

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14A

TO: Members of the Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Division
SUBJECT: Land Use Study LUS21-00002/City of Torrance (Housing Element Update)
LOCATION: Citywide

The purpose of this workshop is to provide information on the City of Torrance General Plan Housing Element update addressing the Sixth Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) cycle covering 2021 through 2029.

BACKGROUND

The City of Torrance is currently updating its Sixth Cycle Housing Element of the General Plan, which will cover the eight-year planning period from October 2021 – October 2029. Local governments across California are required by State Housing Element law to adequately plan to meet their share of the State’s overall housing need. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is the State Agency that is responsible for administering Housing Element Law and for identifying, the State’s overall housing need. To adequately plan for their share of the State’s housing need, local governments adopt Housing Elements as part of their General Plans. Housing Elements provide goals, policies, and programs to create opportunities for housing development. The community is invited and encouraged to participate in the planning process by attending workshops, which will be held virtually. Concurrently with the update of the Housing Element, the City is conducting a Housing Corridor Study to identify locations to facilitate streamlined housing review.

Purpose and Requirements of the Housing Element

Since 1969, California has required that all local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. The Housing Element is a State-mandated policy document within the General Plan that guides the implementation of various programs to meet future housing needs for residents and households of all income levels. The housing needs are determined through the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) process. The Housing Element identifies available land that is suitable for housing development, as well goals, policies, and programs to accommodate the City’s housing need, provide opportunities for new housing, and preserve the existing housing stock.

California Housing Element law requires that local jurisdictions update the Housing Element every eight years. These frequent updates are required because housing is critical to ensure economic prosperity and quality of life throughout the State. The update also helps to ensure that jurisdictions are responding to their residents’ changing needs. The revised Housing Element must be adopted by the Torrance City Council and submitted to HCD by October 15, 2021, although there is a 120-day grace period. Housing Elements must be certified (approved) by HCD as complying with State law. Jurisdictions that are not in compliance with Housing Element law could lose eligibility for significant sources of funding currently provided by the State and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). Noncomplying jurisdictions also run the risk of being sued by the State Attorney General.

Key components of the Housing Element include:

- A demographic profile and analysis of population growth and trends in the community;
- Identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community;
- Identification of adequate sites that are zoned and available within the 8-year housing cycle to meet the city's fair share of regional housing needs at all income levels, as prescribed by the RHNA;
- An evaluation of local constraints or barriers to housing development as well as opportunities to develop housing; and
- Housing goals, policies, quantified objectives and scheduled programs to preserve, improve and develop housing within the City.

Because the Housing Element is updated every eight years, the current 5th Cycle (2013–2021) Housing Element provides a foundation for this update. Please refer to the City's current 5th Cycle (2013–2021) Housing Element for more information on existing goals, policies, and programs. It can be accessed on the City's website: (<https://www.torranceca.gov/home/showdocument?id=2740>).

Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

RHNA stands for Regional Housing Needs Assessment. Every eight years, "housing need"—both the total number of units and the distribution of those units by affordability levels—is determined by the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for the entire State. HCD then distributes this housing needs assessment to each regional planning body in California; this housing needs assessment is the amount of housing that must be planned for by each region. Torrance is located in the six-county regions (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura and Imperial) administered by SCAG, which is the regional planning body for our area. SCAG takes the number of housing units it receives from the State housing needs assessment and allocates it to all jurisdictions in its planning area, including Torrance. This allocation is the RHNA. On September 11, 2020, for the 6th Cycle period, Torrance was allocated at total of 4,939 units, compared to 1,450 units for the 5th Cycle period. On October 14, 2020, on behalf of the residents of Torrance, the City Council submitted a letter appealing the Final Draft RHNA Allocation and methodology used, which was based on local planning factors, land use constraints and available land and density constraints. The appeal was denied in January of 2021. The appeal letter is available on the City's website:

(<https://www.torranceca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=62867>).

