

City of Alameda

Inter-department Memorandum

October 9, 2001

TO: President and
Members of the Planning Board

FROM: Cynthia Eliason
Planning Manager

RE: City of Alameda Draft Housing Element Update

Background

The Development Services Department, in cooperation with the Planning and Building Department, has been involved in a process of updating the Housing Element of the General Plan since 1999. Every jurisdiction in California must have a General Plan and every General Plan must contain a Housing Element. It is one of five mandated elements in the General Plan: land use, housing, transportation, open space and environmental conservation, and health and safety. State law requires the Housing Element to be updated every five years (although the requirement was waived for 1995). It requires the revised Housing Element be adopted by the local jurisdiction, the City of Alameda, and submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to ensure that it meets minimum requirements. State law defining the requirements of the Housing Element is as follows:

"The housing element shall consist of an identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs and a statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. The housing element shall identify adequate sites for housing, including rental housing, factory-built housing, and mobile homes, and shall make adequate provision for the existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community."

The Housing Element is the City's blueprint for meeting all of its housing needs, including low, moderate, and market rate housing. It also outlines an implementation plan for attaining the City's housing goals - including ABAG's "fair share" allocation. This allocation designates a certain number of housing units for very low, low, moderate and above moderate income households that the City needs to try to accommodate in its future housing plans. This five-year planning document covers the period July 2001 through June 2006 (HCD has permitted cities to include housing production from January 1, 1999), and must be adopted by the Alameda City Council and subsequently certified by HCD.

Discussion and Analysis

This Housing Element is a significant revision of the Element adopted by the City Council of the City of Alameda on December 4, 1990 and subsequently amended on December 3, 1991. The State deadline for Housing Element adoption, December 31, 2001, precedes the availability of the housing and population data from the 2000 US Census. The City has relied on data other than the Census to reflect current conditions. The 1990 Census is used throughout this document but understandably the City has changed significantly in 11 years. In addition to the Census data, information has been obtained from the City's Planning and Building Department as well as other sources. Lack of current data was a major impetus in commissioning a telephone survey on housing need and issues, and its results are cited throughout the document.

The preparation of this Housing Element has included a lengthy and exhaustive process of dozens of public meetings and hundreds of hours of work by citizen volunteers. Starting in 1999, the City embarked on an ambitious public participation process. It created, for example, a housing website, alamedahousing.com which provides extensive information on the mandated Housing Element process, state requirements, the current draft of the Housing Element Update, and an interactive "bulletin board" for comments.

Over the past three years, the public process has been carried out in four distinct efforts: the Ad Hoc Committee on Homeownership; the Housing Forum; the Implementation Program for the Economic Development Strategic Plan, and the Housing Element Update. Five public meetings have been held this year and workshops are planned with public advisory bodies to review the public draft.

Housing Element Update Highlights

- * The organization and content of the current Housing Element generally is similar to the 199 document. However this Housing Element is divided into seven chapters rather than the eleven chapters of the original document.
- * The Housing Element Appendices are contained in a separate document providing the public a separate, slimmer and more user friendly Housing Element. This also allows the addition of new information in the future, such as currently unavailable Census data, without amending the Housing Element proper.
- * Housing costs are historically high and vacancy rates are low even with the recent economic downturn. Based on the City's 2001 housing survey, more than half of the respondents are very concerned about the cost of housing with 40 percent of the renters paying more than half their income for rent. The survey also reports that nearly half Alameda respondents are thinking of moving in the next few years.
- * The City is within 25 percent of meeting its new construction goals for very low income housing for the period between 1988 and 2000.
- * Alameda can meet its housing goals established by the Association of Bay Area Governments for Alameda's Regional Housing Need Determination. This is based on proposed and planned projects as well as available development sites with appropriate land use designations. Meeting these goals would be subject to a variety of constraints, including market conditions, availability of subsidies and financing, as well as transfer of Navy land to the City. These goals for the period of January 1, 1999 through June 30, 2006 are:
 - 443 new very low income units,
 - 265 low income units,
 - 611 moderate income units, and
 - 843 above moderate income (market-rate) units,
 - for a total 2,162 units.
- * Examples of income limits for a family of four:
 - very low income - annual income not exceeding \$35,800
 - low income - not exceeding \$53,850
 - moderate income - not exceeding \$85,900

Policy Issues

The Housing Element Update presents numerical goals, potential housing sites and related City policies that support creation, rehabilitation, and retention of housing units. Each of the recent citizen based housing initiatives has generated proposed policies, some of which have been included. The "policy plan" contained in Chapter II reflects adopted Council policy with the exception of two new proposed policies from the Housing Forum. These are:

"Establish a ten percent affordable housing inclusionary requirement on new residential development outside redevelopment areas" (page II-3, c.vii)

"Increase the affordable housing inclusionary requirement on new development in redevelopment projects to 20 percent, with the increase over the mandated 15 percent allocated to household income ranges that are the least served."

There were many proposed policies suggested by individuals and groups and are summarized in Appendix J. Many of these suggestions are similar to or have the same intent as those in the proposed Housing Element policy plan (Chapter II). Some suggestions have not been incorporated into the public draft because they are not supported currently by City Council actions or direction. In the next few months there will be additional opportunities to participate in a public engagement process and address old as well as new approaches to Alameda housing issues. There are at least five City-sponsored workshops planned as well as public meetings and forums being organized by concerned citizens.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Board reviews the attached draft Housing Element Update and provide comments to staff.

cc: Mayor and City Council
Housing Commission
Economic Development Commission
Social Services Human Relations Board
Rent Review Advisory Committee
Alameda Point Advisory Committee
City Clerk

SB/ep

Attachment

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