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1 Introduction

This Housing Element is the City of Bakersfield's eight-year blueprint (2023-2031) for meeting the housing needs of the community. The Housing Element provides a coordinated strategy for preserving the city's existing housing stock and advancing opportunities for new housing in a way that enhances quality of life and equitable access to resources. It also serves as a strategy to address housing needs across the economic and social spectrum, reflecting the needs of a diverse community.

Meeting current and projected housing needs ensures Bakersfield can accommodate its share of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The Housing Element identifies constraints to housing production as well as policies and actions to help overcome these constraints.

The Housing Element was prepared through a major community outreach effort across an economically and racially diverse spectrum of people who live and work in Bakersfield. The outreach effort included conversations with housing developers and affordable housing providers, and with people who represent special needs populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness. Bakersfield solicited input from stakeholders and community members through interviews, surveys, a project-specific website, a housing sites survey tool, community events, and public meetings. To jumpstart the outreach process and to inform the community about the Housing Element Update, the City compiled and contacted more than 340 stakeholders. Complete details of public participation efforts are provided in Appendix A.

1.1 Housing Element Purpose and Content

The State of California has stated that the availability of decent and suitable housing for every California family is "a priority of the highest order." This objective has become increasingly urgent in recent years as communities across the State struggle to meet the housing needs of all their residents. The Housing Element is the primary tool for cities and counties to create a road map to meet their housing goals. The Housing Element is a comprehensive strategy for encouraging development of safe, decent, and affordable housing for all residents and preventing housing loss. Government Code 65583 establishes requirements for the Housing Element, including:

- Identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs, resources, and constraints
- A statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, and scheduled programs for preservation, improvement, and development of housing
- Identification of adequate sites for housing
- Assessment of the City's fair housing issues
- Adequate provision for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community

The Housing Element assists Bakersfield in determining how to address existing and future housing needs and plan for future growth. Housing policies and actions contained in the Housing Element do not commit the City to construct new housing units, but they do identify ways in which Bakersfield will encourage development of housing intended to meet the housing needs of current and future residents during the Housing Element update cycle.

This Housing Element represents the City of Bakersfield's 6th Housing Element cycle and will be in effect from 2023 through 2031.

1.2 Relationship to Other General Plan Elements

The City of Bakersfield's Metropolitan Bakersfield 2040 General Plan was adopted in 2014 December 2002 as a shared document with the County of Kern, and it is comprised of several State mandatory elements including: Land Use, Circulation, Conservation, and Community Character, Mobility, Housing, Community Open Space, Noise, and Safety, Natural Resources, and Hazards. The General Plan also addresses several other optional elements including Economic Development, Public Facilities and Services, Parks and the Kern River Education and Lifelong Learning, and Community Health and Quality of Life.

Although the Housing Element is anticipated to be adopted The Housing Element has been updated in 2023 in accordance with sState legislation in 2024, but also as part of the City is also engaged in the preparation of a comprehensive General Plan update that will be completed in its entirety in 202624. Community outreach, data analysis, and policy creation for the Housing Element Update were conducted in parallel with other elements of the General Plan.

All elements bear equal weight, and no element has legal precedence over another. California Government Code Section 65583 (c) requires the Housing Element to maintain internal consistency with other General Plan Elements. For example, residential density limits established by the Land Use Element are reflected in the Housing Element and form the basis for analyzing residential capacities within the City. The City will ensure that internal consistency is maintained, through the comprehensive General Plan update or other means.

1.3 Organization of the Housing Element

Per California Government Code Sections 65580-65589, a housing element must consist of the following components:

- **Review of the previous Housing Element:** This section reviews the results of the goals, policies, and programs adopted in the previous Housing Element and compares projected outcomes with actual achieved results.
- **Housing Needs Assessment:** This section reviews the existing and projected housing needs of the community. It provides a profile of socio-demographic information, such as population characteristics, household information, housing stock, tenure, and housing affordability. The assessment also considers local special housing needs, such as seniors, farmworkers, homeless, large households, and female-headed households.
- **Resources and Inventory of Adequate Sites.** This section provides resources and an inventory of adequate sites that are suitably zoned and available within the planning period to meet the jurisdiction's fair share of regional housing needs across all income levels.
- **Governmental and Nongovernmental Constraints.** This section identifies and analyzes impediments to housing production across all income levels.
- **Fair Housing Assessment.** This section provides a summary of contributing factors that serve as barriers to fair housing choice and access to opportunities in Bakersfield.
- **Housing Plan.** This section provides a statement of the community's goals, quantified objectives, and policies to maintain, preserve, improve, and develop housing. It also provides a schedule of meaningful actions to be taken during the planning period to

achieve the aforementioned goals, objectives, and policies. It includes quantified objectives for new construction, rehabilitation, and conserved units by income category (i.e., very low, low-moderate, and above-moderate) to make sure that both the existing and the projected housing needs are met, consistent with the City's share of the RHNA.

