

REPORT TO
LA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: February 10, 2021

SUBJECT: Draft Housing Element Update Review and Comment

ISSUING DEPARTMENT: Community Development

SUMMARY

Issue:

Does the draft Housing Element represent the City's Housing Program goals, objectives and policies?

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the draft Housing Element and recommend that the draft document be submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for mandatory review.

BACKGROUND:

Cities and Counties are required to adopt a comprehensive long term General Plan to guide future decisions about development, resource protection and public safety. The California Legislature has identified the goal of attaining decent housing and a suitable living environment for every California resident. Recognizing the significant role of local planning programs in pursuit of this goal, the Legislature has mandated that all cities and counties adopt a Housing Element as part of their comprehensive General Plan.

The City's Housing Element process for the previous Housing Element 5th cycle (2010-2020) yielded a robust document that was held up as an exemplary document by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The City has engaged the same housing specialist consultant to prepare this update effort which focuses on bringing the previous strong document into complete alignment with changes to State law and updating the housing sites inventory.

DISCUSSION:

The Housing Element is one of the seven required elements of the General Plan, and the only General Plan element that requires review and approval by the Department of

Housing and Community Development (HCD) prior to adoption. It is an assessment of the City's housing needs and how to best accommodate the existing and future housing needs of the City. The Housing Element is required to be updated every eight years, on a cycle tied to the regional growth forecast and the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). For the San Diego region, the statutory deadline for the Housing Element to be adopted is April 15, 2021. However, there is a 120-day grace period (August 12, 2021) to adopt without penalties.

As per state law, the Housing Element is required to include the following components:

- A detailed analysis of the City's demographic, economic and housing characteristics;
- Identification of governmental and nongovernmental constraints to housing production;
- A review of the City's progress in implementing current housing policies and programs;
- Development of goals and policies along with programs to implement them; and,
- Identification of sites within the City that could accommodate new housing to meet the City's regional housing needs assessment (RHNA) allocation.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) is a state mandate set by HCD which determines the total number of new housing units needed for each region in California. HCD allocated a total of over 171,685 new housing units to the SANDAG region. SANDAG is then responsible for developing a methodology for distributing the RHNA among its member jurisdictions. The RHNA allocation is broken down into four income groups (very low, low, moderate, and above moderate). Each jurisdiction must demonstrate in its Housing Element that, through its land use policies and zoning, it can accommodate both its total RHNA allocation as well as the allocation by income level.

La Mesa RHNA	
Income Category	Number of Units
Very Low	859
Low	487
Moderate	577
Above Moderate	1,874
Total	3,797

In meeting La Mesa's RHNA, the City relies on projects in the pipeline existing land use policies and zoning regulations, as well as adopted specific plans. The proposed Housing Element shows there is adequate capacity within the City to accommodate the

projected housing need. No rezoning or up-zoning is proposed to meet the RHNA.

Major Changes in State Housing Element Law

Numerous housing bills were passed between 2017 and 2020 that change the Housing Element requirements. Key changes:

- Adequate sites for RHNA are subject to stringent requirements (AB 1397), including minimum site size, realistic achievable density, and near-term development potential
- No Net Loss (SB 166) – continued ability to meeting the RHNA throughout the entire planning period as sites are being built
- Required program (AB 671) to facilitate the development of accessory dwelling units
- Affirmatively furthering fair housing (AB 686), ensuring that low income housing or opportunities for low income housing are not concentrated in neighborhoods with limited resources, and including actions to address impediments to fair housing
- Program to amend the Zoning Code to address special needs housing (such as AB 101 Low Barrier Navigation Center and SB 2162 Supportive Housing)

The prior 5th cycle Housing Element has been comprehensively updated to reflect current demographic and housing market conditions, to identify the sites available to accommodate the City's RHNA, and to update the housing programs with new objectives and timelines to comply with State law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the draft Housing Element provided as **Attachment A** and recommend that the draft document be submitted to the State Department of Housing and Community Development for mandatory review prior to adoption by the City Council.

Submitted by:



Kerry Kusiak
Director of Community Development

Attachments:

A. Draft Housing Element