

CHAPTER  
**5**  
HOUSING  
ELEMENT

**A. BACKGROUND**

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to direct the reader to a separate, free-standing volume of the Albany General Plan known as the Housing Element. Chapter 5 provides an overview of that document’s contents and explains the reason it exists under separate cover.

Unlike the other elements of the General Plan, the Housing Element is prepared and updated on a cycle set by the State of California. State law requires cities to update their Housing Elements approximately every eight years. The State also requires the Housing Element to be submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development for certification.

Albany adopted its 2015-2023 Housing Element on February 2, 2015. The Element will govern housing decisions through January 31, 2023. The City will be required to adopt a new Housing Element at that time, most likely extending to 2031.

The Housing Element document should be consulted for policies on the desired types of new housing in Albany, housing affordability levels, protection of the existing housing stock, the production of housing for special needs populations, fair housing laws, and the removal of constraints to housing production. The Element also includes an action program laying out the specific steps the City of Albany will take in the coming years to facilitate housing construction.

The Housing Element is organized into six chapters as follows:

1. **Introduction** describes the requirements for the Housing Element and the process used to develop the document.
2. **Review of Previous Housing Element** corresponds to a state requirement to evaluate the effectiveness of the previous Housing Element and identify the steps needed to address any deficiencies. This chapter includes a series of tables that describe the progress that has been made in carrying out the previous (2007-2014) Element.

3. **Assessment of Housing Needs** includes an analysis of demographics, income, affordability, employment, special housing needs, housing stock characteristics, and energy conservation. This information is used to assess current and anticipated housing needs in the city.
4. **Site Inventory and Analysis** describes the inventory of sites in Albany that could potentially support new housing during the planning period. It also includes an assessment of the potential for second units in the city. This chapter Albany's ability to accommodate its "fair share" of the region's housing needs for 2015-2023.
5. **Analysis of Constraints to Housing Production** identifies possible governmental and non-governmental constraints to housing development in the city. Governmental constraints include the zoning ordinance, standards for special housing types, design review requirements, building code and permit processing requirements, local fees, and site improvement requirements. Non-governmental constraints include infrastructure, environmental hazards, land and construction costs, financing, and public opinion.
6. **Housing Goals, Policies, and Action Programs** presents the City's official housing policies along with a series of measurable targets for 2015-2023. A timeframe and responsible party is identified for each action program.

Policies and actions are organized under five broad goals which address: (1) conservation of existing housing; (2) production of new housing; (3) special needs housing; (4) reducing housing constraints; and (5) equal access and enforcement of fair housing laws.

## B. REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION

One of the requirements for the Housing Element is that Albany must show its ability to meet its "fair share" of the region's housing need for the next eight years. The "fair share" is calculated by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) through a process called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). A RHNA assignment is given to each Bay Area city and county using a formula that considers population size, land area, vacant land, employment growth, proximity to public transit, environmental constraints, and similar factors. During the current planning period (2015-2023), the RHNA is 335 units.

The RHNA is further broken down into four income categories. Albany's assignment includes 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. The responsibility for constructing housing falls to the private market and non-profit housing developers. Cities are expected to assist by adopting development standards that support housing at a variety of densities, providing technical assistance and infrastructure, and adopting policies that encourage housing production, conservation, and assistance to persons with special needs.

The 2015-2023 Housing Element should be consulted for further information.