

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

DATE: October 22, 2014

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Briefing on the update to the Housing Element of the County's General Plan

County File Number: PLN 2014-00386

PROPOSAL

This is an informational briefing on the ongoing update to the County Housing Element. Planning and Building Department staff, in collaboration with the County Housing Department, is updating the Housing Element of the County's General Plan. Consistent with State law, the amended Housing Element provides an updated assessment of the County's existing and projected housing needs, identifies opportunities and constraints relevant to meeting those needs, evaluates the effectiveness of current housing programs, and develops new policies, programs, and quantified objectives to meet identified housing needs in unincorporated areas.

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: William Gibson, Project Planner, Telephone 650/363-1816

Applicant: County of San Mateo

Location: Countywide, unincorporated areas

Environmental Evaluation: The Housing Element Update is a General Plan Amendment, which is a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff will likely be preparing a Negative Declaration for certification by the Board of Supervisors in connection with the Housing Element Update.

DISCUSSION

A. KEY ISSUES

1. The Housing Element Requirements

The Housing Element is a required component of the County's General Plan, mandated by State law. State law also mandates specific contents of the Housing Element, which include the following:

- a. Goals, policies, quantified objectives and scheduled programs to preserve, improve and develop housing.
- b. Identification of existing and projected housing needs for all segments of the community
- c. Identification of adequate sites that are zoned and available in the Housing Element cycle to meet the County's fair share of regional housing needs at all income levels
- d. A description of constraints on the development of housing in San Mateo County.
- e. An evaluation of the existing Housing Element.
- f. A statement of quantified objectives that estimates the number of housing units by income level to be provided for by the end of the Housing Element cycle.

2. The Housing Element Update

State law requires all local jurisdictions to periodically update the Housing Element of their General Plan, on a schedule established by the state. The current Housing Element covers the period for 2007 to 2014; the updated Housing Element will, on adoption, replace the existing Housing Element, and will cover the period from 2015 to 2023.

3. Adoption and Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Certification

The County must submit a revision or amendment of the Housing Element to HCD for HCD's review and approval; until certification by HCD, the Housing Element is not legally valid. The Housing Element must be certified by HCD, and adopted by the Board of Supervisors, by January 2015 (although there is a subsequent three month grace period ending in April).

4. Review and Revise/Streamlined Review

This Housing Element cycle, the Department of Housing and Community Development has offered jurisdictions the opportunity for streamlined review and the option to “review and revise” the Housing Element. The intent of this process is to focus HCD’s review only on parts of the Housing Element that have changed since the last cycle, simplifying and speeding up the process. San Mateo County is utilizing the streamlined review, as the last Element was adopted only three years ago, and many conditions, much data, and many policies remain current and relevant. This process should make certification by HCD faster and easier, as has proved the case with other jurisdictions using the same option.

5. Contents of the Draft Update

Staff is currently working on the draft of the updated Housing Element. The draft, like the current Housing Element, is organized into eleven sections and an appendix, as described below.

- a. Introduction. This section explains the scope and purpose of the Housing Element and its relationship to other County plans and programs.
- b. Public Outreach. This section describes the County’s efforts to maximize public participation and input from all parts of the unincorporated County community in the Housing Element Update.
- c. Existing Conditions. This section describes existing conditions in the County, including basic geographic and demographic information, housing conditions, economic conditions, and other current information.
- d. Housing Constraints. This section analyzes potential non-governmental, governmental and infrastructure constraints to housing development in unincorporated areas and summarizes potential constraints Countywide.
- e. Housing Needs. This section assesses current and projected housing needs, both Countywide and in unincorporated areas, related to housing supply, overpayment, overcrowding, rehabilitation, special needs, affordable units at risk of conversion to market rate units, and other factors.
- f. Energy Conservation. This section addresses the County’s energy conservation efforts related to housing.

- g. Review of Prior Housing Element. This section evaluates the effectiveness and achievements of the policies/programs from the previous Housing Element, and makes recommendations on whether to continue, modify, or discontinue each policy/program.
- h. Housing Resources. This section summarizes the resources available to the County to address housing needs.
- i. Adequate Sites Inventory and Analysis. This section presents an inventory of all of the sites in the unincorporated County that could potentially be developed with new housing or redeveloped at higher intensities, and an assessment of the realistic development and/or redevelopment potential of each site.
- j. Housing Goals, Policies and Programs. This section describes the new and continued policies and programs the County will implement to address the County’s housing needs, including an implementation timeframe and targets for each policy/program.
- k. Five-Year Quantified Housing Objectives. This section presents the County’s goals for new housing production.
- l. Appendix. The Appendix presents additional details on the public outreach process, summaries of public comment, and examples of outreach materials.

