

City of Torrance Housing Element Update

HOUSING ELEMENT WORKSHOP #1 Special Planning Commission Workshop


April 28, 2021

MEETING SUMMARY

The City of Torrance held its first community workshop regarding the update of the 6th Cycle Housing Element (2021-2029). Staff from the Community Development Department introduced the workshop and answered questions. A PowerPoint presentation was provided by members of the consultant team, who also answered questions. The PowerPoint presentation provided at the workshop can be viewed at <https://www.torranceca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/67532/637631623241100000>. Below is a summary of the discussion, questions, and input from the workshop. The minutes from the workshop are available at <https://www.torranceca.gov/government/city-clerk/commissions-and-advisory-boards/planning-commission/agendas-and-minutes/-folder-5015/-npage-3>.

Opening Questions from Planning Commission Members:

- What does “Housing for All” mean?
 - A. It is about access to fair housing, not actually providing housing for everyone that requires it.
- Would City have to come up with laws for rent control?
 - A. It would not be necessary. There are already measures in place that can accommodate fair housing requirements. Rent control is not required.
- What do the timelines look like?
 - A. The City is mandated to prepare a draft Housing Element and send it to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) first to get comments. HCD has up to 60 days for their review. The City then tries to resolve the comments within 60 days. Once the comments are resolved, the plan can be adopted. The City can utilize the grace period of 120 days beyond the official deadline of October 15, 2021, so the City has until February 12, 2022, to adopt the Housing Element.
- Does the General Plan have to be amended?
 - A. The current Housing Element expires on October 15, 2021, so there needs to be a replacement, which is considered an amendment of the General Plan.
- How does this affect the Hawthorne Corridor?
 - A. Another project team is working on the Housing Corridor study so this question would have to go to the other consulting team. The Hawthorne



Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan is separate from the Housing Element and the Housing Corridor Study, although both may provide sites for the Housing Element.

Planning Commission Questions about the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA):

- What is the RHNA appeal process and who does it go through? What if the Planning Commission doesn't agree with the rejection (of the City's appeal)?
 - A. SCAG officially adopted the RHNA and there is no avenue to change it once it is adopted. State law limits the appeal process.
- What if we don't agree with the RHNA?
 - A. Consultant and City staff both explained that the City is moving forward with the numbers it was assigned. If there are further actions the Council wishes to take, that would be a parallel process. 54 jurisdictions appealed the RHNA and only 2 were approved, one due to a math error in calculation.
- What qualifies for low income tier, senior living facilities, hospital zones?
 - A. Some independent senior living facilities and the Cabrillo Family Apartments, and perhaps some older units in the City qualify as low to moderate income units.
- Concern expressed about traffic with increased densities.
 - A. One strategy is to look for housing near transit.
- Question about how ADU numbers impact the RHNA? Can they be counted?
 - A. Explanation provided about making assumptions of future accessory dwelling units (ADUs) based on averaging the past 3 year's trends. SCAG's affordability review determines how many can be counted toward the low income RHNA numbers.
- What factors accounted for the 250% increase in RHNA for Torrance?
 - A. Two main reasons: One is that the last cycle (5th cycle housing element) was done in a recession, so the projection was substantially lower. The current 6th cycle is at the peak of the housing market, which accounts for the inflation. The other main reason is new legislation that requires the RHNA to not just project future need but make up for housing that was not built in previous decades, and also requiring the RHNA consider the cost burden of paying for housing on households.
- What is the purpose of public input if the City cannot challenge the RHNA?
 - A. Public input is needed regarding where to accommodate the units and other policies and programs. Numbers, sites, and strategies will all be discussed in future workshops.

