train station.

The City of Fremont's 2011 General Plan states "All of the growth projected for Fremont over the next 20-25 years is anticipated take place within the existing urbanized area. By growing more compactly, the City can preserve its hills and Baylands as open space."

### The Economy's Ups and Downs

When the economy is down, the city wants to attract more tax revenues either from new businesses or new housing development fees. That can drive the city to loosen restrictions. Building costs for the developers may be lower.

When the economy improves, more jobs open up and more people want to, and can afford to, live close to their place of employment. That can drive the city to designate more areas of higher residential density. More new houses may sell for higher prices.

So, up or down, the economy can drive new housing.

### **The School District's Draw**

In the 1980's and 1990's, the Fremont Unified School District schools became some of the top in the state. That now attracts families who want the best education for their children. Developers know that new houses in the best performing school attendance areas will sell the best.

### **The Developers' Drive**

Developers are only going to build where they can make a profit. Where are the jobs? Where are the schools? Where is there cheap available land? Where can they build the "product" they are best at building and selling? How tough are the city's development regulations? And finally, what has the city recently been approving?

### **Consequences of Growth**

Fremont may gain tax revenues from the new housing, but, along with infrastructure costs, there will be the costs of maintaining the amenities that draw people to move here. Schools, libraries and parks may be more crowded. Police and fire services may be strained. Traffic and parking may be more difficult to navigate.

If the city wants more urban population growth than can be accommodated in the Downtown City Center or Warm Springs BART areas, all the other small infill parcels will be developed with high-density housing. Will the character of the community change when 3-story townhouses are packed into in every free acre?

Before this happens, let's slow down and reexamine growth and urbanization. Fremont residents need to speak up and voice their opinions.

**For information about proposed residential developments, and more discussion of the issues, go to:**

**[www.ShapeOurFremont.com](http://www.ShapeOurFremont.com)**