



Appendix A2:

City of Blue Lake Housing Element Update Individual Interviews

Qualitative Analysis of the "Extraneous info Removed" Data (5 Interviews)

Dataset Description

The dataset contains **five interview responses** from people who currently live in or have lived in Blue Lake. The respondents include **four homeowners** and **one renter**. The analysis below is limited to themes directly expressed by participants and does not extend beyond what respondents explicitly stated.

1. Reasons People Live in Blue Lake

Several reasons were mentioned repeatedly:

a. Small-town environment

Respondents described choosing Blue Lake because of its:

- Small-town atmosphere
- Community feel
- Familiarity with neighbors
- Sense of safety

Some respondents grew up in Blue Lake or had family ties to the community. Others moved there because they preferred a smaller town setting.

b. Natural environment

Residents frequently cited:

- Proximity to the river
- Open space
- Natural surroundings
- Weather and climate

These were among the most consistently mentioned positive features.

c. Personal and family connections

Respondents reported living in Blue Lake because they:

- Grew up there
- Had family connections

- Attended school in the area
- Preferred the lifestyle offered by the community

These themes appeared across multiple interviews.

2. Housing Situations

a. Types of housing

Among the five respondents:

- Three were homeowners with mortgages.
- One was a homeowner without a mortgage.
- One was a renter.

b. Satisfaction with housing

Most respondents stated that their housing meets their needs.

Comments from various interviewees included:

- "Yes, completely. I have no complaints."
- "Yes, kind of small but yes."
- Feeling fortunate with their housing situation.
- "My home is too big"
- Being happier as a homeowner than when renting.

Concerns mentioned by some interviewees included:

- Small home size
- Housing affordability
- Homes being close together
- A home being larger than needed

The renter reported being satisfied with current housing and did not identify major problems with the rental situation.

3. Housing Costs

Reported monthly housing costs included:

- Approximately \$1,000 (renter)
- Approximately \$2,000
- Approximately \$2,300
- Approximately \$2,500
- One respondent described housing expenses without providing a monthly total

These responses indicate a range of housing costs among participants.

4. Experiences Finding Housing

Respondents frequently described a limited housing market.

Examples included:

- Few homes available for sale.
- Competitive buying conditions.
- Being outbid on homes.
- Limited opportunities to purchase housing.
- Housing requiring significant repairs.
- Extended searches before finding a suitable property.

The renter reported that obtaining housing was straightforward because they rented from family, but also stated that housing did not appear tailored to lower-income residents or college students.

5. Housing Challenges

a. Affordability

Affordability was the most frequently mentioned challenge.

Respondents discussed:

- High housing costs.
- Expensive rentals.
- Limited affordable options.
- Difficulty for young families.
- Difficulty for lower-income households and students.

Several participants specifically raised concerns about affordable housing opportunities.

b. Limited housing supply

Respondents also identified:

- Limited inventory of homes for sale.
- Limited rental opportunities.
- Limited options for people seeking to move within Blue Lake.

These comments were raised across both homeowner and renter responses.

c. Personal Connection

The renter described obtaining housing through a family connection and characterized the process as straightforward because of that advantage. A current homeowner also recalled that personal connections were important when previously renting in Blue Lake. A separate homeowner reported for the next question about perceived housing needs that they wrote a letter to the owner and realtor which may have affected their ability to get the home. Together, these accounts suggest that informal networks may affect access to the limited rental supply, but the interviews cannot measure how common that experience is.

6. Perceived Housing Needs

Respondents identified a variety of housing types as needed.

The most commonly mentioned included:

a. Affordable rental housing

Affordable rental options were selected or discussed by multiple respondents.

b. Workforce housing

Several respondents identified workforce housing as needed.

c. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)

ADUs were repeatedly identified as a needed housing type.

d. Smaller and alternative housing formats

Participants also identified:

- Tiny homes
- Stationary tiny homes
- Manufactured homes
- RV and trailer housing

as housing types that could be beneficial.

e. Specialized housing

Some respondents noted the need for:

- Senior housing
- Accessible housing
- Housing for large families
- Supportive housing
- Temporary housing

These needs were mentioned by some, but not all, respondents.

