

A Reader's Guide to the August 2024 Draft 6th Cycle Alameda County Housing Element



This reader's guide is designed to help residents and other stakeholders review and comment on the 3rd Draft of the Alameda County Housing Element Update.

Basic information:

Full Draft and Appendices here: <http://bit.ly/HEDraft2024>

Public Comment Period: August 16th through September 23rd, 2024. You can send the Planning Department your comments in the following ways:

- Attend a Public Meeting!
 - Castro Valley MAC on August 26th
 - Fairview MAC on September 3rd
 - Eden Area MAC on September 10th
 - Planning Commission on September 16th
- Submit comments to: housing.element@acgov.org or 510-670-6523 via voicemail

What is a Housing Element?

Every eight years, state law requires all California cities and counties to update their Housing Elements. A Housing Element is a chapter of the General Plan that must show how the community can accommodate its “fair share” of new housing units across different income categories. This “fair share” is known as the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA, or “REE-na”). In the current cycle, Alameda County’s Housing Element must show that it can **enable and support the production of 4,711 new housing units in between 2023 and 2030**. A unit can be an apartment, condo, house, ADU, etc.

Housing Element law also requires local governments to **take deliberate actions to foster inclusive communities, advance fair and equal housing choice, and address racial and economic disparities through housing**.

What is the timeline for the County’s Housing Element revision?

The state deadline to submit a compliant Housing Element was January 31, 2023. Alameda County submitted a first draft to the state in October 2023, received a comment letter from the state in January 2024, submitted a 2nd draft in May 2024, and received a 2nd comment letter from the state in July 2024. Alameda’s timeline for submitting a compliant Housing Element is shown below and on the Housing Element website at <https://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/housing-element/housing-element.htm>.

Timeline	Housing Element Update
Summer 2022 – Winter 2023	Initial writing of 1 st Draft, including studies, designating possible places for future housing, and beginning Fair Housing (AFFH) Analysis. Outreach: Surveys and Public Meetings.
Spring – Summer 2023	Completion of 1 st Draft and its publication. Public Comment Period 8/3/23 - 9/21/23.
Oct 6 2023 – Jan 4 2024	90-day State Review Period of 1 st draft. State Comment Letter sent on January 4 th , 2024.
Winter 2024	Staff work on edits based on State Comments and necessary Sites Inventory changes. Host All-MAC meeting on
April/May 2024	Second full Housing Element completed and published on April 19 th . Public Comment Period April 19 – May 3. 2 nd Draft submitted to state on May 9.

Timeline	Housing Element Update
May – July 2024	60-day State Review Period of 2 nd draft. State Comment Letter sent on July 9, 2024.
Summer 2024	Work on revisions of 2 nd draft in coordination with State HCD in response to July 9 letter.
Aug 16 – Sept 23 2024	Publish 3 rd Draft of Housing Element. Comment period: Aug 16 – Sept 23. MAC meetings
Late Sept-Nov 2024	Submit 3 rd Draft to state HCD for 60-day State Review Period.
Late November 2024	Will receive State Comment Letter



How is the Housing Element Organized?

There are 8 sections in the Second Housing Element Draft: the Main Body and 7 Appendices.

Element Main Body	Explains context of Element. Lists all Goals, Programs, and Policies to increase unincorporated-area affordable housing, improve housing conditions, and more!	Read Here
App. A: Housing Needs Assessment	Analyzes the unincorporated County’s population, special needs groups, employment, housing stock, and housing affordability, to help build an understanding of local housing needs.	Read Here
App. B: Sites Inventory & Methodology	Lists properties that could accommodate new housing and an analysis of why they are good housing sites. Demonstrates the County’s ability to meet its RHNA requirement of 4,711 new units.	Read Here
App. C: Housing Constraints	Discusses barriers to housing production in unincorporated Alameda County.	Read Here
App. D: Existing Programs Review	Reviews the previous (5 th cycle) Housing Element's programs and effectiveness	Read Here
App. E: Public Participation	Reviews the public meetings, surveys, interviews, and other techniques used to engage the public in the Housing Element. Includes all comments recieved	Read Here
App F: Fair Housing Assessment	Analyzes how the Sites Inventory impacts fair housing conditions and proposes strategies to promote integration, reduce segregation, and transform areas of poverty into areas of opportunity.	Read Here
App. G: Housing Resources	Lists assistance programs, funding, and other resources available to help create additional housing affordability in unincorporated Alameda County.	Read Here

Housing Element Highlights

The Sites Inventory Alameda County needs to demonstrate that there is enough room for at least 4,711 apartments, houses, townhomes, etc. in the unincorporated areas. The list of parcels of land where staff believe housing could be built is called **the Sites Inventory**. Land in the Sites Inventory is either vacant or underutilized, and some properties are proposed for rezoning. Table 1 shows estimated units for each community in the unincorporated areas. There is a complete list of sites, maps of sites, and an analysis of parcels in [Appendix B](#).