To comply with State law, each jurisdiction's Housing Element must be updated to ensure its policies and programs can accommodate its share of the number of housing units identified by the State. For the upcoming Sixth Cycle (2021-2029) Housing Element update, the City's share of the RHNA is 4,939 units, divided among a range of income or affordability levels (based on Area Median Income, or AMI), as shown in the following table.

6 th Cycle RHNA for Torrance		
Income Category/Affordability Level*	Number of Units	Percent of Total Units
Very Low Income (0-50% of AMI)	1,621	33%
Low Income (50-80% of AMI)	846	17%
Moderate Income (80-120% of AMI)	853	17%
Above Moderate Income (More than 120% of AMI)	1,619	33%
Total Units	4,939	100%

*Income/affordability categories are grouped into the four categories shown in the table above; average median income (AMI) is the average household income for each Metropolitan Statistical Area. The AMI for Los Angeles County is currently \$77,300 for a four-person household.

Through the Housing Element update process, the City must show that it has the regulatory and land use policies to accommodate its assigned RHNA. Local governments are not required to build the housing—the actual development of housing is typically done by for-profit and non-profit developers. However, the Housing Element is required to demonstrate potential sites where housing can be accommodated to meet all the income levels of a jurisdiction’s RHNA. Identification of a site’s capacity does not guarantee that construction will occur on that site. If there are insufficient sites and capacity to meet the RHNA allocation, the Housing Element is required to identify a rezoning program to accommodate the required capacity. As previously noted, if the City does not identify capacity for its RHNA allocation, the City could be deemed out of compliance and risk losing important sources of funding currently provided by the State as well as facing legal challenges.

Housing Element implementation

The Housing Element sets goals, objectives, policies, and programs that are implemented after the plan is adopted. When a new housing program, project, or idea is considered, the Housing Element provides guidance for decision-makers to evaluate the proposal. The Housing Element must remain consistent with the other elements of the General Plan. This may require amendments to certain elements, most often the Land Use Element.

Strategies for Accommodating RHNA:

- To ensure the City has adequate sites zoned appropriately to accommodate the total number of units with the RHNA, and the following steps are being taken:
 - Identify entitled projects (not expected to issue permit until July 1, 2021)
 - Identify “pipeline projects” (in application/review/approval stages)
 - Estimate of future permits for Accessory Dwelling Units (based on recent trends from 2018, 2019 and 2020)
 - Sites Inventory (available vacant and underutilized properties):
 - That already permit residential development
 - That need to be redesigned and rezoned to permit residential development
 - For lower income housing – must meet certain requirements to be deemed adequate sites:
 - At least 10 dwelling units per acre allowed density
 - Between 0.5-10 acres.

The City will be holding additional outreach efforts to obtain input from residents and stakeholders. Additional community workshops are tentatively scheduled for May through July and formal public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council will occur before the Housing Element updates can be adopted. Public notification of both the workshops and the formal public hearings will occur. The workshops will be in a virtual public format to provide information on the Housing Element update and receive public comments.

Following the review by the Planning Commission, the Draft Housing Element will be submitted to the HCD for a 60-day review period, during which the Draft Housing Element will remain available for public review. Copies will be made available at the City Clerk's Office, Planning Counter at City Hall, all six Torrance Libraries and on the Community Development website. (<https://www.torranceca.gov/services/community-development>). Following the 60-day review period, the Housing Element will be brought before the Planning Commission for a second review before being presented before the City Council for adoption.

Housing Identification Corridor Study

The Housing Corridor Study is a grant funded Planning effort aimed at facilitating streamlined housing production in the city. The purpose of the project is to promote the development of housing by identifying and analyzing presently non-residentially zoned areas in the City that may be re-zoned to multifamily residential. Utilizing the current Torrance Housing Element and data showing inconsistently zoned properties in the City, staff identified six preliminary study areas that may be strong candidates for this purpose. The consultant will prioritize these areas based on best use of grant funding, and most efficient yield of housing units, taking into consideration surroundings, scale, services and access. Staff will work with the consultant to draft potential re-zoning of the studied areas as a result of the completed Housing Identification Corridor Study. Staff notes that any future rezoning would require consideration by both the Planning Commission and City Council.