7. Out of Town Opportunities

Of respondents who work, the majority worked in a different city/town despite living in Blue Lake. These respondents identified their work in Arcata, Eureka, and various areas of the County. All respondents also reported using a car to get to work, medical appointments, school, do your grocery shopping, etc. Only one respondent indicated they use a bicycle to get where they need to go. These responses may indicate a community with limited work opportunities and services, resulting in some degree of dependence on surrounding communities and private vehicles. This dependence may create additional transportation costs and barriers, particularly for lower-income households, older adults, people with disabilities, and residents without reliable access to a vehicle.

For the previous question, all five respondents also selected workforce housing as a type of housing needed in Blue Lake. The interviews reveal a disconnect between the unanimous

interest in workforce housing and the limited employment, services, and amenities respondents identified within Blue Lake.

8. Community Strengths

Several strengths appeared repeatedly.

a. Community and neighborhood relationships

Respondents valued:

- Knowing neighbors
- Community connections
- Friendly interactions
- Sense of safety

These themes appeared in multiple interviews.

b. Access to nature

Participants frequently mentioned:

- River access
- Open space
- Natural surroundings
- Walkability

These were among the most commonly cited benefits of living in Blue Lake.

c. Climate and weather

Several respondents specifically identified the climate and weather as positive aspects of living in Blue Lake.

9. Community Needs Outside of Housing

Respondents identified several amenities and services they believe Blue Lake lacks:

- More places to eat
- Grocery options

- Coffee shops and gathering spaces
- Entertainment opportunities
- Public transportation and bus service connections

These comments focused on commercial, transportation, and social amenities rather than housing itself.

10. Desired Housing Changes

When asked what they would change about housing over the next decade, respondents suggested:

- More affordable housing
- More opportunities for families
- Lower-cost rentals
- Assistance for young households purchasing homes
- Additional rental opportunities
- Expanded housing production
- Continued development of ADUs
- Infill housing

The most common theme was increasing affordability.

11. Desire to Remain in Blue Lake

All five respondents indicated they would prefer to remain in Blue Lake rather than relocate elsewhere in Humboldt County. Reasons given included:

- Community connections
- Safety
- Family ties
- Access to nature
- Quality of life
- Familiarity with the community

12. Community Aspirations

Respondents described wanting to live in a safe, walkable, and welcoming community that supports families and provides opportunities for connection. Priorities included:

- Safety
- Walkability
- Access to open space and nature
- Nearby schools and family activities
- Housing affordability
- Social and neighborhood connections
- Community events, dining, music, and theater
- Prosperity
- Inclusion and respect
- Opportunities to gather and celebrate differences

Respondents specifically identified walkability as a valued or desired community characteristic. However, respondents also identified limited grocery/food/dining options, a lack of entertainment, few gathering places, and desire for more community activities. Together, these responses suggest that residents value Blue Lake's walkable scale and pedestrian environment but perceive that there are too few everyday services and destinations available within walking distance.

Key Findings

1. **Housing affordability was the most consistently discussed housing issue across the five interviews.**
2. **Limited housing supply, including both ownership and rental opportunities, was a recurring concern.**
3. **Affordable rentals, workforce housing, and ADUs were among the most frequently identified housing needs.**
4. **Respondents generally reported satisfaction with their current housing situations, despite concerns about affordability, size, or availability.**

5. **Residents consistently valued Blue Lake's small-town character, walkability, natural environment, and community relationships.**
6. **All four participants who answered the relocation question preferred to remain in Blue Lake. One participant did not answer.**

Limitation

This analysis reflects only the perspectives contained in the five interviews reviewed and does not represent all Blue Lake residents. Four participants were homeowners, and the sole renter occupied a family-owned unit and reported no landlord or discrimination problem. The interviews therefore provide very limited evidence about the experiences of renters navigating the open market. They also do not represent the full range of people experiencing housing insecurity, prospective residents, or demographic and economic groups that may face different housing barriers.