



## **Op-Ed: Piedmont has embraced State call for growth**

*As adoption nears, Piedmont Planning & Building Director Kevin Jackson reflects on the Housing Element update process*

This spring, City Council will consider adopting Piedmont’s 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element, a roadmap for how the City of Piedmont can accommodate 587 new homes over the next 8 years. I am proud to say this community has embraced the State’s call to welcome more people of all backgrounds to Piedmont. Working together, we have developed a plan that will allow us to grow in a way that preserves the charm that first attracted many current residents, while also complying with all State requirements.

State officials have determined that more housing is needed in all Bay Area communities. With excellent schools, high quality city services, and no history of environmental pollution, all of Piedmont is considered a “high resource area”. Because of this, Piedmont was tasked with planning for 587 new homes by 2031 – nearly 10 times what we were assigned in the previous cycle. In a small city that is largely built out, this was no easy feat.

I am very appreciative of our community’s response to this formidable challenge. Over 1,000 Piedmonters participated in the planning process. I can’t think of any other city that has been able to engage such a large percentage of its population around the topic of housing.

I witnessed Piedmonters sharing their perspectives and learning from each other at dozens of meetings, workshops, and town halls. Most residents understand how racial bias has shaped historical housing practices at the national, state, and local level. Today, the majority of our community recognizes and supports Piedmont’s responsibility to do our fair share to increase access to safe and stable housing for people of all backgrounds.

Piedmont has added more new housing in the last 8 years than in the previous 45. Piedmonters have also become increasingly diverse. Whereas people of color made up only 3.5 percent of Piedmont’s population in 1970, today 29 percent of residents identify as Black, Hispanic, or Asian.

The updated Housing Element will continue these trends of welcoming new residents and increasing housing production. The City’s plan provides a toolbox of new programs to support creation of the kinds of new housing needed in Piedmont, including ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, mixed-use, and multifamily housing. You can find a detailed breakdown of how the programs outlined in Piedmont’s Housing Element meet all the requirements of State law at [PiedmontIsHome.org](http://PiedmontIsHome.org).

We have already begun some of these programs, including establishing a new incentive for

affordable ADUs and making it easier to convert existing spaces into new housing. Staff are having discussions with affordable housing organizations. We will soon start the process of creating a Specific Plan that will study all City-owned land in Moraga Canyon.

I firmly believe that new housing built under these programs will enhance our neighborhoods, schools, and all of Piedmont by welcoming new members to our community. Looking back, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) weren't always welcomed by some Piedmonters. But over the last twenty years, Piedmonters have come to embrace them. I expect that, in the future, the new programs in 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element will have the same levels of community support as ADUs have today.

I would like to close by thanking the community for learning, engaging, and contributing their perspective, expertise, and ideas. We are lucky to be a community of intelligent, talented, creative, and thoughtful citizens who are ready to do our part to make room for more Piedmonters.