



County of Santa Cruz

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

701 OCEAN STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4070
Planning (831) 454-2580 Public Works (831) 454-2160

DATE: November 1, 2023
TO: Housing Advisory Commission
FROM: Mark Connolly, Principal Planner, Policy Division
SUBJECT: Public Hearing and Recommendation on the Proposed Final Draft 2023 Housing Element

Recommended Actions

Consider proposed Final Draft 6th Cycle Housing Element, and provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors on its adoption. Recommended actions are:

1. Hold a public hearing on the proposed final draft 2023 Housing Element;
2. Receive and consider public comment; and
3. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the Proposed Draft 2023 Santa Cruz County Housing Element, with proposed revisions to be made by staff to address recently received HCD comments, and direct that the final Housing Element, as revised, be forwarded to the Department of Housing and Community Development for certification.

Executive Summary

The County is required to update its General Plan Housing Element every eight years. The County's deadline to submit its adopted 2023 Housing Element (6th cycle update) to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is December 15, 2023. The County Community Development & Infrastructure (CDI) Department has prepared a draft 2023 Housing Element that includes required content, such as: data collection and analysis, analysis of housing needs, housing inventory update, accommodating the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), and community outreach to meet State requirements and local goals. The County designed and implemented a robust community engagement process for this Update beginning in early 2023. Input from that process was incorporated into the draft Housing Element. The draft documents, and more information about the project, is available on the project website:

<https://www.sccoplanning.com/PlanningHome/Housing/2023HousingElement.aspx>

Background

The County last updated its Housing Element in 2015, with HCD certification occurring in April 2016.¹ California Government Code sections 65580-65589.11 establishes many requirements for housing element content and procedures, including the assessment of housing needs, accommodating special needs populations, addressing housing affordability, and identifying

¹ [2015 Santa Cruz County Housing Element \(santacruzcountyplanning.com\)](https://www.santacruzcountyplanning.com)

constraints and barriers to housing, as well as robust community engagement efforts in the update process.

Prior County Meetings on the 6th Cycle Housing Element Update

Board of Supervisors

Staff presented its Housing Element Update work program to the Board of Supervisors on October 25, 2022, and January 31, 2023. The Board approved the work program with additional direction related to community engagement. The Board held a study session on the draft Housing Element on September 12, 2023, after the public draft had been published for a 30-day public comment period. At that session, the Board expressed support for the draft Housing Element, and directed the Planning Commission to “consider options to include specifications for the Mar Vista site as senior housing and include publicly accessible open space”. The Mar Vista site refers to two parcels located at 2600 Mar Vista Dr. in Aptos which are included in the Sites Inventory rezoning list, and proposed to be rezoned to Residential Flex, a new higher density, multi-family zone.

Housing Advisory Commission

Staff presented information about the Housing Element Update project, including the community engagement plan, to the HAC at its regular meetings on March 1 and November 2, 2022, and May 3, 2023. At the May 3 meeting staff also demonstrated one of the outreach tools, an online mapping exercise called Balancing Act. Staff presented the draft Housing Element to the HAC on September 6, 2023. At these HAC meetings, commissioners and members of the public provided comments and asked questions about the Update and, at the September 6 study session, about the draft Housing Element. At these prior meetings, commissioners expressed various opinions about the project, but no formal actions were taken.

Planning Commission

Staff presented the Housing Element work program to the Planning Commission (PC) on November 9, 2022, and June 14, 2023. Staff presented the draft Element to the PC at a September 27, 2023 study session. During these study sessions, the PC discussed and asked questions about various details, such as: achieving all the targets of the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update (Sustainability Update), replacement of demolished units, increasing the inclusionary housing percentage requirements to 20% or 25% for certain types of projects, tenant protections, and several other programs and policies in the draft Element.

At its October 25, 2023 public hearing on the draft Housing Element, the Planning Commission unanimously voted to approve the staff recommendation, with an additional recommendation that when the Mar Vista site is developed, a master plan be developed with at least two acres of publicly accessible open space, with a goal of a larger open space area, possibly up to 4 acres.

Analysis

The Planning Commission staff report, with the full text of the staff recommendation, and all attachments, is provided as Exhibit 1 to this memorandum via link to the Planning Commission online agenda. HAC members and others are encouraged to review that report for more detail about this project and the recommended PC actions. One distinction between the recommended actions for the HAC and those of the PC is that the HAC does not have purview over California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA determinations), which is the exclusive purview of the PC and

Board of Supervisors. That is why the recommended HAC actions below do not include making findings on the CEQA document (EIR Addendum) which was part of the PC staff report.

The second Exhibit to this report, linked below, includes the full text of the Housing Element and all appendices. These documents are also attached to the PC staff report, however they may be easier to read directly from the Housing Element website.

The Board is scheduled to consider this item, including recommendations from both commissions, at its November 14, 2023 meeting.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the following: hold the public hearing on the draft Housing Element, consider oral and written comments received, ask staff any questions commissioners may have, deliberate and then consider motion(s) and vote on a recommendation regarding adoption of the Housing element, either as written in Action 3 above, or with modifications specified by the HAC.

Exhibits:

- 1) [Oct. 25, 2023 Staff Report to the Planning Commission entitled "Public Hearing and Recommendation on the Proposed Final Draft 2023 Housing Element", with attachments.](#)
- 2) [Draft Housing Element Documents with Appendices](#)