



The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Community Land Trust Association of West Marin (CLAM)

September 7, 2011

The Local Coastal Plan, Housing Element and Development Code updating process

Marin County staff came over the hill on July 18th to discuss the final stages of the Local Coastal Plan (LCP), a county planning document that identifies the location, type, densities, and other ground rules for future development in the coastal zone. Thanks to all the CLAM members and supporters who showed up!

We are fortunate to have county staff who take the time to listen to our concerns, and pleased that they express a deep commitment to do all they can as partners with us in generating more affordable housing in our community. As hard as they are working, we need to keep working hard, too.

At one point in the meeting, community member Luke Regalbuto asked everyone present to stand if addressing the urgency of affordable housing was of primary importance to. Nearly every person in a room of 70 people stood up at once. Testimony, story-telling and asking critical questions are good ways to start to increasing awareness and commitment to action. CLAM expressed appreciation for the great sense of urgency from our community and took this opportunity to say - "affordable homes make a rich and resilient community". We cant increase the supply of quality and permanently affordable housing unless the whole community comes together.

CLAM came away from this meeting feeling obligated to play more of an advocacy and organizing role in our community. The fruits of this commitment have already emerged with our sponsorship of Community Conversation #7 (see report, below), partnering with Bolinas Community Land Trust to develop a common policy platform on second units, and our on-going work to ensure that the Local Coastal Plan, Development Code, and Housing Element mutually support affordable housing development throughout our community.

The Marin County Planning Commission is scheduled to complete its review and make a recommendation on the proposed Local Coastal Plan Amendment to the Board of Supervisors by the end of October 2011. The Board of Supervisors will then review and, most likely, adopt the LCPA as early as the end of this year. Next, county staff prepare a submittal package to the Coastal Commission for their final certification of the plan. The Coast Commission can take as much as two years or more to complete that final step.

CLAM co-sponsored the very successful West Marin Community # 7 on August 21st

When our community comes together, it can really come together! Our hats are off to Maggie Levinger, June McCrory (both members of the CLAM Board), Luke Regalbuto and Molly Meyerson for taking the lead as organizers for this conversation – focused on “Empowering the Next Generation: young people, housing, alternative solutions and a viable future for West Marin.”

The event began with a wonderful young artisan showcase on the Dance Palace lawn – demonstrating many of the ways young people are creatively adding value to our community. The conversation inside then started with story-telling, using a skit developed by the organizers with Lisa Doron to convey the experiences of young people in finding housing and cobbling together a livelihood locally. The 75-100 participants in the conversation then broke into nine discussion groups and shared an abundance of insights and concerns, making recommendations on how to fully engage all people in our community in generating the best possible future for West Marin.

CLAM came away from this experience honored to see active testimony to our tag line: affordable homes make a rich and resilient community. We will continue to work together to ensure a bright future for West Marin, which necessarily includes a wise approach to increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing in an environmentally responsible way in the communities surrounding Tomales Bay.

Inverness Fair

CLAM had a great day at the Inverness Fair on August 13th, with a booth hosted by Board members Maureen Cornelia, Susan Brayton, Nancy Vayhinger and Marc Matheson. Board members Marshall Livingston and Lorraine Fisher-Smith also lent a hand with set up and fresh lemonade, respectively. Maggie Levinger, also on the CLAM Board, initiated interaction with a number of younger people who shared their housing stories. We had good conversations with people about our mission, what they know about it, and how they feel about the need for affordable housing.

Working Together to Address the Affordable Housing Challenges in West Marin

CLAM is working closely with the Bolinas Community Land Trust to promote a common policy platform for West Marin regarding second units. While the character of Bolinas is different than that of the diverse communities in CLAM’s service area, both land trusts continue to believe that getting second unit policy right can generate some significant gains in our affordable housing stock. In August, our Property Committee and Board reviewed the policy recommendations, which we will share with you in the next CLAMBites.