- Since California's population has decreased as shown by the recent census, could the RHNA be changed?
 - A. Nothing will affect the current RHNA, but there might be future legislation that could reflect the change.
- A few additional questions were asked, specifically relating to State law and how the RHNA could be amended.
 - A. The RHNA process is complete, and the City must plan for the allocated units.
- Would a standard development without a low income component still count toward the RHNA?
 - A. Yes, it would count toward the RHNA category of moderate and above.
- Would the RHNA be affected in any way if people living in cars in parking lots were allowed to do so?
 - A. The RHNA is related to housing units, so the answer is no.
- Do mobile homes count for the RHNA?
 - A. Yes, if they are parked, but not when they are being towed around.
- How can we build 2400 low and very low income units in just 8 years?
 - A. It is in those 8 years that Torrance should be trying to accommodate those units, plus plan for a buffer of additional units in case some of the units are lost to a different use.
- Question about understanding non-profit builder activity, and if units must be rented for a certain cost?
 - A. City staff responded with an example: For the Cabrillo Family Housing development, the City bought the land with the intention of a non-profit builder constructing in the range of 39 to 44 affordable rental units. Regulations are in place for what the rents can be. Most affordable housing requires multiple layers of assistance or subsidies. They also sometimes use low income tax credits which makes rent affordable.
- Statement that City would need to rezone ½ to ¼ of industrial land to residential to accommodate the new density requirements.
 - A. Since there is very little vacant land in the City, redevelopment of existing land will be needed.
- Comment: How will we call ourselves a balanced City? If we meet all the State's requirements, we have no ability to change that imbalance.
- How do we motivate people to actually build these units?
 - A. The density bonus (state-mandated) can help. With a density bonus, a developer can increase the number of units in exchange for a lower parking ratio, or lower open space requirements, as examples.

Miscellaneous Questions from the Planning Commission:

- Is there any plan to use the Del Amo Mall or the Toyota property for housing, such as condominiums?
 - A. Malls around the country are incorporating housing in close proximity, and mall owners seem very receptive to the idea.
- What is the connection between the CEQA process and the Housing Element? Does CEQA have an effect on the RHNA?
 - A. They are on a parallel track, and CEQA has no effect on the RHNA.

Public Comment from Meeting Participants:

Participant #1: Renter – likes the idea of affordable housing everywhere in Torrance. City should establish rent control. Use empty lots. People should have a place to park if they have to live in cars. Affordable units shouldn't be segregated. High rise development is good.

Participant #2: Shared four points –

1. Submitted printed material for the public record.
 2. Public Outreach – City must do diligent outreach, to include renters, minorities and underrepresented persons. Needs to be across all income levels.
 3. AFFH (Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing) – City cannot put all affordable housing in one place. It should be spread out and near high opportunity areas.
 4. The policies and programs section of the Housing Element should be comprised of aiding underrepresented individuals in Torrance.
- Question from a Planning Commissioner for the Participant – Do you have a concern about outreach?
 - A. I think more can be done to be more inclusive

Participant #3:

- Question – can two adjacent cities share their response to the RHNA if they combined them?
 - A. There is no state provision to allow for that currently. There was once such a provision that is now expired.
- Question - Can the public review the draft Housing Element prior to the 2nd Housing Element Workshop?
 - A. If there are materials to provide the public in advance of the second workshop, they will be put on the City's website. The Housing Element will not be ready for public review at that time. (*Subsequent note:* the Draft Housing Element will be put on the City's website prior to the 3rd public workshop, before the draft Housing Element is submitted to HCD.)

Commented [PAB1]: Is this how the minutes read? It seems a bit negative...

Commented [CT2R1]: I clarified that the question was from a Planning Commissioner to the participant based on his 4th point. This was from my notes. Not sure how to format it so that's clear?



Closing Comments from Planning Commissioners:

- Question regarding whether the City's standard procedure for notification of opportunities for outreach meets state guidelines?
 - **A. City has gone above and beyond the necessary requirements for outreach, and have also reached out to affordable housing developers, social service agencies, HOAs, and others.**
- Comment: Torrance has approximately 150,000 residents, so the RHNA requirement is less than 4% of the population. RHNA requirements may not be so detrimental as led to believe at first.
 - **A. City is looking for ways to accommodate the number and reduce the negative effect on the existing residents.**
- Comment: The strategies put forward will help with this endeavor.