

# Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County

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## **Expanded Housing Element Recommendations**

## **Zoning & Site Identification**

The lack of sufficient and developable sites is a key challenge to affordable home production, and should be a key priority in Housing Elements. Non-vacant sites identified in Housing Elements should be accompanied by analysis demonstrating a realistic capacity for development. Jurisdictions should include some or all of the following key site-related strategies in their Housing Elements:

- Identify and acquire target sites for 100% affordable development.
- In order to facilitate actual production of Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA), identify sites in excess of RHNA, using a standard of 133% of RHNA for market-rate development, and 200% of RHNA for below-market rate.
- Expand capacity for multi-family affordable development by establishing "overlay zoning" in commercial, light industrial and mixed-use areas not zoned for residential development.
- Develop a comprehensive inventory of publicly controlled sites, and evaluate them for potential affordable development with consolidation of existing public uses to other identified sites.
- Pass a density bonus ordinance, or ensure your existing one complies with state law. Ensure density bonus and related concessions are available equally to all development entities
- Ensure areas with increased densities allow high enough buildings to facilitate full realization of density standards.
- Exempt 100% affordable developments from vertical mixed-use requirements in mixed-use areas.
- Allow accessory units by-right, reduce setbacks and allow tandem parking to facilitate development
  of accessory units.

#### Financial Resources

One of the most significant constraints to affordable development is a lack of financial resources. Jurisdictions should provide significant local financial resources for developing affordable homes. Housing Elements should employ some or all of the following strategies related to funding:

- Participation in regional and state-wide efforts to develop permanent, dedicated sources of funding for affordable homes.
- Commitment of dedicated local sources of revenue to regional efforts to build affordable homes, such as HEART, the county's housing trust.
- Establishment of commercial development or "jobs/housing linkage fees", especially in jurisdictions with a jobs/housing ratio of 1.5 or higher.
- Expansion of Inclusionary Housing Ordinances to include fractional fees for smaller developments.
- Implementation of Affordable Housing Impact Fees on larger single family home developments (Alternative to Inclusionary Ordinance)
- Increases in redevelopment housing set-aside funds to 25-30% of redevelopment revenue.
- Reduction or waiver of fees on developments with 100% affordability.
- Use of HOME or CDBG funds for site acquisition
- Use of Condo Conversion Fees (especially where no Inclusionary Ordinance exists)
- Sponsor bond issuance for use by nonprofit affordable home developers

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## Permitting, Fees & Entitlements

Jurisdictions can encourage affordable development by providing a predictable, affordable, streamlined, and organized project-entitlement process. Key strategies for use in Housing Elements include:

- Provision of expedited entitlement processes for affordable developments, especially for those that depend on tax credits.
- Implementation of alternative fee payment schedules for affordable developments, allowing deferred or staggered payment of development fees.
- Provision of early cross-departmental feedback, prioritizing input from non-community development entities like public works, fire and building.

## **Parking**

Excessive and inflexible parking space standards are a key constraint to development of all types, especially affordable development. Parking requirements for any development should reflect the probable parking demands of the intended occupants, especially considering proximity to non-automobile transportation alternatives. Key strategies in reducing parking-induced development constraints include:

- Reduction of parking ratios to a range of 0.7 -1.5 spaces per unit.
- Allowance of "compact spaces", tandem parking and flexibility in lane access.
- Utilization of shared parking strategies across commercial and residential, or daytime and evening uses.
- "Unbundling" of parking costs from homes, or other monetization of parking. Programs could include facilitation of shared parking agreements between separate landowners.
- Provision of significant reductions to or exemptions from parking requirements for developments built for special needs residents or seniors, or those near transit.

#### Design

Jurisdictions should ensure design standards are clear and have pre-established criteria for evaluation. Key Housing Element strategies related to design include:

- Allow exemptions to height limits for design features that increase overall aesthetic quality.
- Ensure design standards do not create unreasonable financial burdens on affordable development.

#### **Implementation**

In order to ensure that Housing Elements are truly useful in facilitating production and preservation of affordable homes, it is important to include a clear implementation framework. Key implementation strategies include:

- Inclusion of quantifiable objectives, especially for site identification and assisted production (e.g. number of units built, funds identified, acres rezoned, etc.).
- Use of timeframes and deadlines for all program actions. This includes rezonings and area plan development, program implementation and assisted production.
- Designation of periodic, meaningful review and evaluation mechanisms for all stakeholders.