

City of Albany



TO: ALBANY PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
FROM: BARRY MILLER, GENERAL PLAN CONSULTANT
SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN UPDATE
DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 2014

REQUEST

This is the 15th Planning and Zoning Commission Study Session on the Albany 2035 General Plan Update. This Study Session will review draft Housing Element policies and programs for the 2015-2023 period. An opportunity for public comment will be provided.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This item is a study session and no Commission action is required.

SITE LOCATION

The General Plan applies to all property in the City of Albany.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

State law requires all cities in the Bay Area to update their housing elements by January 31, 2015. The Albany Housing Element will cover the period 2015-2023 and must demonstrate the City's ability to accommodate its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for the 2015-2023 period. The RHNA for Albany is 335 units, including 145 above moderate income units, 57 moderate income units, 53 low income units, and 80 very low income units. Through its Housing Element, the City must show that it has a sufficient amount of land zoned to accommodate this assignment, as well as programs which facilitate housing construction by the private and non-profit sectors.

The 2015-2023 Housing Element update process has been structured as a continuation of the 2007-2014 update process, which only recently concluded. The Planning and Zoning Commission conducted several study sessions on the 2007-2014 Housing Element in 2007-2009 and in 2013 and early 2014. On March 3, 2014, the City Council adopted the 2007-2014 Housing Element. The document was certified by the state on June 3, 2014.

The Commission held a study session on the 2015-2023 Housing Element on July 23, and received a status update on the project on September 10. The status update included the addition of three new housing sites on San Pablo Avenue. In addition, the City convened a “Town Meeting” on housing on July 22 and is planning an affordable housing “symposium” on September 30. The City has also reached out to the community on housing issues via public events such as the Solano Stroll, coordination with the community-based Diverse Housing Working Group, and the General Plan website.

Attachment “A” to this staff report presents the City’s Draft Goals, Policies, and Programs for 2015-2023. This is “Chapter 6” of the Housing Element. Chapters 1-5 of the Element were still in production at the time of this staff report and will be released in the next 10 days.¹ Because the Element was adopted just six months ago, Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5 will not be substantially different than the chapters adopted in March. Chapter 2 is an evaluation of the City’s existing Housing Element, including an update on tasks accomplished since March 2014.

Changes to the Goals, Policies, and Programs

Attachment “A” uses “tracked changes” to highlight changes to the proposed 2007- 2014 Housing Element. The tracked change format is intended to facilitate review by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and also to facilitate review by the California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). HCD has established “streamlining” provisions for 2015-2023 housing elements which enable state reviewers to focus only on changes to the previous element rather than reviewing the element in its entirety.

The following bulleted list summarizes proposed changes to the Goals, Policies, and Programs. The list is organized by goal (see Attachment A). At the study session on September 24, staff will walk the Commission through this list and ask for feedback on each item. The proposed changes were developed based on input from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the community at large. Notes from Commission study sessions, Town Hall meetings, and meetings with housing advocates were reviewed to develop recommended changes. *It should be emphasized that the actions presented here are preliminary—the Commission may delete, edit, or add actions as appropriate.*

Goal 1: Housing Conservation

- Policy 1.8 has been added to discourage the use of rental units, especially secondary units, for short-term stays.
- Program 1.C has been updated to incorporate the City’s recent efforts to monitor inclusionary units.
- Program 1.F has been added to evaluate Municipal Code provisions for short-term rentals to determine if Code changes are needed to protect rental housing opportunities.

¹ Chapter 1 is the Introduction, Chapter 2 is the Evaluation of the Prior Element, Chapter 3 is the Needs Assessment, Chapter 4 is the Site Inventory, and Chapter 5 is the Constraints Analysis.

