



2023-2031 Housing Element Update for the City of Soledad

Housing Element Overview

What is a Housing Element?

A housing element is how local jurisdictions plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. At its core, a housing element is an opportunity to have a community conversation about how to address local housing challenges and find solutions. The housing element is one important part of a city or county's general plan, which serves as the blueprint for how a city or county will grow and address changing needs for development. Every eight years, each city, town, and county must update its Housing Element, and work with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to achieve certification.



A housing element is a local plan adopted by a city, town, or county that includes the goals, policies, and programs that direct decision-making about housing.

All jurisdictions in Monterey County must update their housing elements for the 2023-2031 planning period. Local jurisdictions look at housing trends and zoning and market constraints, and evaluate various approaches to meeting housing needs across income levels.

The inventory of available sites, or "Sites Inventory," is a key component of a housing element. In this inventory, jurisdictions identify if they have enough land zoned for housing to meet the future need.

State law does not require jurisdictions to build or finance new housing, but they must plan for it.

Local governments must involve the public from all economic segments of the community in developing the housing element.

Housing elements must be updated every eight years and certified by HCD. The 2023-2031 planning period is Monterey County's 6th Cycle Housing Element. The 5th cycle covered 2014-2023.

- Every city, town, and county in California receives a target number of homes to plan for. This is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation or RHNA.
- The State of California (HCD) determines the number of new homes that are needed statewide by region. The regions are organized by councils of governments (COG). Soledad is in the AMBAG COG (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments).
- AMBAG prepares the RHNA plan for Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. The RHNA plan establishes the total number of housing units that each city and county must plan for within an eight-year planning period, divided into four income categories.
- AMBAG received its 6th-cycle RHNA from HCD in August 2021 and convened a planning directors forum made up of local elected officials and staff and stakeholders to create the proposed RHNA methodology. AMBAG released the Draft 6th Cycle RHNA Plan on April 22, 2022, for public review. The Final 2023-2031 6th Cycle RHNA Plan was adopted on October 12, 2022.

City of Soledad 2023-2031 RHNA Allocation

Income Category	Units
Very Low Income (<50% of AMI*)	100
Low Income (50-80% of AMI)	65
Moderate Income (80-120% of AMI)	183
Above Moderate Income (>120% of AMI)	376
Total Allocation	724

*AMI = Area Median Income. AMI in Monterey County for a household of four = \$90,100 (HCD, 2022).

What Are the Components of a Housing Element?

The housing element typically includes:

- 1 Housing Needs Assessment:** Examine demographic, employment, and housing trends and conditions that affect the housing needs of the community.
- 2 Assessment of Fair Housing:** Analyze fair housing issues, including patterns of segregation and integration, disparities in access to opportunity, and disproportionate housing needs.
- 3 Evaluation of Past Performance:** Review the previous housing element to measure progress in implementing policies and programs.
- 4 Housing Sites Inventory:** Identify available sites for housing development or redevelopment to ensure that there is adequate capacity to address the Regional Housing Needs Allocation.
- 5 Community Outreach and Engagement:** Implement a robust community outreach and engagement program, with a particular focus on outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups.
- 6 Constraints Analysis:** Analyze and recommend remedies for existing and potential governmental and nongovernmental barriers to housing development.
- 7 Policies and Programs:** Establish policies and programs to fulfill the identified housing needs.

What Happens if a Jurisdiction Does Not Adopt a Housing Element?

If a city does not comply with State law, it can be sued. In addition to facing significant fines, a court may limit local land use decision-making authority until the jurisdiction brings its housing element into compliance. Additionally, local governments may lose the right to deny certain projects.

Why Should the City of Soledad Plan for a Variety of Housing Types?

Purchasing or renting a home is becoming farther out of reach for too many people. A variety of housing types is essential to provide housing options for young and old, families with lower and higher incomes, large and small families, and persons with disabilities. A mix of housing opportunities means, among other things, that young adults moving into the housing market can stay in the cities they grew up in; workers like teachers, firefighters, health care workers, and other essential workers can find homes near their jobs; and older adults have more options for retirement and can stay in the communities they know.