Update on Affordable Housing Opportunities considered this year by CLAM

Eleven possible affordable housing development projects have come to CLAM during the past year. Turning a “prospect” into an active development project, however, takes time and careful review. The timeframe from the initial request for CLAM to consider a project to successfully moving families into affordable housing may take several years.

The first consideration is whether the combined costs of acquiring, developing, or rehabilitating

a property, along with ongoing maintenance costs, can be packaged so that working people of low to moderate income will be able to afford to rent or buy the property. The vast majority of opportunities we consider fail on this first screen. As hard as we try to remain optimistic with the willing sellers who approach us with opportunities, we have to be honest about both the challenges of making housing truly affordable and the limitations of CLAM, still a very small housing provider.

Currently, we are working actively to support projects that are in the early stages of discussion or development. Here are two examples. First, the Inverness Valley Inn has developed a proposal to convert its buildings to housing and has asked for CLAM support. We have helped them connect with the County and other supports that make it possible for their business to continue to be strong while policy changes are proposed in the Coastal Zone. Second, a family with a second unit on their property has asked CLAM to help them provide an affordable homeownership opportunity to someone using the Tenants-in-Common approach. We spread the word to people who have participated in our Tenants-in-Common workshops, and also worked to connect other potential buyers to the owners.

Executive Director Transition

Sam Grant, CLAM Executive Director since June 1, 2010, will be leaving the job on September 30, 2011. Sam joined CLAM given the very strong alignment of the mission with his personal values and his love for the land trust model of affordable housing stewardship.

He has come to the difficult conclusion, with his family, that their abundant appreciation of the seashore, and friends they have made here are not adequate to make up for the significant economic hardships they have encountered here, with less revenue and higher costs (typical of many working households in West Marin). Therefore, with regret and fond memories that will endure, Sam, Zea and Sol are returning to their former home, and to lower costs and greater economic opportunities.

Among Sam's key accomplishments at CLAM are:

Making sure CLAM completed the Blue House Project on time, which resulted in CLAM building the first new-construction Passive House in the state

Completing the financing for CLAM's acquisition of Mesa Apartments, adding four more units to the permanently affordable housing supply in our community

Supporting the development of an affordable housing eco-village at the Inverness Valley Inn

Bringing new members to both CLAM and the Board of Directors

Supporting a "more open conversation" in the community about how we all benefit from increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Sam says, "I leave with a great appreciation for the challenges of affordable housing development in West Marin and for the presence of a capable board and strong membership base to carry forth. We all do better when we work together. Please, take all possible steps to increase the supply of quality affordable housing to serve the growing need for an inter-generational and inclusive population for our community."

Program Assistant Bonnie Guttman will continue on in her staff role while the Board hires a new executive director.

Join Us in a Fun and Messy Fund-Raiser!

Build an Affordable Home – in Clay!

Want to build a house without a permit for only \$125 (\$100 if you're a CLAM member).

At this one-day workshop, ceramic artist Virginia Ferguson will help you bring forth your inner architect. You will build and decorate a charming clay house that can be lit by candlelight in your home or garden.

No prior experience with clay required. Lunch provided.

Date: October 15, 10-4

Place: “Launch for Hire” boathouse on Tomales Bay, Inverness

Limited to 20 participants

For MORE INFORMATION or to sign up, CALL 669-1183

CLAM's mission is to provide stable and permanently affordable housing in an environmentally responsible way in the communities surrounding Tomales Bay. As a community land trust, CLAM holds land and housing in trust for the community in perpetuity while creating housing that working people can afford.

**Please partner with CLAM to increase the supply of permanently affordable housing.
Affordable homes make a rich and resilient community!**

Board of Trustees: Maureen Cornelia, President; Nancy Vayhinger, Vice President; Susan Brayton, Secretary; Rishi Schweig, Treasurer; ; Jon Fernandez; Lorraine Fisher-Smith; Maggie Levinger, Kerry Livingston, Marshall Livingston, Marc Matheson, June McCrory, Susan Scott

Staff: Sam Leguizamon Grant, Executive Director; Bonnie Guttman, Program Assistant

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