

SUBJECT: HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE: DRAFT ELEMENT

PREPARED BY: PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
(Robyn Eason, AICP, Long Range Planning Manager)  
(Rachel Dimond, AICP, Senior Planner)  
(Bryan Eck, AICP, Senior Planner)  
(Gurdeep Kaur, AICP, Assistant Planner)

COMMUNITY SERVICES  
(Brian League, Property Development Manager)  
(Alicen Bartle, Project Development Administrator)

URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE STUDIO  
(Ric Abramson, FAIA, Manager, Urban Design and Architecture Studio)

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**STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:**

The purpose of this meeting is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission with a draft of the Housing Element Update (Exhibit A) and Technical Background Report (Exhibit B). Staff requests feedback from the Historic Preservation Commission in order to move forward with adoption of the Housing Element Update, which includes a review by Housing and Community Development (HCD) before final review by Planning Commission and City Council prior to the February 2022 deadline. Staff continues to seek input on these items from the Historic Preservation Commission and the public as part of the public engagement process, with the draft report available for public review through September 1, 2021.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission consider the staff presentation, ask any pertinent questions, and provide feedback on the draft Housing Element Update and Technical Background Report.

**BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:**

*Housing Element Overview*

The Housing Element is a state-required chapter in the City of West Hollywood General Plan. This plan provides an indication of the need for housing in the community, particularly the availability, affordability, and adequacy of housing. This will be the State's sixth eight-year planning cycle, with the upcoming cycle for the time period of October 2021 to October 2029. State law requires the City to update

and submit its Housing Element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for state certification by February 2022. The Housing Element is important because it helps guide the next eight-year cycle of housing in the City. Maintaining adequate housing is essential to ensuring good quality of life and economic prosperity for our community and the region as a whole. Current demand for housing dramatically exceeds the existing housing stock in the Los Angeles region and in California as a whole. While new jobs have attracted new residents, construction has not kept pace. This has resulted in more people living further away from jobs, causing congestion and pollution. In order to expand housing while reducing environmental impacts, redevelopment of land and construction of housing needs to occur near jobs and transportation. Thus, the City of West Hollywood has been tasked with the planning and construction of a substantial amount of housing units over the next eight years.

The components of the Housing Element are largely dictated by the State and must include:

- Existing Conditions: A detailed analysis of the City's demographic, economic and housing characteristics.
- Barriers to Housing: A comprehensive analysis of the barriers to producing and preserving housing.
- Current Policies: A review of the City's progress in implementing current housing policies and programs.
- Proposed Policies: An identification of goals, objectives, and policies, in addition to a full list of programs that will implement the vision of the plan.
- Sites Inventory: A list of sites (aka the Suitable Sites Inventory) that could accommodate new housing, demonstrating the City's ability to meet the quantified housing number established in the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).

The Housing Element includes all of the above except for barriers to housing, current policies and the sites inventory, which are included in the Technical Background Report.

#### *Historic Preservation Commission Related Items*

The Housing Element update includes a number of references to preservation of housing in West Hollywood as part of a robust housing policy. Programs 1-5 are all part of the housing preservation aspect of the programs, including programs to acquire, rehabilitation and preserve existing housing. Staff seeks particular input on these aspects of the Housing Element Update by the Historic Preservation Commission.

## *RHNA Overview*

A major factor in the Housing Element is planning for the ability to locate and construct housing units required as part of the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation. The City's RHNA allocation for the sixth cycle (June 30, 2021, to October 15, 2029) is 3,933 dwelling units, including 1,066 very-low income units, 689 low income units, 682 moderate income units, and 1,496 above-moderate income units. The RHNA is a minimum number assigned by the state to meet regional housing goals. The RHNA does not require the City to build the units; the City must ensure there are no governmental or other barriers preventing the units from being built by a private developer. These units must be planned for in the Housing Element. In order to plan for these housing units, the City conducted an Adequate Sites Inventory and a review of City Housing Policy.

Currently, California is nearing the end of the fifth state planning cycle for housing, which ends in Southern California October 14, 2021. In the 2013-2021 Housing Element cycle, the City of West Hollywood was assigned a RHNA of 77 housing units to be developed in a span of 8 years. As of 2018, the City met its assigned RHNA numbers in all affordability brackets, and has issues building permits for 1,941 units during this time period.

The RHNA is a minimum number assigned by the state to meet regional housing goals. RHNA, is not a maximum for housing production. SCAG encourages jurisdictions to plan for housing above the RHNA minimum. Overall, less than 20 communities in the state have met their RHNA numbers in the current 5th Cycle thus far; West Hollywood leads these jurisdictions by having met the assigned RHNA numbers for all affordability levels.

