

HOUSING ELEMENT 101

Fact Sheet

What is a Housing Element?

The Housing Element is how the City of Walnut Creek plans to meet the existing and future housing needs of its residents for all income levels. It includes goals, policies, programs, and strategies to accommodate the City's housing growth, provide opportunities for new housing, and preserve the existing housing stock. It is a core element of the City's General Plan and must be consistent with the other elements of the General Plan.

The key components of the Housing Element include:

- A community demographic profile and analysis of population growth and trends;
- A list of available land suitable for housing development;
- An evaluation of local constraints or barriers to housing development as well as opportunities to develop housing; and
- Housing goals, programs, policies, and resources for promoting and developing housing within the City.

Why update the Housing Element?

California State 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 in our region. This Housing Element update is an opportunity to evaluate the previous element and determine which parts have been effective and which should be improved. It also provides an opportunity for residents to get involved and help determine housing priorities, thereby helping to ensure that the City is responding to residents' changing needs.

The updated Housing Element must be adopted by the Walnut Creek City Council and submitted to the State Department of Housing and Community Development Department no later than January 31, 2023, or Walnut Creek could lose eligibility for significant sources of funding currently provided by the State and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), including critical infrastructure and transportation funds.

How is the Housing Element implemented?

The Housing Element sets goals, objectives, policies, and programs that direct decision-making around housing. When a new housing program, project, or idea is considered, the Housing Element provides guidance for decision makers to evaluate the proposal.

How Can I Get Involved?

Thank you for wanting to get involved and have your voice heard! To help shape the element as it is drafted, there will be multiple engagement activities for your participation. As the process progresses, you will be provided opportunities to comment on draft documents and attend public hearings. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, these engagement activities will be mostly online and through Zoom meetings.



SIGN UP NOW!

Join the email list to be notified of involvement opportunities and updates to the Housing Element! Please visit www.walnut-creek.org/HEU to join.



TAKE THE SURVEY!

Share your thoughts on housing needs and opportunities in Walnut Creek! Visit www.walnut-creek.org/HEU to take the survey.



ATTEND WORKSHOPS!

Two virtual workshops are planned for this year. Zoom links and agendas will be provided prior to each workshop.

How much housing is needed?

Every eight years, each region in California receives a target number of homes to plan for from the State. This is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation or RHNA. Walnut Creek is located in the region administered by the Association of Bay Area Governments or ABAG. ABAG, with input from the jurisdictions in its nine-county area, takes the number of housing units it receives from the State and divides it among those jurisdictions, including Walnut Creek.

To comply with State law, the City's Housing Element must be updated to ensure the City's zoning, policies, and programs can accommodate its share of the estimated housing growth identified by the State. For the current Housing Element update, the City's share of the RHNA is 5,805 units, split among different income levels (based on Area Median Income, or AMI) as shown in the side table.

For more information about RHNA, please visit the ABAG website at <https://abag.ca.gov/our-work/housing/rhna-regional-housing-needs-allocation>.

Income Category	Number of Units	% of Total Units
Very Low Income (0-50% of AMI)	1,657	29%
Low Income (50-80% of AMI)	954	16%
Moderate Income (80-120% of AMI)	890	15%
Above Moderate Income (More than 120% of AMI)	2,304	40%
TOTAL UNITS	5,805	100%

Is the City required to build housing?

State law does not require jurisdictions to build or finance new housing, but they must plan for it. Through the Housing Element update process, the City must show that it has the zoning, regulations, and land use policies to accommodate its housing needs. The actual development of housing is primarily done by the private market.

The Housing Element is required to demonstrate potential sites where housing can be accommodated. 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, then the Housing Element is required to identify a rezoning program to create the required capacity.

It is important to note that if the City does not identify capacity for its RHNA targets, the City may be deemed out of compliance and risk losing important sources of funding currently provided by the State. It may also lose the right to deny certain projects and be limited in its local land use decision-making authority.

What is the schedule to complete the Update?

The updated Housing Element must be adopted by the Walnut Creek City Council and submitted to the State for certification no later than January 31, 2023. The first public meetings to discuss the update were study sessions with the City Council's Housing & Community Development Committee (HCD) on January 31, 2022, Planning Commission on February 10, 2022, and City Council on February 15, 2022. The next set of meetings are virtual workshops scheduled for the evenings of March 21, 2022 and April 20, 2022. Additional information and hearing notices will be posted to the Housing Element Update webpage and noticed via email.



Stay Up to Date on the Housing Element Update Process!

Visit the Housing Element Update webpage for progress updates and engagement opportunities.
www.walnut-creek.org/HEU