Goal 2: Housing Conservation

- Policy 2.12 has been added to support the concept of scattered site affordable housing.
- Policy 2.13 has been added to consider additional housing sites at UC Village and on other public sites not committed to open space, park, or public facility use.
- Policy 2.14 has been added to support low income housing tax credit projects.
- Program 2.A (minimum densities in SPC and SC) has been deleted since it is underway and is presumed to be completed by the time the Element is adopted.
- Program 2.B has been merged into former Program 4.H (Incentives).
- New Program 2.A has been added to conduct a nexus study for an affordable housing impact fee.
- New Program 2.D has been added to consider an Affordable Housing Incentive Program (this program would offer specific zoning incentives to projects that incorporate affordable units).
- Program 2.E has been expanded to note additional community outreach ideas.
- Program 2.I has been updated to reflect the recent adoption of a Second Unit Amnesty Program.
- Program 2.J has been updated to note that the City recently did a survey of second unit rents, and will repeat that survey every three years.
- Program 2.K incorporates the current status of the Affordable Housing Fund.

Goal 3: Special Housing Needs

- Former Program 3.E has been reworded and is now Policy 3.8, since the City has already completed the zoning changes for transitional and supportive housing.
- Program 3.A incorporates current data on persons with disabilities in Albany.
- Minor edits have been made to Programs 3.D and 3.E to include current data.
- Program 3.F has been updated to note the City's compliance with SB 2 (emergency shelter) and to explore allowing such uses in the SC and R-3 zones with a conditional use permit.
- Program 3.H has been revised to incorporate the public's suggestion that the City explore the feasibility of a homeless drop-in center (for meals, showers, counseling, etc.).
- Program 3.I incorporates current data on the status of "boomerang" funds.

Goal 4: Reducing Housing Constraints

- Policy 4.7 has been added supporting innovative housing types.
- Policy 4.8 has been added to encourage car-free living.
- Former Program 4.A (multi-family housing by right in the R-4 zone) has been deleted because it is presumed this will be completed before Housing Element adoption.
- New Program 4.A has been added to consider additional Zoning Code changes in the R-1 and R-3 districts.
- Program 4.B has been rewritten to reflect the recent revisions to the second unit standards, and to suggest additional incentives for second units to be explored in the coming years.
- Program 4.D has been updated to reflect anticipated Zoning Code changes for the SPC zone and to identify possible new changes that could be considered in the next eight years.
- Former Program 4.E (allowing SROs in the SPC zone) has been deleted because it is presumed it will be completed by the time of Housing Element adoption.

- New Program 4.E has been updated to reflect the citywide parking study now underway.
- Program 4.F has been updated to reflect the recommendations of the parking task force.
- Program 4.G has been updated to reflect the anticipated completion of a fee reduction policy in the next six months.
- Program 4.J has been added to evaluate potential obstacles for non-traditional housing types.

Goal 5: Fair Housing

- Policy 5.7 has been added to avoid tenant displacement due to rising rents.
- Program 5.D has been added to support free Fair Housing Training programs.
- Program 5.E has been added to consider the feasibility of creating a Rent Review Board.

Objectives

- The quantified objectives at the end of the chapter have been updated to reflect the higher RHNA.

NEXT STEPS

As noted, staff has organized a “Housing Symposium” to be held at City Hall on September 30, 2014. The public is invited and encouraged to attend and participate.

On October 8, the Commission will consider a “Working Draft” of the entire Housing Element, including revisions to Chapter 6 and the completed Chapters 1-5. Staff will ask for a recommendation to forward this document to the City Council for discussion. On October 20, the Council will hold a study session on the Housing Element, and will be asked for a recommendation to submit the document to HCD for their initial review.

HCD comments are anticipated in early December. Depending on the date that comments are received, the Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing on the new Housing Element in either mid-December or early January 2015. This would be followed by a City Council hearing to adopt the Element.

Work on other parts of the General Plan will continue while State review of the Housing Element is underway. Planning and Zoning Commission study sessions on the Environmental Hazards Element, the Community Services and Facilities Element, and the Waterfront Element are anticipated in October and November.

ATTACHMENT A: Draft Housing Goals, Policies, and Programs