This Housing Element contains two chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) details the public outreach methods and input for the Housing Element Update, and Chapter 2 (Housing Plan) provides the goals, policies, and programs that guide the City's housing-related actions during the next eight years. The research and analysis that inform the update are compiled in appendices at the end of the document:

- Appendix A: Public Outreach
- Appendix B: Housing Needs Assessment
- Appendix C: Housing Constraints
- Appendix D: Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing
- Appendix E: Housing Resources
- Appendix F: Review of Past Accomplishments
- Appendix G: Affordable Housing Strategy

1.4 Data Sources and Methods

Data from a variety of sources is used to complete the Housing Element. The most cited source is the U.S. Census, which provides consistent demographic characteristics that are widely accepted. The American Community Survey is a feature offered by the U.S. Census and includes five-year estimates on population and demographic characteristics. Other data sources include the following:

Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG)

- California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- California Housing Finance Agency
- California Tax Credit Allocation Committee
- Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)
- California Department of Finance (DOF)
- Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) lending data
- Regional Homeless Point-in-Time Count
- State Employment Development Department (EDD) data on wage and labor statistics
- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

1.5 Public Outreach and Participation

The 2023-2031 6th cycle Housing Element Update was informed through input from a variety of public outreach efforts. The City created a dedicated webpage for the Housing Element Update: <https://bakersfield2045.com/housing-element/>. In a diligent effort to include all segments of the Bakersfield community, Bakersfield solicited input from stakeholders and community members through interviews, surveys, a housing sites survey tool, community events, and public meetings.

Public Input and the Housing Element Update

Input from the City’s outreach events and meetings helped define the Housing Element Update priorities and goals, and provide direction on the sites inventory, housing policies and programs, and zoning efforts. The overarching themes discussed during community outreach include:

- Need more affordable housing for both renters and buyers.
- Need to increase the variety of available rental and for-sale housing types, including apartments and townhomes, and more options for studio, one, and two-bedroom units.
- Need increased resources and housing options for people experiencing homelessness.
- Need increased access and services for education on housing rights and resources for tenants and landlords.
- Support for building housing throughout all neighborhoods in Bakersfield.
- Support for transit-oriented development and increasing density in areas with existing services.
- A discussion of how each theme is addressed is included in Appendix A, Public Participation. All public comments provided to the City during the public comment period were reviewed by the City and taken into consideration.

Summary of City Meetings and Community Engagement Events

The following is a summary of workshops, meetings, surveys, and other outreach methods used during the update process. Copies of materials and detailed input from the public outreach conducted for the Housing Element Update are included in Appendix A, Public Outreach.

Table 1-1 Meetings and Community Events

Meeting	Dates	Description
Affordable Housing Strategy Public Outreach	2021-2022	Partner focus groups, a planning commission presentation, a City Council presentation, a community survey and a community workshop, and a project website to inform the Affordable Housing Strategy, a guiding document for the Housing Element Update. An online “self-paced workshop” about housing issues and opportunities in Bakersfield. Participants viewed three short videos and answered a series of 15 questions. The self-paced workshop had 182 participants.
Community Workshops	4/27/22 5/24/22 6/7/22 6/22/22 7/12/22 10/11/22 10/18/22	Presentations and public input on housing opportunity sites and housing policies and programs.
City Council Informational Update	4/6/22	Presentation of an introduction to the housing element, the regional housing needs allocation (RHNA), state legislation, and the project timeline.
General Plan Workshop Series	3/22/22 3/23/22 4/14/22	Workshops to introduce new General Plan goals and requirements to the community, educate the community on

Meeting	Dates	Description
		housing element requirements, and increase public understanding of the decision-making process.
Focus group interviews	10/11-10/13/22 10/17/22	A series of virtual stakeholder interviews with market rate and affordable housing developers to identify key issues to housing development.
Equity Task Force Meetings	2/22/23 3/17/23	Discussion to inform the development of equitable and meaningful General Plan policies and approaches, including those included in the Housing Element Update.
Public Comment Survey on Housing Opportunity Sites	10/11/22 – 11/15/22	Online survey seeking input from the public and recommendations relating to housing opportunity sites. There were 11 comments received.
Housing Needs and Opportunities Survey	5/16/22 – 7/7/22	Online survey inquiring about housing, access to resources, and experiences with discrimination to all individuals in the City of Bakersfield. There were 268 survey participants.
Zoning Amendment Outreach	4/17/23 1/18/24 1/26/24 2/1/24 2/29/24 3/13/24	Three stakeholder meetings, property owner engagement, and a public workshop, were conducted to gather input on the proposed changes to zone classifications. Public hearings were conducted in February and March 2024.

Timeline of the Draft Housing Element Update

The City provided the draft Housing Element for public review pursuant to AB 215 prior to submittal to HCD. The following list is a timeline of the Housing Element public review and HCD submittals.

- A public review draft of the Housing Element was published and made available for comment on the City's website from April 17 to May 17, 2023 (30 days). Over the course of the public review period, 30 separate comment letters and statements were received via email and the project website.
- The City submitted its Initial Draft Housing Element to HCD for 90-day review on June 22, 2023.
- HCD provided the City with preliminary comments and allowed the City to submit a revised draft prior to receiving the official comment letter. The City posted a revised draft for public review from September 5 to September 12, 2023 (seven days). The City received two comment letters via email. HCD provided its comment letter on September 20, 2023.
- The City addressed HCD's comments and incorporated revisions based on public comment. The City also conducted outreach for zoning code updates. The City published a revised draft Housing Element for public comment on April 22, 2024 through April 29, 2024.

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