



Memorandum

TO: Steering Committee Members

FROM: Winston Rhodes, AICP, Planning Manager
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SUBJECT: Draft Housing Element Review and Residential Land Use Densities

DATE: September 28, 2009

Draft Housing Element Review

On September 3 and September 11, 2009 the Housing Subcommittee reviewed and discussed the Draft Housing Element. The attached Draft Housing Element document reflects the Subcommittee's input.

The Housing Element identifies and analyzes existing and projected housing needs and includes a statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing. The Housing Element is the only General Plan Element that requires a detailed review by the State prior to adoption. The City is required to send the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) a copy of the draft element prior to and after adoption for assessment of compliance with extensive State statutory requirements.

A key provision of the Housing Element is the City's plan to satisfy the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) that is established by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) for each city and county within the San Francisco Bay Area. The City's RHNA allocation and current progress by housing affordability level is summarized below.

	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Above Moderate	Total
Allocation	83	49	48	143	323
2007 – 2008 Units Built & Approved	2	1	10	48	61
Remaining Need	81	48	38	95	262

Source: ABAG and Pinole Community Development Department.

The City is considered a suburban jurisdiction under State Housing Element law and must comply with a requirement that future sites be identified to satisfy the remaining RHNA at all levels of affordability. Further, sites designated to meet the very low and low income housing need must be zoned to allow a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre by right. The Draft Housing Element identifies vacant residentially zoned sites as well as housing opportunity sites to demonstrate how the City plans to accommodate 262 additional dwelling units. State law requires that the minimum density of an allowable range be utilized to calculate the dwelling unit potential for a given site. No vacant residential sites currently meet the minimum density requirements for very low and low income housing. The draft Housing Element currently includes underutilized sites that may be rezoned to accommodate 20 dwelling units per acre to plan for the remaining 129 lower income housing unit need during this RHNA cycle (2007 - 21024).

Staff is seeking Steering Committee feedback on the attached draft Housing Element prior to sending it to the HCD for mandatory review. Once HCD comments and wider public comments are received, the draft document will be edited further and discussed with the Housing Subcommittee, Economic Development and Housing Advisory Committee (EDHAC) and brought back to the Steering Committee prior to City Council action.

General Plan and Specific Plan Residential Densities

The Housing Subcommittee discussed what the allowable residential density ranges and maximum density should be for several of the future development sites both inside and outside the proposed Corridor Specific Plan for San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road, and Appian Way. The Subcommittee recommends changes to residential density ranges included in the previously discussed Corridor Specific Plan and proposed General Plan Land Use Designations discussed by the Steering Committee on September 24, 2009. Dwelling unit potential for opportunity sites identified in the draft Housing Element are calculated based on these recommendations. The Subcommittee recommendations are provided in the following table.

When reviewing the proposed residential density ranges, the Steering Committee should consider the need for internal consistency between the General Plan Land Use Element and the Corridor Specific Plan; internal consistency is legally required. Further, the need for future clarity should be considered for readers of the General Plan and Specific Plan interested in allowable residential densities.

Changes to the allowable densities may affect the review of proposed planning documents, including the General Plan and the Corridor Specific Plan. In particular, the upcoming environmental review process needs to be considered. The preferred General Plan and Specific Plan alternatives are analyzed in greater detail in the Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) than the other alternatives. If higher densities are analyzed as part of the preferred alternative, changes involving reduction in residential densities after the EIR is circulated can be made without requiring recirculation of the Program EIR. However, changes involving increasing densities could require recirculation of the EIR.

Density changes may also affect development interest at a site. Higher densities can encourage transit-oriented development and attract more development interest to small infill sites that are difficult to assemble and develop. Higher densities also help achieve the

sustainability objectives mentioned throughout the General Plan by focusing development in already urbanized areas along existing arterial roadways that have convenient access to public services rather than more sensitive development sites that are further from urban services and require more complex infrastructure extensions and greater auto dependence. Higher densities also can help meet housing objectives while conserving the very limited available land supply. However, lower densities can generate less traffic and reduced parking demand and may be easier to develop in a manner that provides compatibility with existing adjacent land uses.

Proposed Residential Density Ranges (dwelling units per acre)

Land Use Category	Existing General Plan	Proposed Specific Plan	Proposed General Plan	Housing Subcommittee
Low Density Residential (LDR)	1 to 7	4 -10	0.21 to 1.0	0.21 to 1.0
Suburban Residential (SR)	N/A	N/A	1.1 to 7.0	1.1 to 7.0
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	8 to 15	10.1 – 20.0	7.1 to 15.0	7.1 to 19.9
High Density Residential (HDR)	16 to 25	20.1 - 35.0	15.1 to 30	20 to 30
Very High Density Residential (VHDR)	N/A	35.1 – 50.0	N/A	N/A
Mixed Use	Allows MDR or HDR densities above with commercial and light industrial uses on a site and maximum building height of 50 feet	N/A (see Mixed Use categories below)	N/A	N/A
Residential Mixed Use (RMU)	N/A	10.1 - 35.0	N/A	20 to 30
Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)	N/A	10.1 -30.0	N/A	20 to 30
Office Professional Mixed Use (OPMU)	N/A	10.1 – 30.0	N/A	20 to 30
Corridor Specific Plan Service Sub –Area	N/A	N/A (See RMU, CMU, and OPMU)	Not Specified (see Corridor Specific Plan)	20 to 30
Corridor Specific Plan Old Town Sub-Area	N/A	N/A (See RMU, CMU, and OPMU)	Not Specified (see Corridor Specific Plan)	20 to 30
Corridor Specific Plan Mixed Use Sub-Area	N/A	N/A (See RMU, CMU, OPMU, and VHDR)	Not Specified (see Corridor Specific Plan)	20 to 30
Corridor Specific Plan Residential Sub-Area	N/A	N/A (See RMU, CMU, OPMU)	1.0 to 7.0	1.1 to 7.0

Staff is seeking Steering Committee feedback on the residential densities contemplated for the General Plan land use categories and the Corridor Specific Plan to ensure internal consistency, provide clarity for future readers and for environmental review assumptions.

Attachment:

- A. Draft Housing Element – Steering Committee Review Draft 9-28-09