6. Regional Housing Needs Allocation

A core component of the Housing Element, and one of the most important legal requirements, is a demonstration that the County can meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation, or “RHNA.” The RHNA is the County’s share of overall regional housing need, as determined by the State of California and the Association of Bay Area Governments, and modified and agreed to by the local San Mateo County jurisdictions through a collaborative process. San Mateo County’s RHNA for the 2015-2023 period is:

Income Category¹	Units Needed
Extremely Low (up to \$33,950)	77
Very Low (between \$33,950 and \$56,550)	77
Low (between \$33,950 and \$90,500)	103
Moderate (between \$90,500 and \$123,600)	102
Above Moderate (greater than \$123,600)	555
Total	913

¹ Income category from 2014, based on a family of four.

Analysis completed for this Housing Element Update indicates that the County has enough available sites for new development and/or redevelopment of housing to meet the need indicated in the County's RHNA, without changes to zoning or other land use and development policies. The Housing Element does not create any new housing or other development, but only contains policies intended to encourage and facilitate development and redevelopment of housing, particularly housing affordable to lower-income households.

7. Changes from Prior Housing Element

The Housing Element has been revised and updated to reflect current conditions, current housing needs, best practices, the requirements of State law, and input received from stakeholders and County residents. However, because the prior Housing Element was adopted very recently, most changes are merely updates to existing data, existing policies and programs, and other information, including the adequate sites inventory, which must be modified to address changing conditions or new data. There are some exceptions, which are required to address new requirements in State law or new policies proposed as part of the Housing Element Update. In addition, some policies that are no longer relevant, or that have been completed, have been removed from the Housing Element. Some representative changes include:

- a. Assessment of the number and needs of the developmentally disabled in the County.
- b. Removal of policies relating to adoption of the North Fair Oaks Community Plan, which has been adopted.
- c. Removal of policies related to Senate Bill 2 compliance, which relates to zoning appropriately for emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing (see "Key Implementation Actions," below).
- d. Addition of a policy regarding pre-approved development prototypes for small lots in the Coastal Zone.

8. Public Participation

The updated Housing Element will be based on input received through public outreach and participation. Public participation includes the following components:

- a. 21 Elements Stakeholder Forums and Input. Through the Countywide 21 Elements Collaborative, which is an ongoing joint effort by all twenty-one County jurisdictions to share information, data, and

best practices on Housing Element Update and implementation, the County participated in stakeholder forums which provided input from developers, housing advocates, and other stakeholders on housing trends, housing needs, and other relevant information.

- b. Public Workshops. The County has held two public workshops, one on the Coastside and one on the Bayside, prior to creation of the draft Housing Element, and will hold two further workshops, also on the Coast and the Bayside, to receive comments on the draft Housing Element.
- c. Brochures. The County has produced informational brochures in English and Spanish for the Housing Element Update. The brochures have been distributed through County departments, through local libraries and community centers, and by email to a variety of stakeholders and partners.
- d. Online Survey. The County prepared a survey to obtain feedback on the housing issues most critical to County residents. The survey was available through the County's website, in English and Spanish, and was publicized by email, at the workshops, and in the brochure. Approximately 100 responses to the survey were received as of October 8, 2014 (in addition to ten hard copy versions of the survey received through the public workshops).
- e. Website. The County has maintained a website describing the Housing Element Update, providing information on housing issues, providing notice of meeting and hearing dates and other key dates and deadlines, and providing access to the current Housing Element, the online survey, electronic versions of the informational brochure, contact information for County staff, and other information.

9. Key Implementation Actions since Last Housing Element

The County has undertaken a number of implementation steps, many of which are ongoing, since adoption of the last Housing Element. However, two key implementation steps are required by State law for the County to remain in compliance with Housing Element law. First, the County must have created at least one zoning district in which emergency shelters are allowed by right, without discretionary approvals. The County amended the zoning of the Planned Colma District zoning regulations to meet this requirement. Second, the County must amend its zoning regulations to stipulate that transitional and supportive housing are allowed under the same standards as the base allowed residential use in any zoning district. This zoning amendment is underway, and will be reviewed by the

Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in December 2014 and January 2015.

In addition, if any rezonings are required to make sufficient sites available to meet the County's RHNA, these rezonings must be completed prior to adoption of the new Housing Element. In this case, the County did not need to undertake any rezonings.

10. Next Steps

- a. Workshops on Housing Element Draft, November 2014
- b. Finalize Draft, November 2014
- c. Environmental Review (likely Initial Study and Negative Declaration), November, December – 2014
- d. Planning Commission Hearing on Draft Element and Recommendation to Board of Supervisors, December 2014
- e. Submittal to Housing and Community Development, December 2014, January 2015
- f. Board of Supervisors Review, January 2015
- g. Board of Supervisors Adoption, January – February 2015

WG:pac WSGY0885_WPU.DOCX