

City of Albany



TO: ALBANY PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
FROM: BARRY MILLER, GENERAL PLAN CONSULTANT
SUBJECT: 2015-023 HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE
DATE: OCTOBER 8, 2014

REQUEST

The Planning Commission is asked to review the “Working Draft” Housing Element for 2015-2023 and make a recommendation to the City Council to forward the document to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for their initial review and comments. The document is still a Working Draft and will not be brought forward for formal adoption until December 2014 or January 2015.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Forward the document to the City Council, who will then authorize its submittal to State HCD for preliminary review.

SITE LOCATION

The Housing Element 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 discussed changes to the housing opportunity site inventory on September 10. The Commission also held a study session on September 24, focused on revisions to adopted policies and actions. In addition, the City convened a “Town Meeting” on housing on July 22 and conducted 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.

The 2007-2014 Housing Element provides the starting point for the 2015-2023 document. The prior document has been edited and updated to include current data and new objectives for the next eight years. To facilitate review by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council, and the State reviewers, staff has prepared two versions of the document:

- (a) A “track change” version which highlights changes to the March 3, 2014 document; and
- (b) A “clean” version which accepts the changes.

The Planning and Zoning Commission may wish to focus its review on the “track change” version, as much of the document has not changed since March.

For the October 8 meeting, the document has been further organized into two sections:

- (a) Chapters 1-5 (not previously reviewed by the Commission—see exhibits “A” and “B”)
- (b) Chapter 6 (reviewed by the Commission on September 24---see exhibits “C” and “D”).

Chapter 6 includes tracked changes which preceded the September 24 meeting (in red font) and tracked changes made in response to public input (and Commissioner input) on September 24 (in blue font). The public input included the oral testimony of five persons at the meeting on September 24, plus written comments from Alexa Houser and Loni Gray. In its review of Chapter 6, the Commission may wish to focus on the “blue font” changes, since they reflect the most recent edits.

Overview of Changes to Chapters 1-5

The following bulleted lists summarize the changes to Chapters 1-5. The changes principally relate to the new planning time period (2015-2023), as well as factual updates of data and narrative text to reflect current conditions.

Chapter 1 (Introduction)

- Has been updated to reflect the higher Regional Housing Needs Allocation for the next eight years (335 units vs 276 units)
- Added a description of the HCD “streamlining” process for Housing Element review
- Rewrote the description of the community outreach program to reflect the work of the last year (and delete the description of the 2007-2013 process)

Chapter 2 (Review of the Previous Housing Element)

This chapter has been almost entirely rewritten, since its purpose is to evaluate the City's performance on the prior Element. The March 2014 version of this chapter described progress in implementing the 1992 Albany Housing Element, and addressed achievements over a 21-year period between 1992-2013. The current (September 2014) Draft focuses on progress during 2007-2014, with a special focus on achievements since adoption of the Housing Element in March 2014.

Specific changes include:

- Data on the RHNA and housing production during the “prior” planning period has been updated to focus on 2007-2014 (rather than 1999-2006)
- The discussion on carry-over of unmet need has been eliminated since the City currently has a compliant Housing Element for the prior planning period
- The “review of prior Housing Element policies” in the March 2014 document has been deleted, and replaced with updated text that focuses on achievements between March and September 2014. The appropriateness of each goal, policy, and action for the 2015-2023 period has been evaluated.

Chapter 3 (Needs Assessment)

Most of this text is unchanged since March 2014. Minor edits have been made to keep the document factually correct and current, and to incorporate data released in the past year.

Specific changes include:

- Data on persons with disabilities has been updated (the prior document used 2000 Census data, which is outdated. The new document uses 2008-2012 data from the American Community Survey)
- The description of Albany's homeless needs has been updated to reference the 2013 Homeless Count (which had not been released when this chapter was written a year ago) and to reflect current conditions at the Albany Bulb
- Current data on home prices and rents has been updated
- The discussion of projections and the RHNA has been updated to reflect the new planning period

Chapter 4 (Sites Inventory)

The text has been updated to add three new sites, increase the estimated number of second units that will be produced during the planning period, delete discussion of the availability of sites during the prior planning period, and update the discussion of units produced so far in the planning period.

Specific changes include:

- The prior Element included a detailed discussion of housing units added from 2007-2013, since the City was “credited” for producing these units during the last RHNA period. This has been deleted and replaced with a discussion of housing units added or approved so far during this RHNA period, which started on January 1, 2014.

- Three housing sites have been added: The Goodwill (former Blockbuster) site at 501-505 San Pablo, the Mary and Joe's site at 911-913 San Pablo, and the Town Centre site at 950 San Pablo. Collectively, these sites add 61 units of potential to the City's inventory (using a conservatively low density assumption).
- The text on second units has been updated to reflect recent local Code amendments
- The discussion on site availability during 1999-2006 has been deleted since it is no longer required

Chapter 5 (Constraints)

Most of this chapter is unchanged since March 2014. Updates have been made to reflect recent zoning code amendments, and several amendments that are pending and will be brought to the Planning and Zoning Commission in the coming months. The Chapter includes current information on second unit regulations, the status of parking studies, and pending changes to the SPC zoning regulations regarding ground floor residential and SROs. Fee information has been updated to FY 14-15.

Changes to the Goals, Policies, and Programs (Chapter 6)

The September 24 staff report included a detailed list of the proposed changes to Chapter 6. That list is not repeated here, and the presentation on October 8 will focus will on the changes that have been made since September 24 in response to public comment. Members of the public asked for more committal and/or affirmative language on some of the action programs. The text has been edited to include such language, although not every requested change has been made. In some instances, staff believes that directives to "consider" and "encourage" various strategies are more appropriate than those to "enact" or "require" them. This reflects fiscal constraints, the need for additional community input, staff limitations, and other unknowns.

Exhibit "C" highlights the supplemental changes that have been made to the goals, policies, and programs using blue font (in a few cases, green font appears---this reflects text that has been cut and pasted from one section of the document to another). Specific changes include:

- Changed "should" to "shall" on Policies 1.1 and 1.2
- Added a policy supporting "shared housing" (1.9)
- Added a program to support remodels which facilitate home sharing and co-housing. Since a similar program already existed at 3.C, some of the text from 3.C was moved here and Program 3.C was rewritten to focus on room rentals.
- A footnote was added to Policy 2.12 to define "scattered site housing"
- Program 2.E was expanded to call for participation in Affordable Housing Week, or an equivalent local event
- Minor edits were made to programs under Goal 2, consistent with public input
- Policy 3.9 was added to connect special needs residents with housing opportunities
- Program 3.C was edited so it is distinct from the new program on home sharing and co-housing added under Goal 1
- Minor edits were made to programs under Goal 3, consistent with public input
- Policy 4.9 was added to maintain staffing levels to implement local housing programs

- Ideas for additional education on second units (home tours, awards, plaques, etc.) have been added to Program 4.B
- Minor edits were made to policies and programs under Goal 4, consistent with public input
- Minor edits were made to policies and programs under Goal 5, consistent with public input

NEXT STEPS

As noted, staff is requesting 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. A CEQA Initial Study will be prepared before the document is brought back to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

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 on October 22 and in November.

EXHIBITS:

A: Draft Chapters 1-5 (redlined)

B: Draft Chapters 1-5 (clean)

C: Draft Chapter 6, with edits through October 3, 2014 (redlined)

D: Draft Chapter 6, with edits through October 3, 2014 (clean)