The RHNA does not require the City to build the units; the City must ensure there are no governmental or other barriers preventing the units from being built by a private developer. These units must be planned for in the Housing Element. In order to plan for these housing units, the City is undergoing an Adequate Sites Inventory and a review of City Housing Policy. Should the City not meet its RHNA allocation, there are numerous state laws that deem certain projects ministerial in municipalities that have not met their RHNA allocation in the previous cycle. Additionally, provided that the upcoming Housing Element update is certified by HCD, the units allocated to the City through the RHNA do not carry over into the next planning period.

Because the Housing Element is updated frequently, the previous element provides a foundation for this update. This update gives us the opportunity to evaluate the previous element and determine which parts have been effective and which should be improved.

## *Community Engagement*

Community engagement is an essential component of the Housing Element process. City staff, along with the consultant team, developed a community engagement process that takes a two-pronged approach to gather public input. The process includes focused engagement with a Task Force of housing specialists, as well as participation with the community at large. Due to the COVID-19 state-wide Safer At Home mandate issued by the California governor, the community outreach campaign prioritizes strategies for meaningful public input in a virtual online environment, instead of in person meetings. All outreach methods are housed on the project website in order to safely gather community input for updating the Housing Element during the shelter-in-place mandate. The website can be viewed at [www.weho.org/housingelement](http://www.weho.org/housingelement).

The community outreach program was designed in three phases, each with its own objectives, outcomes, and related tasks.

**Phase I: Education and Visioning:** Phase I provided basic, educational information related to the Housing Element Update and the RHNA requirements over the first four to six months of the Housing Element Update. This phase also facilitated opportunities to collect insight on community priorities about current housing needs and conditions. The importance of this phase was to conceptualize palatable goals, policies, programs that addressed the community's concerns and aspirations for the Housing Element Update.

**Phase II: Policy and Program Development:** Phase II which occurred over the course of approximately three to five months. This phase presented initial findings from Phase I, in the form of preliminary concepts. Presenting initial goals, policies, and programs during the second phase provided another opportunity for input and allow for adjustments to finalize concepts that will be incorporated into the Administrative Draft of the Housing Element Update.

**Phase III: Evaluation of Housing Element Update and Decision Making:** Phase III occurs over the last two to three months of the Housing Element update process. The objectives of Phase III are to present the administrative draft Housing Element to the public and decision makers. The combination of outreach efforts is intended to finalize the Housing Element Update in a manner that is representative of the community.

Additionally, the City Council appointed ten representatives to the Task Force to provide expert-level input on how the City's programs, regulations, and processes can best meet the upcoming RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Allocation) number and continue to provide the level of housing and support services in the community. The task force met three times during the community outreach program. All meetings were facilitated with an agenda and survey questions in order to gather specific

input. The objective of the first meeting was to gather specific feedback on current housing needs and conditions as well as input on the effectiveness of existing housing policies and programs. The first task force meeting occurred in February 2021. The objective of the second meeting in June 2021 was to review preliminary goals, policies, and programs for the draft Housing Element Update, and the third meeting, on July 26, 2021, reviewed the draft Housing Element.

A detailed discussion of the community engagement process for the Housing Element is discussed in the Technical Background Report (Exhibit B).

### *Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)*

A requirement for the upcoming Housing Element update is to incorporate means of affirmatively furthering fair housing. This includes assessing and developing programs and actions to address institutional and systemic racial and socioeconomic disparities in housing. To accomplish this, staff will incorporate AFFH guidance established by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, including an evaluation of the following topics:

- Housing Mobility
  - Housing Options and Locational Choices
  - Use of Housing Choice Vouchers
- Displacement and Gentrification
  - Tenant Protection
  - Neighborhood Stabilization
- Segregation
  - Race, Income, Disability, and Housing for Families
  - Access to Opportunities and Resources

The AFFH section of the Housing Element is included as Appendix C in the Technical Background report.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Housing Element Update is a complex planning project that will help plan for the allocation of over 4,000 units within the City of West Hollywood over the next eight years. As staff moves forward with this important process, the sites inventory provides a guide to achieving the City's RHNA allocation requirements. The housing capacity from the underutilized sites in addition to the housing units discussed above totals 4,318 number of units, and thus, would meet the City's regional housing allocation requirements plus the required 15% buffer. As discussed in the summary above, the City's existing land use and development potential can accommodate its regional housing requirement and no rezoning is necessary to accommodate more housing units.

**EXHIBITS**

- A. Draft Housing Element
- B. Draft Technical Background Report