

Getting to “Yes” in My Backyard

By Michael Matta

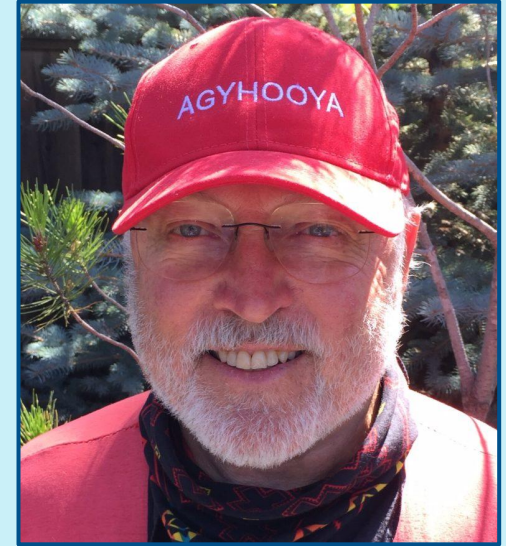
Housing Crisis in Palo Alto

- **Demand** outnumbers **supply**
 - Palo Alto is 6,000+ units short of its housing needs (PA Housing Element Update)
 - Average home cost is more than 50% the avg. income (HIF)
- Housing prices **surpass** the avg. income
 - In 2024, **1/5** of buyers could afford the median home price (**\$1.2 million**) (Palo Alto Online)
 - People earning **\$70,000–\$80,000** struggle to find housing in the Bay Area (HIF)
- Regulations and little federal funding make affordable housing **unattainable** (Alta Housing)



Effects of the Housing Crisis

- **Teachers** and other essential workers can't afford to live in the communities they serve (Alta Housing, John Fredrich).
 - Workers are forced to commute long distances (very costly)
 - Many are homeless or living in unstable conditions
 - Residents report more **RVs** and **encampments**, but **reject** permanent housing solutions (Palo Alto Online).
- **NIMBYism blocks long-term solutions**, even when residents say they **support** affordable housing (Palo Alto Online).
- **Lack** of teen efforts in the housing advocacy space



"So I've been on the list [since 1993]... now number three on the waiting list to purchase a below market rate unit. I'm recertified every year."

— John Fredrich, retired Gunn H.S. Social Studies teacher

The Project

Survey:

Housing Advocacy Census

The aim of this survey is to assess community perspectives, concerns, and awareness regarding affordable housing in Palo Alto.

* Indicates required question

High School *

☐ Gunn

☐ Other: _____

Grade *

☐ 9th

☐ 10th

☐ 11th

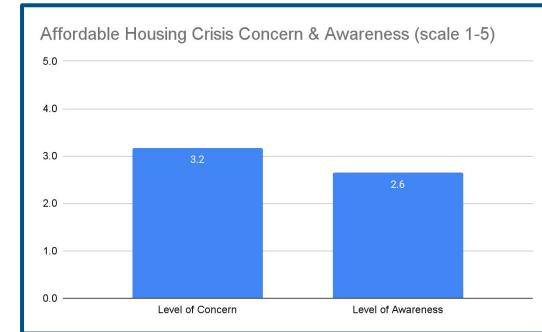
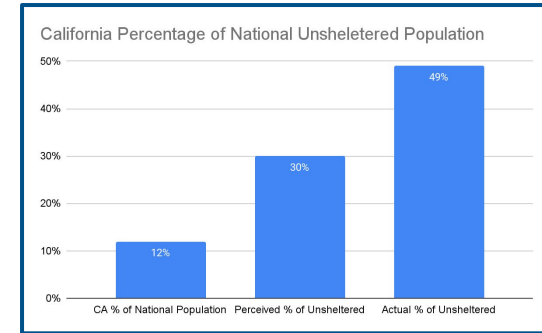
☐ 12th

Presentation:



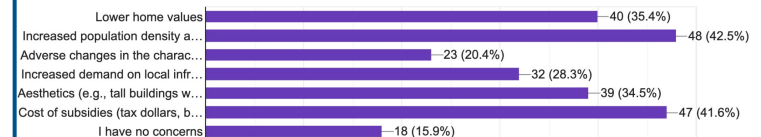
Survey Results

- Consisted of **9** questions
- Received **113** responses
 - **50%** upperclassmen
- **% students** expressed concerns about building affordable housing
- Gap between **concern** and **awareness**



Some of the concerns that I or my family have about MORE affordable housing in my own neighborhood include (check all that apply)

113 responses



Presentation Results

- Presented for a Social Studies class
- Focused on:
 - i. Sharing survey results
 - ii. Background about the Housing Crisis
 - iii. Breaking down **NIMBY** stigma
 - iv. How to be a Housing Advocate
- Conducted pre and post survey:
 - **1-5 scale**
 - How **concerned** are you about the housing crisis at a local level?
 - How **aware** are you of ways to support affordable housing in our community?

Results:

- Concern level went from **3.33** → **4.31**
- Awareness level went from **2.08** → **4.08**



- Photo of presentation taken by Ms. Matta on 5/1/25

Takeaways

- Learned how gratifying it feels to make a difference
- How to market a survey
- Nuances of the Housing Crisis
- Learned about both sides of **NIMBY** through interviews

Notable quotes from the surveys:

“Your point on making housing affordable so we can live here after college really spoke to me. Right now most of us don’t have any need to be concerned for housing because our parents are in control, but adding that piece on how it will affect us changed my perception of the problem a lot.”

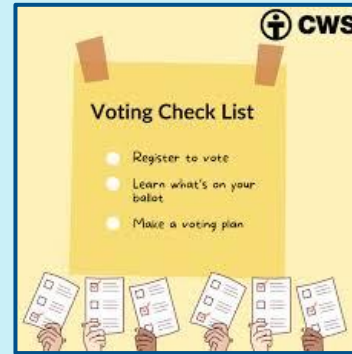
“I did not realize how large of an issue affordable housing was, especially for teachers and service workers.”

“I plan to advocate for housing by becoming more involved in housing issues and convincing my parents to vote for pro housing measures.”

“I am unsure, but I am glad to know that there are organizations that exist if I do decide to put in the effort to advocate”

Next steps

- Share data and takeaways from experience to **PACC/YC**
- **Be** a pro-housing advocate in Palo Alto
- Continue to improve and do more presentations at Gunn
- Make the presentation **adaptable** to other Bay Area cities for other teens to use



Works Cited

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Thanks!