

**MINUTES**  
**CITY COUNCIL CITIZEN'S FORUM**  
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - YUMA CITY HALL  
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA  
**March 5, 2019**  
**5:30 p.m.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**Mayor Nicholls** called the City Council Citizen's Forum to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Shelton, Watts, Thomas, Knight, McClendon, Miller and Mayor Nicholls  
Councilmembers Absent: None  
Staffmembers Present: City Administrator, Gregory K. Wilkinson  
Various department heads or their representatives  
City Attorney, Richard W. Files  
City Clerk, Lynda Bushong

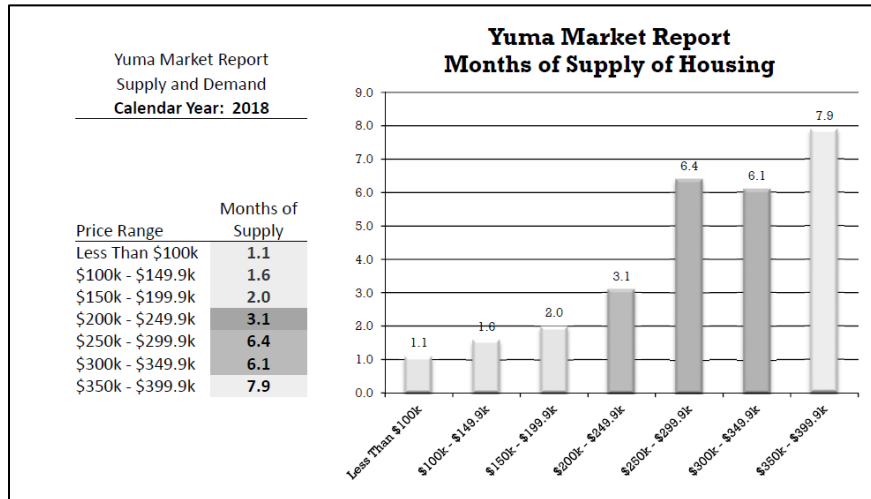
**I. OVERVIEW OF HOUSING**

**Jeff Snow**, representative of Saguaro Desert Land, Inc., discussed the following housing trends in Yuma and throughout Arizona:

- There is a need for housing at all income levels
  - Failure to provide housing for moderate and middle income earners forces those buyers to occupy housing that would normally be targeted for moderate and low income earners
    - Homebuyers can 'buy down', or purchase homes below their income level, but they cannot purchase homes beyond their income level
- Information provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) shows that about 37,000 people are experiencing housing problems in Yuma.
  - Approximately 19,000 are experiencing severe housing problems, meaning they are spending half of their income or more on housing.
  - 34,000 people are experiencing a housing cost burden.
- Land use controls, building codes, and site improvement fees all represent constraints to housing production, and minimum lot sizes and low densities raise the per unit cost of land.

**Nikki Watson**, also of Saguaro Desert Land, Inc., presented the following information on the lack of housing in certain sale prices within Yuma:

- Housing under \$200,000 is in critical need of availability, as can be seen in the chart below
  - It is generally accepted that a 6-month supply of housing equates to a balance in the market between buyers and sellers



- The average sales price of single-family homes increased by 8% during 2018; this increase is 20 times more than the average wage growth of 0.4%
  - The disparity between wage growth and the increase in home prices makes it even more important to provide housing for all income levels and at all sales point levels

**Snow** continued by discussing the availability of developable land as follows:

- Most agree that new housing is needed, but each time new housing is proposed the response is that it is not the 'right place' for it
  - North Yuma Valley – mostly built out with very few parcels of vacant land designated for medium/high density housing and a number of parcels with Estate/Suburban Ranch designations
  - South Yuma Valley – very little Medium/High Density land designations and highest development costs in Yuma, making it the least affordable area for workforce housing
  - South Yuma Mesa – this area has available land, but limiting workforce housing to this area may lead to increased traffic congestion, pollution, and commuting costs
    - This may also exclude workforce housing from 'higher opportunity' areas
- Less than 2% of developable land – vacant parcels 5 acres or greater – is designated High Density
  - Low Density Residential: 82.5%
  - Medium Density Residential: 15.6%
  - High Density Residential: 1.9%
- Possible solutions seen in other communities
  - Expedite approval times, streamline processes, and fast-track critical projects
  - Modify land use designations in the General Plan
  - Expand the urban growth boundary
  - Implement flexible design standards
    - Reduce landscaping, parking, and minimum lot setback requirements
    - Modify street, curbing, and lighting requirements
  - Approve more 'missing middle housing'
    - Duplexes, triplexes, quad-plexes, cluster housing, townhomes, and condominiums
  - Variances for low and moderate income housing
    - Approve density or floor area ratio bonuses

- Reduce setbacks and height restrictions on new developments
- Reduce or eliminate certain fees
- Implement other changes
  - Authorize accessory dwelling units with reduced regulatory requirements
  - Increase high density zoning near mass transit, healthcare, and social services
  - Set aside additional developable land for medium and high density land use

**Snow** concluded by providing information on the following benefits to the community when homeowners spend 30% or less on housing:

- Families spend nearly five times more on healthcare, 33% more on food, and two times more on retirement savings
- Families report less domestic violence and family separations and their risk of housing instability and/or eviction declines
- Children obtain higher test scores and academic achievement, are more likely to attend college, and achieve higher earnings
- Children are less likely to be placed in foster care and are less likely to become single parents

**Mayor Nicholls** asked if the benefits are specific to homeowners or if they would also apply to renters. **Snow** stated that the benefits apply to both, homeowners or renters, as long as there is housing stability. **Shelton** commented that distance is relative, and commuting to anywhere in Yuma is not far compared to larger cities.

**Mayor Nicholls** asked if the information on developable land was based on a General Plan analysis or a zoning analysis. **Snow** responded that it was a General Plan analysis, adding that any land without access to water, sewer, and roads was not included in the results because it will likely not be developed in the next decade. **Mayor Nicholls** pointed out that subdivisions extend water and sewer all the time, although it is not cheap, and over the past 40 years the City has expanded out from being clustered in one area. **Snow** concurred, however growth boundaries would need to be changed to allow development west of Avenue D and south of 40<sup>th</sup> Street. **Mayor Nicholls** stated that he had not heard of the 40<sup>th</sup> Street boundary, but the Avenue D boundary is understood based on discussions with the agriculture community. The City is trying to address some of these issues, noting that the R-1-5 zoning was added a few years ago which allowed for a tighter density. **Snow** acknowledged these changes and agreed that they should help.

## II. ADJOURNMENT/EXECUTIVE SESSION

**Motion** (Knight/Thomas): To adjourn the meeting into Executive Session. Voice vote: **approved** 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

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Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor