



**MAYOR
MARI RODIN**

An update from the desk of Mayor Mari Rodin

It's exciting to see so much housing development underway in Ukiah these days. As a testament to our efforts, the state's Department of Housing and Community Development recently awarded Ukiah a "Prohousing Designation." So, what does it mean to have a "Prohousing" designation and what are the benefits? First and foremost, it's an acknowledgement that the City of Ukiah has been successful at increasing its housing stock, particularly housing for very-low, low, and moderate-income households. **Since 2019, Ukiah has issued over 192 building permits, the most in any four-year period in the City's modern history.** And more than 150 units of market-rate housing, accessory dwelling units, and student and Tribal housing are currently in the development pipeline.

The Prohousing designation sends a signal to housing developers that Ukiah wants them here and that we are serious about making their experience as seamless as possible.

The benefits of the Prohousing designation are manifold. For one thing, it makes us eligible for funding opportunities that are only available to Prohousing-designated jurisdictions. The Prohousing designation will also give the City bonus points on a variety of grant applications, including funding opportunities related to climate change, infrastructure, transportation, and, of course, housing. These are pretty sweet benefits! We plan to take full advantage of this extra funding competitiveness to keep the cycle of housing production going.



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Economic development is key to the success of any city. Ukiah's recent efforts with its [General Plan Update](#) help clarify our strategic approach to economic development. The cannabis industry's recent downturn, for instance, which has impacted business activity throughout Mendocino County, reinforces our goal to give Ukiah a robust and diversified economic base not dependent on any one industry.

Toward that end, our multi-pronged approach will be based primarily on agriculture, retail, and tourism. The latter represents an especially big opportunity for economic growth, as the state just designated Ukiah as an official California Welcome Center. This means we'll be promoted as a destination by "Visit California" and have a brick-and-mortar "Welcome Center" at the conference center on School Street to help drive tourism. Improvements to the Great Redwood Trail will give a big boost to this effort, which will in turn support businesses as more tourists visit us.

As we grow, we'll need a smart and unified overall approach to development, based on solid land-use principles.



Our current city boundaries, for instance, are artificially small given the daily population impacts to our city from people living in the unincorporated areas of the Ukiah Valley. Our constrained city boundaries limit us economically because we don't receive property or sales tax from unincorporated areas, yet we experience impacts on our roads, police, parks, etc. Moreover, unincorporated areas do not have the same level of municipal services (water, sewer, police, fire, streets maintenance, etc.) that City of Ukiah addresses receive. This is obvious when one notices the lack of landscaping and sidewalks in areas outside of the city limits. If we annex already developed areas of the Ukiah Valley that place a demand on city services, we could broaden our tax base and ensure Ukiah's growth is consistent with the vision of our residents.

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Our “complete streets”—perhaps better expressed as “people-first streets”—renovations are also a part of this grow-smart equation. We want our roadways to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists too, rather than focus solely on moving cars quickly through town. This way we can limit congestion and pollution while making our streets more inviting spaces, which increases foot traffic and helps businesses thrive. (And as a part of this complete streets construction, we’ve been able to replace our water and sewer pipes beneath our oldest roads.)

Improvements to Ukiah’s streets make non-motorized travel safer. These improvements include narrower travel lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb outs to shorten crosswalks and slow car traffic, and more street trees to increase shade. Major work has already been done with our Downtown Streetscape Project, and Phase 2 is now underway. The Gobbi and Perkins Gateways, for instance, which connect downtown to Highway 101, will be made more aesthetically pleasing and inviting, improving the experience of walking, biking, and driving through these areas and drawing people into the downtown. This work has been paid for by the sales tax increase in 2016’s voter-



approved Measure Y, which qualified Ukiah for a \$3 million matching grant from Caltrans. We just received this funding in June, which we would not have been eligible for without Measure Y. Furthermore, Ukiah acted strategically when interest rates were low to secure bond funding for necessary infrastructure projects. All these actions demonstrate Ukiah’s foresight and commitment to investing wisely in our community.

Of course, this progress — in our housing, economic development, and streets, to name just a few areas — hasn’t been an accident. It’s the product of smart vision and diligent work, formalized in the city’s General Plan and carried out by dedicated city employees and elected officials. **We’ve proven our capacity to think big, decide on a vision, and pursue it seriously, thereby leading our communities into a future of our design.**