

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

State law requires the Housing Element to contain a statement of “the means by which consistency will be achieved with other General Plan elements and community goals” (California Government Code, Section 65583[c] [6] [B]). The Housing Element is one of seven required elements of a City’s General Plan. Unlike the other mandatory general plan elements, the Housing Element, required to be updated approximately every eight years, is subject to detailed statutory requirements and mandatory review by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), a State agency.

The Housing Element has been a mandatory element of the General Plan since 1969. This reflects the statutory recognition that the availability of housing is a matter of statewide importance and that cooperation between government and the private sector is critical to attainment of the State’s housing goals. The regulation of the housing supply through planning and zoning powers affects the State’s ability to achieve its housing goal of “decent housing and a suitable living environment for every California family” and is critical to the State’s long-term economic competitiveness.

The purpose of maintaining internal consistency in the General Plan is to avoid policy conflict and provide a clear framework for the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing within the city. The purpose of maintaining internal consistency in the General Plan is to avoid policy conflict and provide a clear framework for the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing within the city. The City will continue to maintain General Plan consistency by reviewing the Housing Element as other elements are updated or amended. The Housing Element envisions housing development on land designated for such development by the 1990 General Plan. The Housing Element is also consistent with the overall vision for the community established by the General Plan, which emphasizes a variety of housing types and infill development.

### 1.2 2007-2014 HOUSING ELEMENT

This Housing Element updates the 2007-2014 Vacaville Housing Element, which was adopted in 2010. Policies of the 2007-2014 Housing Element were reviewed and evaluated in preparing the new housing program. The City’s success in implementing the goals of the 2007-2014 Element has been evaluated in Chapter 8.

### 1.3 HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS

To a greater extent than any other part of the General Plan, the contents of the Housing Element are mandated by State law. The cornerstone of the State-mandated requirements is the allocation of Statewide housing needs on a regional basis and the adoption by each community of its share of the projected regional need. The State requires that the Housing Element contain an identification and analysis of existing and projected housing need for individuals of all levels of income; a statement of goals, policies, and quantified objectives; programs to address identified housing needs; and an identification of an adequate number of

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sites for all types of housing (including rental, factory built, and mobile homes). Government Code Sections 65580 through 65589 set forth requirements relating to the preparation and content of housing elements. By law, a housing element must contain:

1. An analysis of population and employment trends and documentation of projections and a quantification of the locality's existing and projected housing needs for all income levels.
2. An analysis and documentation of household characteristics, including level of payment compared to ability to pay; housing characteristics, including overcrowding; and housing stock condition.
3. An inventory of land suitable for residential development, including vacant sites and sites having potential for redevelopment, and an analysis of the relationship of zoning and public facilities and services to these sites. The land inventory must demonstrate the City's ability to accommodate its fair share of regional housing needs as determined by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).
4. An analysis of potential and actual governmental constraints upon the maintenance, improvement, or development of housing for all income levels and for persons with disabilities, including land use controls, building codes and their enforcement, site improvements, fees and other exactions required of developers, and local processing and permit procedures.
5. An analysis of potential and actual non-governmental constraints upon the maintenance, improvement, or development of housing for all income levels, including the availability of financing, the price of land, and the cost of construction.
6. An analysis of any special housing needs, such as those of the elderly, persons with disabilities, large families, farm workers, families with female heads of household, and families and persons in need of emergency shelter.
7. An analysis of opportunities for energy conservation with respect to residential development.
8. An analysis of existing assisted housing developments that are eligible to change from low-income housing uses during the next 10 years due to termination of subsidy contracts, mortgage prepayment, or expiration of restrictions on use.

Eight sections make up the Housing Element: the introduction, housing programs, sections covering regional context, existing housing, housing need, ability to meet housing need, and an evaluation of the 2007-2014 Vacaville Housing Element.

### **1.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was a significant amount of public participation efforts made in drafting this Housing Element update. These efforts have resulted in proposed housing programs, which have been tailored to address the local housing market and community needs.