Rezoning When the Housing Element is certified by the state and brought to the Board of Supervisors for adoption, staff will also propose that **113 parcels of land will be rezoned** to enable higher densities of housing than currently allowed or to enable housing where residential uses are not currently allowed (Program 1.A).

- Staff are currently working with BART and the city of San Leandro to make **housing development at the Bay Fair BART Station**. Proposed rezonings will include densities of 75-125 units/acre
- **Larger vacant lots in northern Castro Valley and Fairview**: There are 15 lots in Castro Valley and 27 lots in Fairview proposed for a maximum of 17 housing units/acre. This would enable lower-density townhome-style housing. These zoning changes will enable more housing than is currently allowed through existing zoning but are also lower density than most proposed rezonings. There are no proposed rezonings in Very High Fire Hazard Areas.
- **San Lorenzo Village Sites**: There are rezoning lots in this part of San Lorenzo to up to 86 units per acre. This density is already allowed through current zoning in Ashland and Cherryland.
- **Castro Valley Boulevard Sites**: staff are proposing increasing possible housing densities to up to 86 units per acre. This density is already allowed through current zoning in Ashland and Cherryland.
- **Sites in Ashland**: In addition to the Bay Fair BART Station, Ashland includes two other larger sites proposed for rezoning: the Crunch Fitness and adjacent lots, and Cherryland Place at the corner of Mission and Hampton. Both locations are proposed for densities of 43-86 units/acre.

Table 1. Estimated Sites Inventory units by Community

	Total Proposed Units	% Above Moderate Income Units	% Moderate Income Units	% Low and Very Low Income Units	% Units from Rezones by Community	% Units from Permitted Projects by Community
<i>Ashland</i>	1,489	23.6%	18.9%	57.5%	80.6%	10.1%
<i>Cherryland</i>	197	28.4%	27.4%	44.2%	43.7%	7.8%
<i>San Lorenzo</i>	614	57.3%	6.7%	36.0%	75.6%	24.4%
<i>Hayward Acres</i>	58	22.4%	41.4%	36.2%	65.5%	22.4%
<i>Castro Valley</i>	1,777	41.3%	19.4%	39.3%	67.1%	17.5%
<i>Fairview</i>	524	93.3%	5.0%	1.7%	78.8%	5.2%
<i>East County</i>	772	84.6%	0.4%	15.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total Units per column	5,431	2,648	774	2,009	3,355	1,455

Housing Element Overlay Combining District This district is a zoning tool that will promote development of all housing types and especially those for lower and moderate income households. If approved by the Board of Supervisors, it will help projects to receive Planning permits faster. It would lower the amount of required parking spots and modify height or other development standards as needed to ensure the estimated maximum number of housing units can be built on a parcel.



Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) construction Accessory Dwelling Units are the small (often <800 square feet) homes constructed near existing residences. They can also be converted from garages, basements, or other additional structures. Based on previous year, staff anticipate **427 ADUs** to be built before 2030. In 2025, there will be **pre-approved ADU plans** available to make construction easier, cheaper, and faster. The **Alameda County ADU Resource Center** (<https://www.adu.acgov.org/>) has guidance for how to build an ADU.

Contributing Factors and Meaningful Actions Based on the analysis of [Appendix F](#), section F.7 describes what problems residents face in fairly accessing a variety of housing and what solutions the County can implement. Solutions include encouraging the **construction of more housing** through rezoning, **funding legal services**, and implementing [the Environmental Justice Element](#).

