County of Santa Clara
HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

2023-2031

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How to Use the Housing Element Update

A Housing Element is a planning document required by California state law as part of the local government's General Plan. The Housing Element is intended to address the current and future housing needs of a community, including the development, preservation, and improvement of housing for all income levels.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) sets forth specific requirements for the Housing Element, including an assessment of housing needs, identification of sites suitable for housing development, and policies to promote affordable housing. The Housing Element must be updated every eight years to reflect changing community needs and to ensure that the local government is meeting its goals for housing production.

The Housing Element plays a critical role in California's efforts to address its housing crisis by providing solutions to affordability and quality in housing. By requiring local governments to plan for housing growth and development, the Housing Element helps ensure that California's communities can provide a range of housing options for residents at all income levels.

The 2023-2031 update to the County of Santa Clara Housing Element is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Overview of Housing Element Update 2023-2031

Chapter 2: Housing Needs and Production

Chapter 3: Fifth Cycle Performance Review and Sixth Cycle Housing Strategies and Policies

Chapter 4: County Housing Strategies, Policies, and Programs

How the Housing Element is used will vary greatly based on the user. This section gives some general suggestions based on different users. Please also review the Frequently Asked Questions section, for general questions about the Housing Element.

County Officials

As an elected or appointed official, you have a duty to oversee the development, preservation, and improvement of housing for members of your community. This includes future members of the community and those of varying income levels, abilities, ages, and backgrounds.

Professional staff employed by the County will also need to be familiar with the Housing Element to implement the goals, strategies, policies, and programs it contains.

The Housing Element contains goals and policies to guide you in your work to ensure that these goals are met while still allowing for an appropriate level of local control. Some of the key sections County officials should be familiar with include:

- **Chapter 2**: 2.04b Development Capacity Analysis.
- **Chapter 3**: 3.05 Sixth Cycle Housing-Related Strategies and Policies
- **Chapter 4**: County Housing Strategies, Policies, and Programs.

Homeowners

As a current or future homeowner, you may want to know how the Housing Element impacts you and your housing choices. The Housing Element contains information about housing-related programs for both first-time home buyers as well as current homeowners.

For those individuals looking to become first-time home buyers, the County has several programs that may be of assistance, including:

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.02 - Limited Equity Housing Cooperative Projects (LEHCs).

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.04 - Empower Homebuyers SCC.

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.05 - Mortgage Credit Certificate (MCC) Program.

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.06 - Below Market Partnership Program.

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.31 – Minor Home Repair and Maintenance.

Existing homeowners can find several programs and policies that can assist them as well. Some of these programs may include additional information on how to add an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and/or Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU), programs to assist in home repair or maintenance, and information on how to keep your home safe from wildfires. Chapter 4 describes a number of these policies and programs including:

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.31 – Minor Home Repair and Maintenance.

- **Chapter 4**: Program 2.06 - Streamline Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Processing.

- **Chapter 4**: Program 2.17 - Training and Support to Homeowners Aging in Place.

Please see Chapter 4 for the full list of programs and policies.

Landlords/Tenants

The County of Santa Clara has housing programs geared at assisting tenants as well as landlords, including:

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.18 - Tenant/Landlord Dispute Mediation Services.

- **Chapter 4**: Program 1.19 - Eviction Diversion Program.

Please see Chapter 4 for the full list of programs and policies.

Developers

Coordination with housing developers, especially affordable housing developers, is crucial to seeing more housing built in Santa Clara County. Developers can use the Housing Element to learn more about the sites identified for additional housing development. They can also take advantage of some of the County's on-going efforts to free up additional land for residential development such as: Program 2.11 - Update Zoning Ordinance for Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings to Residential. Some sections of the Housing Element that may be of interest to developers include:

- **Chapter 2**: Housing Needs and Production

- **Chapter 4**: County Housing Strategies, Policies, and Programs

Affordable Housing Advocates

The provision of affordable housing is critical for the continued vitality of the Bay Area. The County of Santa Clara has partnered with

affordable housing developers in the past and will continue to provide support through a number of programs and funding mechanisms. To learn more about past projects, as well as future opportunities, please read the following sections:

- **Chapter 2**: 2.04b Development Capacity Analysis.

- **Chapter 3**: 3.03 Review of County's Investment in Countywide Housing Efforts During Fifth Cycle and Beyond.