#### **Community Outreach**

In an effort to educate the public about the Housing Element, the City provided information regarding the Housing Element on its website: [www.cityofvacaville.com](http://www.cityofvacaville.com). The Housing Element webpage included the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers; identified housing topics that would be addressed in the Housing Element document; provided information about the ongoing public participation process; included a link to the previous Housing Element and other Housing Element related websites; provided a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

sheet; and provided contact information for people seeking additional information regarding the Housing Element. The aforementioned FAQ sheet was available in the handout display located on the Planning Division counter.

\*The Draft Housing Element was posted on the City's website during the public review period and interested persons were able to submit comments electronically through an email address located on the webpage.

### **Senior Roundtable Presentations**

Vacaville has a relatively large and active senior population. To encourage ongoing discussions between the City and the senior community, the City established the Senior Roundtable in January 2000 as a community collaborative for senior issues. Almost 50 government and community organizations are represented. The mission of the Senior Roundtable is to:

- Identify the vision for seniors in our community in order to help focus the programs of participating agencies.
- Conceptualize and create new programs for seniors and then assist in their development.
- Provide a forum for networking and dialog among members to promote formal and informal support.

On November 21, 2013 and October 16, 2014, the City provided a presentation on the City's pending General Plan and Housing Element updates to the Senior Roundtable and solicited comments, questions, and concerns raised by the senior community. Topics raised at these meetings included, but were not limited to the following:

- The need for affordable senior housing.
- The need for the City to plan and help seniors to "age in place."
- The need for smaller, single story homes for seniors.
- The need for easy and close access to senior social services.
- The desire for the Housing Element to cross reference other General Plan policies supporting senior housing and services.

### **Stakeholder Interview**

To solicit questions, comments, and information about the community's housing needs from key stakeholders, the City individually invited representatives from the social services, development, and housing communities to a facilitated discussion on June 4, 2014. Attendees included representatives from the following organizations:

- California Apartment Association (Napa-Solano)
- Child Start of Napa and Solano Counties
- Community Action Partnership of Solano County
- Downtown Vacaville Business Improvement District
- Legal Services of Northern California
- Local residential developers, property owners, realtors, and property managers
- North Bay Housing Coalition

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- Northern Solano County Association of Realtors
- On My Own
- Opportunity House
- Solano Affordable Housing Foundation
- Solano Community Foundation
- Vacaville Community Housing
- Vacaville Social Services Corporation

Additional people and groups were invited to the meeting, and they will continue to be informed regarding Housing Element activities. Several issues were discussed, including, but not limited to:

### **Location of Affordable Housing**

- Allowing secondary units on larger lots with reduced fees
- Need for affordable rental and ownership opportunities
- Redeveloping Brown Street to avoid flood insurance and meet the need for extremely low-income housing
- Perception that there is no available vacant land for affordable housing within city limits
- Where to locate affordable housing and how to reduce the concentration of low-income housing
- Whether affordable or market-rate housing is appropriate in the downtown, and downtown parking concerns

### **Extremely Low-Income Housing**

- Concerns regarding transients, safety, illegal activity, enforcement, and the upkeep of low-income housing
- Supporting homeless and low-income residents with services as well as housing, including services, amenities, and activities near housing

### **Funding Issues**

- Unavailability of funds for building affordable housing
- Development fees
- The pros and cons of an inclusionary housing policy
- Whether to build housing for low-income residents, or focus on extremely low-income residents
- The difficulty of making new construction “pencil out” at an affordable price

### **Market-Rate Housing**

- Executive housing for business and job attraction
- Housing for seniors, including single-story units and cooperatives

- Existing oversupply of two-bedroom units
- Need to increase the stock of:
- Small one-bedroom and studio/efficiency units
- Family-friendly three- and four-bedroom units
- Large-lot, single-story single-family houses
- Small mobile and manufactured homes
- Small, single-story homes with small yards for seniors (such as those at Maplewood)
- Community support for mixed-use housing above retail

As a result of the discussions with the Senior Roundtable, the stakeholder meeting, and subsequent individual meetings with some of the stakeholder members, the City incorporated housing policies and programs into this document to address many of these issues, including addressing the need for units with many bedrooms by supporting a proposed development in the Rocky Hill area, and supporting housing for residents with special needs. Many of the other issues are already addressed in the existing housing element. Housing policies resulting from public participation are listed in Section 1.5, below.