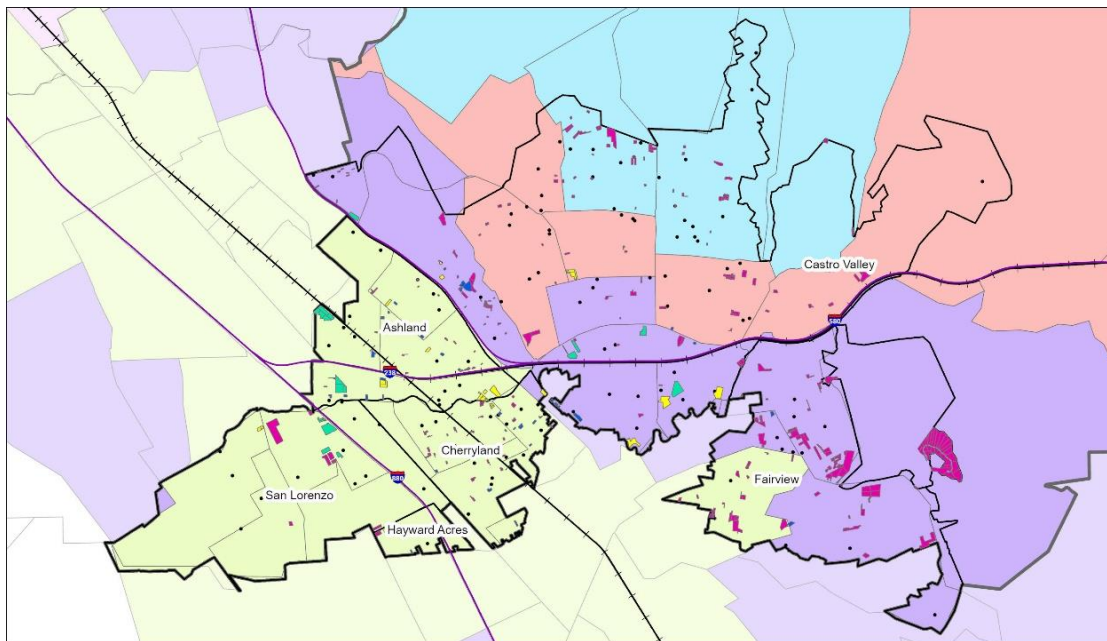
Tenant Protections At the time of writing (August 2024) there are ongoing conversations regarding what policies and may be adopted. State HCD requests that, whatever protections are adopted, staff monitor their efficacy and propose changes as needed. See Program 6.O: Renter Protections in the [Main Body](#) for more information.

Promoting Housing Mobility Ensuring that people have a variety of housing options (housing choice) is a significant goal of the Housing Element. In addition to the rezonings discussed above, the following policies will contribute to greater Housing Mobility.

- **Additional Housing Opportunities Near Transit** (Program 6.P) would allow additional units (potentially up to 10 units total) in existing single-family areas within ½ mile of the Bay Fair and Castro Valley BART Stations. Precise densities and design guidelines to be determined.
- **Inclusionary Zoning** (Program 6.J) would require a certain amount of affordable housing (often 15% of the total number of units) for larger developments (generally those with at least 11 housing units).
- **Innovative and Unconventional Housing Types Ordinance** (Program 6.L) would make it easier for tiny homes and other unconventional housing types to be permitted.

History of Housing in the Unincorporated Areas In Section F.6 of [Appendix F](#), you can find a history of how colonization, racism in local and federal government housing policies, the internment of Japanese Americans, and more have resulted in existing patterns of unfair housing in the unincorporated communities.

Community demographics In Section F.1.2 of [Appendix F](#), you can read a summary of major demographic analysis for all communities included in the Sites Inventory. This includes the following information: which



communities have older houses, the median income per household, how many households are living in poverty, how overcrowded housing is per community, how many households pay too much in rent and mortgage payments, and what the measurable risk of displacement is per community.

This map is an example of what can be found in [Appendix F](#). It uses a state data set based on incomes, school district scores, environmental

factors like pollution, and other data to estimate how many ‘opportunities’ or resources residents have access to in their neighborhoods. It shows northern Castro Valley as high/highest resource and Data like this can help us understand the potential impact of new housing.

Important programs and policies These are some of the important Programs listed in the [Main Body](#) of the Draft Element. Staff will begin working on them after adoption of the Element.

- Staff have secured funding to **update the San Lorenzo Village Specific Plan** (Program 1.B).
- Staff will update county ordinances to comply with state laws to make it easier to open **Emergency Shelters** (Program 4.A), **Low Barrier Navigation Centers** (Program 4.B), **Transitional Housing, and Supportive Housing** (Program 4.C).
- Staff and Planning Commission members are considering **three significant changes to the County’s development processes to make developing housing faster**. They include using recently adopted Design Standards approve new projects more often; no longer considering the consistency of lot sizes; and minimizing future creation of private streets when possible (Program 3.B).
- In response to community advocates, staff are developing a **Mobile Home Overlay** zoning tool that, if approved by the Board of Supervisors, would further protect existing mobile home communities from displacement (Program 6.N)

Additional Analysis In response to state comments made in January and July 2024, significant additional analysis was added to Appendices B (covering the Sites Inventory and how it was selected), C (covering housing constraints), and F (covering access to fair housing). Examples of edits include:

- Explaining why underutilized sites in the Sites Inventory are likely to redevelop as housing before 2030
- Further dissecting the Racially Concentrated Areas of Affluence in Castro Valley and how they relate to zoning history
- Explaining the impacts of the existing development approval processes, like Site Development Review, on how quickly new housing projects can be approved.