- **Chapter 3**: 3.05 Sixth Cycle Housing-Related Strategies and Policies.

- **Chapter 4**: County Housing Strategies, Policies, and Programs.

Special Housing Needs

Part of the role of the Housing Element is to plan for a variety of housing types for a wide variety of individuals and circumstances. This includes looking at situations such as housing for agricultural workers, Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and temporary housing. To learn more about these programs and policies please visit the following sections of the Housing Element:

- **Chapter 3**: Sixth Cycle Housing-Related Strategies and Policies.

- **Chapter 4**: County Housing Strategies, Policies, and Programs.

Members of the Community

Community engagement is a key part of the Housing Element update process. Throughout the process, the County of Santa Clara has reached out to community members like you for your input and feedback. Thank you for your participation in the Housing Element process and for your continued interest. To learn about how public input was incorporated into the Housing Element, please refer to the following section:

- **Chapter 1:** Community Participation and Outreach.

Housing Element FAQ

What is the purpose of a Housing Element?

The purpose of a Housing Element is to address the current and future housing needs of a community, including the development, preservation, and improvement of housing for all income levels.

What are the requirements for a Housing Element?

The requirements for a Housing Element include an assessment of housing needs, identification of sites suitable for housing development, and policies to promote affordable housing. The Housing Element must be updated every eight years and approved by HCD.

The main categories or types of information and analysis required in a Housing Element update are:

- Identification and analysis of existing housing needs and projected housing needs;

- A statement of goals, objectives, strategies, and policies relating to the maintenance, preservation, improvement, and development of housing;

- An analysis of the capacity of the existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance to meet projected needs; and,

- A summary of housing programs and a five-year schedule of implementation measures.

The 2023-2031 update serves four additional important purposes:

- To document local housing needs in the context of existing County land use and growth management policies;

- To affirmatively further fair housing throughout Santa Clara County;

- To explain important components of planning policies in Santa Clara County, which has urban growth management policies that guide urban housing development to occur within cities and Urban Service Areas (USAs) to preserve open space and promote rural land use densities outside cities; and

- To document the many other ways, in addition to the approval of residential development, by which the County contributes significantly to meeting local and countywide housing needs.

- Who is responsible for preparing a Housing Element?

- Local governments are responsible for preparing a Housing Element. In this case, the County of Santa Clara is responsible for the preparation and update of the Housing Element for the unincorporated areas of the county.

How often does a Housing Element need to be updated?

A Housing Element needs to be updated every eight years. HCD will release a detailed timeline of when Housing Elements need to be submitted to HCD and approved for compliance with State law.

How does a Housing Element address affordable housing?

A Housing Element addresses affordable housing through policies that promote the production of affordable housing, such as permit streamlining and zoning reform. It also acknowledges the use of public funds (such as Measure A) to help subsidize the development of affordable housing.

How does a Housing Element address the needs of different income levels?

A Housing Element addresses the needs of different income levels by identifying the housing needs of all income levels and developing

policies to promote the production and preservation of housing for all income levels. The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) identifies housing production targets for a range of income brackets—ensuring that the County plan for housing at all income levels.

What role do public participation and community input play in the preparation of a Housing Element?

Public participation and community input are critical in the preparation of a Housing Element. Local governments are required to engage with the community in the development of the Housing Element, through public meetings and other outreach efforts, and the County of Santa Clara held numerous on-line and in-person events. Section 1.08 highlights the Community Engagement plan and all of the efforts that went into meeting with the community and integrating their feedback into the final draft of the Housing Element.

How are housing needs assessed in a Housing Element?

Housing needs are assessed in a Housing Element through an analysis of demographic data, population projections, and housing market data. In the case of the County of Santa Clara, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) developed the methodology to assess the housing need in the region, and then assigned a certain number of projected units to each member jurisdiction. This is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA).

RHNA methodology adopted by ABAG and approved by HCD intends to achieve five primary objectives: increase housing supply and mix of housing types; promote infill development and socioeconomic equity; promote improved intraregional jobs-housing relationship; balance disproportionate household income distributions; and affirmatively further fair housing.

What is the role of the state government in the review and approval of a Housing Element?

The state government reviews and approves Housing Elements to ensure they comply with state law and meet the state's housing goals. HCD provides guidance and technical assistance to local governments in the preparation of the Housing Element.