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3. Housing Element

The County of Ventura adopted its current Housing Element in 2014, which was certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The 2014 Housing Element provides a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments in the unincorporated area. The Housing Element includes goals, policies, implementation programs, and identifies housing sites adequate to meet the needs of the County and state.

The next cycle of housing element updates for cities and counties within the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) area will cover the planning period from 2021 to 2029. As part of this process, SCAG will work with the County and the cities within the county to develop a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The RHNA process requires the County to identify land available to accommodate the development of adequate housing for all household income categories (e.g. extremely low, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate-income) in the unincorporated area. SCAG will release draft RHNA numbers for the 2021-2029 Housing Element update in February 2020, with final RHNA numbers expected in October 2020.



The update of the County's Housing Element is dependent upon the receipt of the new RHNA numbers for the unincorporated area. Final RHNA numbers are expected to be released in October 2020. The Housing Element for the County will be updated following the receipt of the RHNA numbers. At this time, this Element only provides information regarding the process that will be followed to conduct this subsequent update.

The County's certified 2014-2021 Housing Element is contained in Chapter 3.3 of the County's Goals, Policies and Programs document with supporting documentation in Chapter 3.3 of the Land Use Appendix.

<https://docs.vcrma.org/images/pdf/planning/plans/gpp-section3.3.pdf>

The RHNA numbers provided by SCAG will be used to prepare the 2021-2029 Housing Element update. To comply with state Housing Element law, the County must demonstrate that there is adequate capacity to accommodate the development of dwelling units that are affordable for all household income categories (i.e., extremely low, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate-income) based on the existing zoning and General Plan designations.

The County's 2021-2029 Housing Element update will also address changes in state law that have occurred since the 2014-2021 Housing Element was adopted in 2014. During 2017 and 2018 the state passed several new affordable housing laws that will impact the analysis and ultimate identification of adequate RHNA sites for the 2021-2029 Housing Element cycle. These include, but are not limited to, a law that requires the County demonstrate that the projected residential development capacity of RHNA sites can realistically be achieved (Gov. Code, Section 65583.2(c)). According to HCDs "Building Blocks: A Comprehensive Housing-Element Guide," realistic development capacity is based on several factors:

- Existing site use: vacant, underutilized, or appropriate for redevelopment;
- Site's current zoning: a site is either zoned for or allows residential development, or a site is zoned for nonresidential use but can be rezoned and redeveloped for residential use;
- The cumulative impact of development standards on residential development such as maximum lot coverage, height, open space, and parking;
- Existing development trends;
- A site's general environmental features such as existence of floodplains, protected wetlands, or oak tree preserves, and demonstration that the presence of such features will not preclude residential development; and
- Adequate public infrastructure capacity, such as water, sewer, and other dry-utilities supply.

In addition, new state law requires no "net loss" of identified RHNA sites for lower and moderate-income dwelling units (i.e., the County may not take action that would reduce identified affordable housing sites for these income categories (Gov. Code, § 65863). Furthermore, the state adopted the Housing Accountability Act, which prohibits the County from lowering the density or denying a project (unless there are specific and unmitigable adverse impacts to health and safety) if the project complies with the County General Plan and zoning ordinance (Gov. Code, Section 65589.5). Finally, new state law requires ministerial approval of, and provides a statutory CEQA exemption for, affordable housing projects consistent with specified criteria (Gov. Code, Section 65913.4).

The existing General Plan allows residential uses in areas designated as Open Space, Agriculture, Rural, Urban, and Existing Community. The proposed 2040 General Plan land use designations provide a more refined range of designations with clear density ranges to accommodate the County's housing needs.

To meet the lower-income portion of the RHNA (i.e., low-income, very-low income, and extremely low), the County can assume that land zoned with a density of at least 20 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) qualifies as suitable for development of housing affordable to lower-income households (Gov. Code, Section 65583.2(c)(3)(B)). Further, the County can address a portion of its RHNA through the provision of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The County currently (2018) permits ADUs on most lots that allow for residential development, including Open Space and Agricultural Exclusive zoned lots. ADUs are a valuable housing type that can facilitate affordability for a variety of housing needs.