### **Public Meetings**

The Planning Commission held study sessions on July 15, 2014 and December 16, 2014 to review the Housing Element update process, the RHNA, and to request input regarding proposed housing programs and policies. On April 21, 2015, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider the merits of the Housing Element and voted to recommend that the City Council adopt the Housing Element. On April 28, 2015, the City Council held an informational meeting to solicit public comment and input prior to scheduling the Housing Element for an adoption hearing. The meetings were televised live on the City's local access channel (Comcast Channel 26) and can continue to be viewed on the City's website. In addition, the staff reports are also available online on the City's website: [www.cityofvacaville.com](http://www.cityofvacaville.com). The Housing Element adoption hearing is scheduled for May 12, 2015.

### **Comment Letter on Draft Housing Element**

On March 5, 2015, the City received a comment letter from Legal Services of Northern California (LSNC). The letter included recommendations on how to improve the Housing Element. Recommendations were made regarding:

- Increasing public participation
- Explaining why specific housing policies identified in the 2007-2014 Housing Element were not implemented
- Expanding the analysis of the housing needs of specific vulnerable populations
- Alternative funding sources following the dissolution of redevelopment in California
- Providing additional affordability information for specific housing sites Including the cost associated with development standards
- Including the cost associated with development standards

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As a result of the letter received from LSNC, the City is committed to doing more public outreach prior to the Housing Element adoption hearing; additional information and clarification language has been added to the Housing Element; and two new housing policies have been added, while two additional policies have been amended, to incorporate some of the recommendations.

### **1.5 HOUSING POLICIES RESULTING FROM PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

As a result of public input, several policies are being proposed or modified to address specific concerns and ideas. These policies have been incorporated into Chapter 2, Housing Programs, and are discussed below:

#### **Guiding Policies**

- H.1 - G 5** Support the development of permanent, affordable, and accessible housing, along transit lines and near services, that allows people with disabilities to live independent lives integrated into the larger community.
- H.1 - G 6** Encourage universal design in new housing developments to support both accessibility for residents with disabilities as well as visitability of friends and neighbors by people with disabilities.

#### **Implementing Policies**

- H.1 - I 6** Give priority to special needs housing and residential care facilities by allowing for reduced processing time and streamlined procedures for special needs housing land use applications.
- H.1 - I 7** Include preferential handling of special needs populations, such as domestic violence cases, youth aging out of foster care, the developmentally disabled, single parents, etc., in the management plans and regulatory agreements of funded projects.
- H.1 - I 8** Consider adopting a Universal Design ordinance incentivizing accessible design features in new residential development to support visitability, which allows people with limited mobility to stay integrated with the community.
- H.1 - I 11** Work with private and non-profit developers to target subsidies and programs, including the Density Bonus Ordinance, to encourage the inclusion of three- and four-bedroom units in affordable rental projects.
- H.3 - I 16** Evaluate the impact of the City's crime free multi-family policy to consider whether refinements are needed to the City's screening policies.
- H.3 - I 17** Continue to work with non-profit organizations and social service agencies that provide after school programs for childcare in low-income neighborhoods.

## 1.6 INFORMATION SOURCES

The most comprehensive and authoritative source of information on population, housing, and economic data is the United States Census. Census data within this report is from the Decennial (2010) Census, except in a few instances where information was available from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey. The source for the majority of the data tables found in this report is from the Census' Summary File 3. Summary File 3 presents detailed population and housing data (such as place of birth, education, employment status, income, value of housing unit, year structure built) collected from a 1-in-6 sample and weighted to represent the total population.

While the 2010 Census is considered the most reliable source of demographic information, other more recent sources of data may provide a better snapshot of today's demographics. To address this, the City supplemented the Census data with data from other sources when possible. The additional data sources include:

- Demographic and housing data provided by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the State Department of Finance Economic Development Department.
- Median Income data provided by the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Housing market information, including foreclosure data and median sales data was purchased from Data Quick Services.
- Employment and commuter data provided by Metropolitan Transportation Commission (for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area) (MTC).
- Demographic information from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey.
- Housing condition information collected by a City windshield survey.
- Public and nonprofit agencies were consulted for data on special needs groups, the services available to them, and gaps in the system.
- Apartment vacancy and rental rate data was collected from annual City surveys.

Appendix A provides a list of City documents and standards available upon request.

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