



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Housing Element Update

What is the Housing Element? All communities in California are required to have a Housing Element as part of their adopted General Plan. The Housing Element is strictly regulated by State planning law and must be updated at regular intervals. The topics they must address include:

- An assessment of housing needs and an inventory of resources and constraints relevant to the meeting of those needs.
- A statement of the community's goals, quantified objectives, and implementing policies governing the maintenance, preservation, improvement, and development of housing.
- A program that sets forth a five-year schedule of actions to implement relevant Housing Element policies and

Why is the Housing Element important? Updating the Housing Element presents a real opportunity for communities to be forward thinking and strategic in their overall planning process. The benefits of updating the Housing Element include: providing timely access to State infrastructure bonds to construct needed capital improvement projects; implementing redevelopment/revitalization initiatives and smart growth principles to help shape the community's physical form; achieving a jobs-housing balance to reduce commute patterns, retaining a local employment basis and providing the capacity for attracting new business; engaging the public and stakeholders in developing a common base of understanding; devising land use strategies and achieving consensus on common goals; and directing growth in the community.

Who are we planning for? State law requires that the needs possessed by all economic segments be addressed within the Housing Element. However, particular focus is placed on the needs of extremely low, very low, low and moderate income households. In addition, issues specific to the elderly, disabled, homeless, farm workers, female-headed households and large families must be addressed.

What is RHNA? A fundamental requirement of Housing Element law is the need for each community to address their fair share of regional housing needs (commonly referred to as "RHNA." The RHNA process is part of a statewide mandate to address housing issues related to future growth in California. The numbers are first generated by the State and then refined by regional planning agencies in cooperation with local government. The Association of Bay Area Governments ("ABAG") is Solano County's regional planning agency. ABAG has determined that the City of Vacaville must plan for a minimum of 2,901 housing units within a 7 year time period spanning from 2007 to 2014.

Target Incomes	2007-2014
Very Low	754
Low	468
Moderate	515
Above Moderate	1,164
	2,901

What are the consequences for not updating the Housing Element? As part of the update process, all California localities are required to submit draft and adopted elements to the California Department of Housing and Community Development ("HCD") for review. Although communities are obligated to consider HCD comments, they are not required to modify their Elements to incorporate changes requested by HCD. The ultimate determination of whether a Housing Element complies with applicable law is reserved for the courts to decide. Although HCD is not the final authority on determining Housing Element compliance, there are three primary consequences for not obtaining HCD approval:

- In any action taken to challenge the validity of a Housing Element, there is a rebuttable presumption of validity of the element if HCD has found that the element or amendment substantially complies with the requirements of Housing Law.
- Various grant and loan programs offered through the State of California are only available to those communities which either have HCD-certified Housing Elements or do not otherwise have impediments to the production of affordable housing.
- Unfilled regional housing needs from the previous Housing Element cycle resulting from the failure to provide adequate sites must be addressed in the first year of the next planning period in addition to all new housing needs that are assigned to that particular jurisdiction.

What role does community input play in the Housing Element update? Community input is a very important part of the Housing Element Update. State planning law requires that communities make diligent efforts to engage public participation that includes all stakeholders and income groups. The public process for the 2007-2014 Housing Element will include focus group discussions and public workshops on housing issues, policy formation and program development. Late in the process, the Planning Commission and City Council will conduct formal hearings to adopt the updated Housing Element. Written public comment regarding issues related to housing are always welcome. If you would like to be contacted regarding future meetings and/or you have any questions about the Housing Element, please contact Maureen Carson, City Planner, or Tyra Hays, Associate Planner at 650 Merchant Street, Vacaville, CA 95688. (707) 449-5140. Mtraut@cityofvacaville.com or Thays@cityofvacaville.com.

For More Information regarding Housing Element Requirements please visit www.hcd.ca.gov.