

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Background

The San Mateo County farmworker community continues to face severe housing challenges despite its invaluable contributions to California's agricultural industry. To address these concerns, the Farmworker Advisory Commission (FAC) hosted a listening session on April 15, 2026. The session aimed to gather feedback from farmworkers and other community members about their housing experiences on the Coastside and to identify recommendations for improvement. Facilitated by Schechter Consulting, the listening session was attended by 23 community members and supported by community-based organizations and County staff. To foster dialogue, participants were asked about their current living situations, their experiences finding housing, and possible solutions to the farmworker housing challenges they face.

To support an objective process, participants were encouraged to share their perspectives candidly and provide honest feedback. Each table was staffed by an OCA member and a commissioner, both of whom were instructed to listen without influencing the discussion. This approach was designed to create a welcoming environment and collect feedback that accurately reflected community members' experiences and priorities.

Key Areas of Feedback

1. Current Living Situation

- A variety of current living situations were described including shared housing on farm property, trailers, small rental units and experience living in a large room with bunkbeds for farmworkers.
- Most noted that their living space is small and overcrowded.
- Some expressed that their living situation is okay and that the landlords treat them well.
- Others noted that their housing is in poor condition and they are fearful of raising issues to landlords.
- Most mentioned that housing is expensive, yet some said it is affordable in comparison to the rest of the County.
- All participants were currently renting their homes or apartments and do not own them because they don't believe it is possible to own a home.
- Most continue to stay in their current living situation because it's conveniently close to work and school, as transportation is a challenge in Pescadero, and they don't believe they have any other option.

2. Experience Securing & Maintaining Housing

- Most reported it is extremely difficult to find affordable housing and purchasing a home is virtually impossible.
- Several shared looming concerns regarding the instability of their housing situation if their landlord chooses to sell the property.
- A few people noted that they believe the restrictions at Stone Pine Cove mean that you can't truly own a home there (referring to deed-restrictions).

3. Suggested Community Recommendations

- Increase supply of affordable housing by improving collaboration among state and county officials, departments, community-based organizations, philanthropies (Silicon Valley Community Foundation and Sobrato Foundation) and homeowners.
- Present Urban Habitat's farmworker housing report (Semillas del Cambio: Advancing Dignified Housing for Farmworkers on the San Mateo County Coast) to the Board of Supervisors.
- Reduce regulatory barriers and red tape that impede housing construction.
- Address challenges associated with septic needs and flood zone maps to allow housing construction.
- Use existing County property to build housing and/or buy land and build housing for farmworkers like Stone Pine Cove, especially in Pescadero.
- Address and enforce uninhabitable and substandard housing conditions provided by landlords at farms (e.g. mold, poor insulation)
- Subsidize landlord costs to improve housing conditions.
- Provide subsidies to lower housing costs. Consider rental rates based on income/ability to pay.
- County should increase transparency regarding potential housing projects, policies and timelines (e.g., Puente property).
- The County should provide housing assistance information (including assistance for first time home buyers) on an ongoing basis via flyers, text messages and updates from the Supervisor as information sharing is lacking.

4. Farmworker Advisory Commission Priority Recommendations

1. Presentation from the Department of Housing on Stone Pine Cove along with an opportunity for community to provide feedback.
2. Presentation by Environmental Health and Planning & Building on the housing inspection process with the opportunity for community to provide feedback.

3. Presentation on the Housing Element Report.
4. Create an archive of existing South Coast housing reports and related materials. This would avoid burdening the community by not having to ask the same or similar questions repeatedly and I would maintain an easily accessible and clear record of efforts and progress made.
5. Present Urban Habitat's farmworker housing report: Semillas del Cambio: Advancing Dignified Housing for Farmworkers on the San Mateo County Coast and this report to the Board of Supervisors or to Supervisor Ray Mueller.

Conclusion

The Farmworker Advisory Commission is committed to advancing affordable, safe and dignified housing for the farmworker community on the Coastsides of San Mateo County. By implementing these recommendations, the FAC is taking the next step to support a community that has been neglected for far too long and is empowered to participate directly in the advancement of their communities and lives.