



## **2023-2031 Newark Housing Element Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **What is a Housing Element?**

Under State law, all local governments in California are required to adequately plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community by adopting a Housing Element as part of their General Plan. The Housing Element identifies housing conditions and needs and establishes the goals, objectives, and policies that are the foundation of the City's housing strategy.

### **Why is having a Housing Element important?**

The State has declared that "the availability of housing is a matter of vital statewide importance and the attainment of decent housing and a suitable living environment for all Californians is a priority of the highest order" (Gov. § Code 65580). At the local level, the Housing Element allows cities to prepare a community-specific approach to "how" and "where" housing will be addressed to meet the needs of the community.

Plan Bay Area 2050, the region's long range Sustainable Communities Strategy and Transportation Plan, forecasts that the population of the Bay Area will increase by 2.7 million people between 2015 and 2050. Local Housing Elements will play a critical role in ensuring that a decent and affordable supply of housing is available to the expanding population and that the region grows in a sustainable and equitable manner.

### **Does the City of Newark currently have a Housing Element?**

Yes. The City of Newark has an adopted Housing Element for 2015-2023. State law requires local governments to update their Housing Element every eight years to periodically address the changing housing needs of their communities. This year's effort will update the city's housing policies and actions, as well as identify locations, housing types, and number of homes to be accommodated (but not necessarily built) by 2031.

### **What's the timeline for the Housing Element Update?**

A Final Housing Element will be adopted around January 2023 to plan for the housing needs for the next eight-year Housing Element Planning Period (2023-2031).

Here is an overview of the general timeline:

- During early 2022 there will be community outreach
- Newark will simultaneously be assessing what happened since the last update and developing a draft, informed by studies, your input, and State law
- A draft will be released during the spring of 2022 for public review
- Public hearings with Newark's planning commission and Council and an initial review by the state will occur in the fall of 2022
- After edits have been made, a final draft will be adopted by the Council and submitted to the state for final certification in January 2023

### **How do the Environmental Justice and Safety Elements connect to the Housing Element?**

When local governments in California update their Housing elements, they are also required to prepare an update to the Safety Element. In Newark, this part of the General Plan is currently included as a component of Chapter 9: Environmental Hazards. The portions of this Chapter having to do with safety issues in the community will also be updated in conjunction with the Housing Element. In addition, the City will over the course of the next 6-9 months prepare a new Environmental Justice Element to identify needs and develop strategies for ensuring a sustainable and equitable community for all Newark residents.

### **What is inclusionary housing?**

Inclusionary housing programs connect the creation of affordable units to the construction of new market-rate development. An inclusionary housing program might require developers to sell or rent anywhere from 5 to 20 percent of new residential units to lower-income residents at prices or rents that they can afford. These policies leverage the profitability of new development to pay for new affordable housing units and support the creation of more economically diverse and inclusive communities. Newark currently has a residential in-lieu fee program which market-rate developers can pay into when they build new housing to support future affordable housing production, but the City Council has directed staff to look for ways to encourage on-site inclusion of affordable units, and to study the development of a new inclusionary housing program for Newark. This may also be a program in the Housing Element Update.

### **What is affordable housing?**

Affordable housing refers to homes that are rented or sold at rents or sales prices that are lower than prevailing market rates. In Alameda County, the vast majority of purpose-built affordable housing is built and managed by private and nonprofit developers using a variety of funding and financing sources. Affordable housing programs generally target households who earn 80% or below of the area's median income (AMI), which for Alameda County is \$119,200 a year for a household of four. Households that pay more than 30% of their monthly income are considered "rent burdened" while families who pay over 50% of their monthly income are considered "severely rent burdened". Many of the most common jobs in Alameda County don't pay enough for many households to afford prevailing sales prices or rental rates, underscoring the need for more affordable housing options.

### **How can I get involved in the Housing Element Update process?**

Please add your voice to the Housing Element Update process and help shape the future of your community. Get involved by participating in Newark's online community conversation via a brief survey and by attending any of our upcoming meetings or events. You can also stay up to date by signing up for our email updates!