RECOMMENDATION

The Community Development Director recommends that the Planning Commission conduct a public workshop, provide feedback and take public comment on the 2021-2029 Housing Element update.

Prepared by,



Carolyn Chun
Senior Planning Associate

Respectfully submitted,



Gregg D. Lodan, AICP
Planning Manager

Attachments:

1. Correspondences

From: Aidan Schwing <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 15, 2021 at 11:14:41 PM PDT
To: "Kalani, Sharon" <SKalani@torranceca.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

WARNING: External e-mail
Please verify sender before opening attachments or clicking on links.

Dear Council Member Sharon Kalani,

I'm a constituent in your district writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. I'm frustrated by increasing homelessness, by the burden that displacement and gentrification place on our neighbors, and by policies that promote exclusion and housing scarcity in our neighborhoods.

Exclusionary zoning and land use practices have led to an undersupply of affordable medium- and high-density housing near jobs and transit, and have perpetuated segregated living patterns and the exclusion of historically disadvantaged communities. The racist practice of redlining, which divided our city's neighborhoods by race and income, strongly influenced zoning laws that remain on the books today, defining where affordable housing may and may not be built. The housing and homelessness crisis, together with this year's COVID-19 pandemic, severe wildfires, and civil unrest, illustrate the need for a totally new approach to solving our city and region's housing crisis.

Fortunately, our city has a valuable opportunity to address the need for more housing in a way that furthers equity, environmental sustainability, and economic recovery. Under California's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, our city is required to update the housing element in a way that encourages historically high housing growth, while affirmatively furthering fair housing opportunities and undoing patterns of discrimination in housing. We can't miss this opportunity to fix our city's housing crisis.

That's why I urge you to ensure that our city creates a transformative, high-quality housing element that fully accords with state law and expert recommendations, by doing the following:

- Incorporating an estimate of the likelihood of development and the net new units if developed of inventory sites, which will provide a realistic estimate of future housing production on parcels where redevelopment is likely to occur
- Using an HCD-recommended "safe harbor" methodology for forecasting future ADU production
- Prioritizing high-opportunity census tracts and well-resourced areas (e.g. near transit, jobs, schools, parks, etc.) when selecting sites for lower-income housing opportunities, in order to affirmatively further fair housing
- Including the HCD-recommended buffer of at least 15-30% extra capacity in the site inventory, in order to avoid violating the No Net Loss requirement

Furthermore, I urge you and your colleagues to adopt supplemental policies alongside the housing element this year, in order to further the following crucial goals:

- Legalizing more housing
- Making housing easier to build
- Funding affordable housing and ending homelessness
- Strengthening tenants' rights

Our city needs a transformative housing element to solve its housing affordability crisis, and to create a city where everyone can thrive. The time for action on housing is now.

Personally sent by Aidan Schwing using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Aidan Schwing



From: Aron Sanchez <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 21, 2021 at 11:39:40 PM PDT
To: "Kalani, Sharon" <SKalani@torranceca.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

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Personally sent by Aron Sanchez using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Aron Sanchez



From: Ciera Coronado <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 16, 2021 at 1:00:38 AM PDT
To: "Kalani, Sharon" <SKalani@torranceca.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

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Personally sent by Ciera Coronado using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Ciera Coronado

[Redacted signature]

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 4:59 PM
To: Chen, George <GChen@TorranceCA.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element

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Dear Council Member George K. Chen,

I'm a constituent in your district writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. I'm frustrated by increasing homelessness, by the burden that displacement and gentrification place on our neighbors, and by policies that promote exclusion and housing scarcity in our neighborhoods.

