



# Housing Elements Make a Difference!

Good Planning = Good Results

## ***Provides Higher Density Land for Efficient Residential Development***

- In California's fourth housing element planning cycle, 124 jurisdictions, as of December 31, 2012, have so far adopted programs to rezone or upzone sites. The purpose of these changes is to increase residential capacity, at higher densities, in their housing elements.
- Rezoning efforts will provide a total of 6,259 acres, at higher densities, to facilitate multifamily and mixed-use housing. This will provide a minimum capacity of 105,576 additional units, with a majority at minimum densities of 20 units per acre. Housing element site inventories have been used as a tool to identify parcels close to parks, schools, grocery stores, and other important amenities. These increase competitiveness for funding opportunities and create more sustainable neighborhoods.
- Without the effective State role in the implementation of housing element law, the State lacks crucial tools and incentives for local governments to adopt higher densities and to address affordable housing needs.

### **Case Study Planning for Change: San Joaquin Valley**

Cities are promoting higher densities within existing communities, in addition to several programs that encourage infill development, such as lot consolidation. The City of Fresno committed to rezone approximately 700 acres, with a capacity of approximately 13,500 units, at densities of 20-38 units per acre. Bakersfield will designate 40 to 80 acres of land to zoning, allowing approximately 20-35 units per acre.

### **Case Study Increasing Housing Supply: City of Oakley**

As part of the 2000–2007 housing element update, the City of Oakley rezoned 16 acres to accommodate multifamily development by right.

As reported in the City's 2007–2014 housing element, four multifamily developments (with a total of 318 units) have been built for lower-income families and seniors on those rezoned sites.

## ***Facilitates Infill Development***

- In the fourth housing element planning cycle, many jurisdictions have identified or rezoned higher density sites within infill or transit-oriented development areas, to address housing needs.
- The housing element identifies and includes strategies to mitigate regulatory barriers to the development of infill and transit-oriented housing. Examples of strategies include reduced parking standards, increased densities, facilitating lot consolidation, reduced fees, streamlined permit processing, and tiered environmental review.
- The housing element process promotes the development of programs to encourage and facilitate infill development, such as targeting of financial resources, identification of housing opportunity sites, and development of preapproved plans for the construction of certain housing types (second units).
- By developing tools such as HCD's *Housing Element Building Blocks* website and providing staff expertise, HCD provides a critical resource for local governments to assist the effective implementation of sustainable community objectives for greenhouse gas reduction. This is done through the development of program strategies to promote infill and remove regulatory barriers.

**Case Study**  
**Promoting Infill Development:**  
**City of Fullerton**

In the City of Fullerton, nearly all of the housing needs for higher density housing were identified in existing infill areas, as the city has very little available vacant land.

To encourage and facilitate development in these areas, the city developed a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote multifamily development within infill areas. The city also included programs to expedite permit processing for affordable housing, provide regulatory incentives such as reduced development standards, land assemblage, lot consolidation, fee assistance, and reduced parking standards.

The City of Fullerton was designated as a Gold Catalyst Projects under the State's Catalyst Projects for California Sustainable Strategies Pilot Program for their Transportation Center Specific Plan Project.

- Housing elements play a critical role in implementing SB 375 because they provide an important vehicle for the coordination of housing and land-use planning and focus on actual implementation rezoning, along with other programs that address climate change objectives.
- HCD's role in the housing element update process is unique and critical in promoting sustainable development to address climate change and other important public policy objectives (AB 32, SB 375, SB 732, etc.). State housing element law is the only venue where the State possesses authority to require land-use strategies to address these objectives, monitor their implementation, and connect the policy objectives with access to State-administered resources.

**Case Study**  
**Addressing Energy Conservation**  
**City of South San Francisco**

The City of South San Francisco adopted its housing element update in 2009. In order to meet statutory requirements, the element included several innovative programs to address Climate Change and Energy Conservation goals.

These programs included commitments to provide funds for residential energy and water conservation, including CDBG grants for home repairs and weatherization modifications, provided city sponsored training to low-income disadvantaged youth to do residential energy audits and weatherization of homes, and disseminated information on energy efficient standards.

***Promotes Energy Conservation  
and Sustainable Communities  
Objectives***

- The housing element review process has resulted in local governments committing to actions promoting energy conservation and efficiency activities. Examples include city funding for installation of energy efficiency measures, zoning reforms to orient homes that will maximize natural day lighting and promote use of photovoltaic systems, incorporating green building standards above minimum requirements, providing free energy audits, and revising development codes to promote transit-oriented development.