



Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County

139 Mitchell Avenue, Suite 108
South San Francisco, CA 94080
(650) 872-4444 / F: (650) 872-4411
www.hlcsmc.org

Expanded Housing Element Recommendations

Zoning & Site Identification

The lack of sufficient and developable sites is a key challenge to affordable home production, and should be a key priority in Housing Elements. Non-vacant sites identified in Housing Elements should be accompanied by analysis demonstrating a realistic capacity for development. Jurisdictions should include some or all of the following key site-related strategies in their Housing Elements:

- Identify and acquire target sites for 100% affordable development.
- In order to facilitate actual production of Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA), identify sites in excess of RHNA, using a standard of 133% of RHNA for market-rate development, and 200% of RHNA for below-market rate.
- Expand capacity for multi-family affordable development by establishing “overlay zoning” in commercial, light industrial and mixed-use areas not zoned for residential development.
- Develop a comprehensive inventory of publicly controlled sites, and evaluate them for potential affordable development with consolidation of existing public uses to other identified sites.
- Pass a density bonus ordinance, or ensure your existing one complies with state law. Ensure density bonus and related concessions are available equally to all development entities
- Ensure areas with increased densities allow high enough buildings to facilitate full realization of density standards.
- Exempt 100% affordable developments from vertical mixed-use requirements in mixed-use areas.
- Allow accessory units by-right, reduce setbacks and allow tandem parking to facilitate development of accessory units.

Financial Resources

One of the most significant constraints to affordable development is a lack of financial resources. Jurisdictions should provide significant local financial resources for developing affordable homes. Housing Elements should employ some or all of the following strategies related to funding:

- Participation in regional and state-wide efforts to develop permanent, dedicated sources of funding for affordable homes.
- Commitment of dedicated local sources of revenue to regional efforts to build affordable homes, such as HEART, the county’s housing trust.
- Establishment of commercial development or “jobs/housing linkage fees”, especially in jurisdictions with a jobs/housing ratio of 1.5 or higher.
- Expansion of Inclusionary Housing Ordinances to include fractional fees for smaller developments.
- Implementation of Affordable Housing Impact Fees on larger single family home developments (Alternative to Inclusionary Ordinance)
- Increases in redevelopment housing set-aside funds to 25-30% of redevelopment revenue.
- Reduction or waiver of fees on developments with 100% affordability.
- Use of HOME or CDBG funds for site acquisition
- Use of Condo Conversion Fees (especially where no Inclusionary Ordinance exists)
- Sponsor bond issuance for use by nonprofit affordable home developers

Permitting, Fees & Entitlements

Jurisdictions can encourage affordable development by providing a predictable, affordable, streamlined, and organized project-entitlement process. Key strategies for use in Housing Elements include:

- Provision of expedited entitlement processes for affordable developments, especially for those that depend on tax credits.
- Implementation of alternative fee payment schedules for affordable developments, allowing deferred or staggered payment of development fees.
- Provision of early cross-departmental feedback, prioritizing input from non-community development entities like public works, fire and building.

Parking

Excessive and inflexible parking space standards are a key constraint to development of all types, especially affordable development. Parking requirements for any development should reflect the probable parking demands of the intended occupants, especially considering proximity to non-automobile transportation alternatives. Key strategies in reducing parking-induced development constraints include:

- Reduction of parking ratios to a range of 0.7 -1.5 spaces per unit.
- Allowance of “compact spaces”, tandem parking and flexibility in lane access.
- Utilization of shared parking strategies across commercial and residential, or daytime and evening uses.
- “Unbundling” of parking costs from homes, or other monetization of parking. Programs could include facilitation of shared parking agreements between separate landowners.
- Provision of significant reductions to - or exemptions from - parking requirements for developments built for special needs residents or seniors, or those near transit.

Design

Jurisdictions should ensure design standards are clear and have pre-established criteria for evaluation. Key Housing Element strategies related to design include:

- Allow exemptions to height limits for design features that increase overall aesthetic quality.
- Ensure design standards do not create unreasonable financial burdens on affordable development.

Implementation

In order to ensure that Housing Elements are truly useful in facilitating production and preservation of affordable homes, it is important to include a clear implementation framework. Key implementation strategies include:

- Inclusion of quantifiable objectives, especially for site identification and assisted production (e.g. number of units built, funds identified, acres rezoned, etc.).
- Use of timeframes and deadlines for all program actions. This includes rezonings and area plan development, program implementation and assisted production.
- Designation of periodic, meaningful review and evaluation mechanisms for all stakeholders.