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Personally sent by Kari Gallegos using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Kari Gallegos
[REDACTED]

From: Margaret Gilbert <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 16, 2021 at 1:00:15 AM PDT
To: "Kalani, Sharon" <SKalani@torranceca.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

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Personally sent by Margaret Gilbert using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Margaret Gilbert

[REDACTED]

From: Morgan Bennyworth <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 29, 2021 at 12:49:15 PM PDT
To: "Kalani, Sharon" <SKalani@torranceca.gov>
Subject: End Exclusionary Zoning
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

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Dear Council Member Sharon Kalani,

I'm a local constituent writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. In particular, I'm writing to express my opposition to policies that ban apartments in much of our city. This misguided policy promotes housing scarcity, high rents, exclusion, and displacement in our neighborhoods.

Apartments are banned on over 80% of the residentially-zoned land in Los Angeles County; this share is often even higher in high-income cities and neighborhoods. This form of exclusionary zoning, which mandates single-family detached homes as the only legal housing option in most of the county, has led to an undersupply of affordable medium- and high-density housing near jobs and transit, and has perpetuated segregated living patterns, lack of access to opportunity, and the exclusion of BIPOC individuals and communities. With the County's median home value over \$750,000, and with affordable rental apartments scarce, single-family zoning effectively guarantees that high-opportunity neighborhoods remain restricted to wealthy households, who tend to be white.

Fortunately, cities across California are recognizing that ending exclusionary zoning and legalizing apartments will help make our neighborhoods more affordable, diverse, and environmentally sustainable. Sacramento recently voted to allow up to four homes on any residential parcel, and Berkeley is poised to do the same. Oakland's city council is exploring a similar policy. Portland and Minneapolis legalized small apartment buildings citywide several years ago. However, no cities in Los Angeles County have yet adopted these reforms.

As a city with positive values, we must emulate the example of our Bay Area neighbors and also legalize apartments citywide. I urge you to support an end to exclusionary zoning and apartment bans in our city. This bold reform will help us fix our city's housing affordability crisis, creating a city where everyone is welcome and everyone can thrive.

Personally sent by Morgan Bennyworth using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool.
Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Morgan Bennyworth
[REDACTED]

From: Prabhu Reddy <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 15, 2021 at 5:17:22 PM PDT
To: "Ashcraft, Heidi" <HAscraft@torranceca.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

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Dear Council Member Heidi Ann Ashcraft,

I'm a constituent in your district writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. I'm frustrated by increasing homelessness, by the burden that displacement and gentrification place on our neighbors, and by policies that promote exclusion and housing scarcity in our neighborhoods.

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Personally sent by Prabhu Reddy using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Prabhu Reddy

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] on
behalf of Scarlett Davis [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 4:07 PM
To: Chen, George
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element

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Dear Council Member George K. Chen,

I'm a constituent in your district writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. I'm frustrated by increasing homelessness, by the burden that displacement and gentrification place on our neighbors, and by policies that promote exclusion and housing scarcity in our neighborhoods.

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Personally sent by Scarlett Davis using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Scarlett Davis



From: Sunny Zhou <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 15, 2021 at 8:49:03 PM PDT
To: "Ashcraft, Heidi" <HAshcraft@torranceca.gov>
Subject: Support for a Transformative Housing Element
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

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Please verify sender before opening attachments or clicking on links.

Dear Council Member Heidi Ann Ashcraft,

I'm a constituent in your district writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. I'm frustrated by increasing homelessness, by the burden that displacement and gentrification place on our neighbors, and by policies that promote exclusion and housing scarcity in our neighborhoods.

Exclusionary zoning and land use practices have led to an undersupply of affordable medium- and high-density housing near jobs and transit, and have perpetuated segregated living patterns and the exclusion of historically disadvantaged communities. The racist practice of redlining, which divided our city's neighborhoods by race and income, strongly influenced zoning laws that remain on the books today, defining where affordable housing may and may not be built. The housing and homelessness crisis, together with this year's COVID-19 pandemic, severe wildfires, and civil unrest, illustrate the need for a totally new approach to solving our city and region's housing crisis.

Fortunately, our city has a valuable opportunity to address the need for more housing in a way that furthers equity, environmental sustainability, and economic recovery. Under California's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, our city is required to update the housing element in a way that encourages historically high housing growth, while affirmatively furthering fair housing opportunities and undoing patterns of discrimination in housing. We can't miss this opportunity to fix our city's housing crisis.

That's why I urge you to ensure that our city creates a transformative, high-quality housing element that fully accords with state law and expert recommendations, by doing the following:

- Incorporating an estimate of the likelihood of development and the net new units if developed of inventory sites, which will provide a realistic estimate of future housing production on parcels where redevelopment is likely to occur
- Using an HCD-recommended "safe harbor" methodology for forecasting future ADU production
- Prioritizing high-opportunity census tracts and well-resourced areas (e.g. near transit, jobs, schools, parks, etc.) when selecting sites for lower-income housing opportunities, in order to affirmatively further fair housing
- Including the HCD-recommended buffer of at least 15-30% extra capacity in the site inventory, in order to avoid violating the No Net Loss requirement

Furthermore, I urge you and your colleagues to adopt supplemental policies alongside the housing element this year, in order to further the following crucial goals:

- Legalizing more housing
- Making housing easier to build
- Funding affordable housing and ending homelessness
- Strengthening tenants' rights

Our city needs a transformative housing element to solve its housing affordability crisis, and to create a city where everyone can thrive. The time for action on housing is now.

Personally sent by Sunny Zhou using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Sunny Zhou

[REDACTED]

From: Yazmine Mihojevich <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 30, 2021 at 2:21:25 PM PDT
To: "Ashcraft, Heidi" <HAshcraft@torranceca.gov>
Subject: End Exclusionary Zoning
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

WARNING: External e-mail
Please verify sender before opening attachments or clicking on links.

Dear Council Member Heidi Ann Ashcraft,

I'm a local constituent writing to express my concern about our region's affordable housing shortage and its impact on the future of our city. In particular, I'm writing to express my opposition to policies that ban apartments in much of our city. This misguided policy promotes housing scarcity, high rents, exclusion, and displacement in our neighborhoods.

Apartments are banned on over 80% of the residentially-zoned land in Los Angeles County; this share is often even higher in high-income cities and neighborhoods. This form of exclusionary zoning, which mandates single-family detached homes as the only legal housing option in most of the county, has led to an undersupply of affordable medium- and high-density housing near jobs and transit, and has perpetuated segregated living patterns, lack of access to opportunity, and the exclusion of BIPOC individuals and communities. With the County's median home value over \$750,000, and with affordable rental apartments scarce, single-family zoning effectively guarantees that high-opportunity neighborhoods remain restricted to wealthy households, who tend to be white.

Fortunately, cities across California are recognizing that ending exclusionary zoning and legalizing apartments will help make our neighborhoods more affordable, diverse, and environmentally sustainable. Sacramento recently voted to allow up to four homes on any residential parcel, and Berkeley is poised to do the same. Oakland's city council is exploring a similar policy. Portland and Minneapolis legalized small apartment buildings citywide several years ago. However, no cities in Los Angeles County have yet adopted these reforms.

As a city with positive values, we must emulate the example of our Bay Area neighbors and also legalize apartments citywide. I urge you to support an end to exclusionary zoning and apartment bans in our city. This bold reform will help us fix our city's housing affordability crisis, creating a city where everyone is welcome and everyone can thrive.

Personally sent by Yazmine Mihojevich using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool.
Abundant Housing LA is a grassroots pro-housing organization.

Sincerely,
Yazmine Mihojevich
[REDACTED]