Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

Bruce W. McClendon FAICP
Director of Planning

June 18, 2008

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

HEARING ON THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY 2008-2014 DRAFT HOUSING ELEMENT (ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS) (3-VOTES)

SUBJECT

The proposed update to the Housing Element consists of technical revisions to address the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for the County; revisions to reflect recent changes in the State Housing Element Law; updated analyses; and new programs to meet the County's housing development goals, pursuant to the State Housing Element Law.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

1. Consider the attached Negative Declaration together with any comments received during the public review process, find on the basis of the whole record before the Board that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment, find that the Negative Declaration reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board, and adopt the Negative Declaration; and

2. Approve and adopt by a resolution to be prepared by County Counsel prior to the public hearing date, the recommendation of the Regional Planning Commission as reflected in the attached 2008-2014 Draft Housing Element and determine that it is compatible with and supportive of the goals and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan; and

3. Repeal the Housing Element for the 1998-2005 planning period, which was adopted by your Board on October 23, 2001, upon effect of the attached 2008-2014 Draft Housing Element.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The State Housing Element Law (California Government Code §§65580-65589.8) requires every local jurisdiction to prepare and regularly update the Housing Element, which is one of the seven mandated Elements of the General Plan. The purpose of the Housing Element is to analyze existing, and to plan for future housing needs for all unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The Housing Element must address the housing needs of all income levels and accommodate a diversity of housing types and special needs.

All local jurisdictions located within the region covered by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), including the County of Los Angeles, are required to prepare and submit their adopted Housing Elements to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) by July 1, 2008. At the time of submittal, HCD will undergo a 90-day review to determine compliance with the State Housing Element Law.

Housing Elements are required to be updated periodically to ensure that every local jurisdiction plans for its fair share of the regional housing need. SCAG has determined that unincorporated Los Angeles County's fair share, or its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation, is 57,176 dwelling units to be built over the period July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2014. The RHNA, broken down by income level, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *RHNA for Unincorporated Los Angeles County*

	Very Low (≤50% AMI*)	Lower (≤80% AMI)	Moderate (≤120% AMI)	Above Moderate (>120% AMI)	**Total Housing Units**
RHNA	14,425	9,073	9,816	23,862	**57,176**

*Area Medium Income

The Housing Element provides an assessment of the diversity and magnitude of the housing needs in the unincorporated areas. For example, the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County face a high rate (25%) of overcrowding, and 26% of households are overpaying for housing. In addition, on any given night, there are over 10,000 homeless individuals—91% of which are not sheltered, in the unincorporated areas. The Housing Element also provides an assessment of mortgage foreclosures. In the second quarter of 2007, Los Angeles County, as a whole, accounted for 34% of all foreclosures filed in Southern California.

Through a market-based approach, the Housing Element ensures that local jurisdictions incentivize and encourage the production of a diversity of housing types for a variety of needs and income levels. Compliance with the State Housing Element Law provides the public and private sectors with a clear set of goals and policies to appropriately guide housing development over the next six years. Furthermore, the State incentivizes compliance by prioritizing funding for State housing programs with certified Housing Elements.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The Draft Housing Element promotes the County's strategic planning goal of "service excellence" by identifying regulatory barriers to housing development, and offering solutions to removing these constraints. The goal of "organizational effectiveness" is also promoted by providing continuous quality improvements to the County's services.

Furthermore, the Draft Housing Element addresses the County's goal of focusing on "children and families' well-being." Adequate and safe housing is necessary to create strong and stable families. The Draft Housing Element addresses the housing needs of all income levels and special needs groups, including single-parent households and large families.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

Adoption of the Draft Housing Element will not result in any significant new costs to the Department of Regional Planning or other County departments. The majority of the programs outlined in the Draft Housing Element are ongoing programs. The implementation of the new programs will be funded by applicable County departments, including the Department of Regional Planning, through the General Fund as part of the overall work program.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The General Plan must contain a Housing Element that sets forth goals, policies and programs for preservation, improvement and the development of housing for all income levels and special needs populations. The Housing Element is required, pursuant to the State Housing Element Law, to be periodically updated to ensure that every local jurisdiction properly plans for its fair share of the regional housing need. In addition, §65583(c)(7) of the Government Code requires that a local jurisdiction's Housing Element describe the means by which consistency will be achieved with other General Plan Elements and community goals. The Draft Housing Element is compatible with and supportive of the policies outlined in the Los Angeles County General Plan. At the time of adoption of the forthcoming General Plan Update, the County will amend the Housing Element, as needed, to demonstrate consistency and the continued ability to accommodate the RHNA under the updated General Plan Land Use Element.

The State Housing Element Law prescribes the contents of the Housing Element. The Draft Housing Element contains the required analyses, including: a parcel specific inventory of vacant and underutilized sites, a housing needs assessment, an analysis of governmental and non-governmental constraints to housing development, and a list of programs focused on addressing the identified needs and constraints.

In addition, the State Housing Element Law requires that local governments make a diligent effort to achieve public participation of all economic segments of the community in the development of the Housing Element.

The County staff organized community forums on housing issues within the following unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County between October 1 and November 14, 2007: Willowbrook, the Santa Monica Mountains, Marina del Rey, Florence-Firestone, Altadena, and the Antelope Valley. The staff promoted the meetings by targeting neighborhood groups, canvassing communities, publishing newspaper notices, and mailing announcements to over 5,000 identified stakeholders and groups. Other outreach efforts included focus group discussions, the distribution of housing surveys, and regular updates on the status of the Housing Element (via postcards and email announcements).

Pursuant to Government Code §65575(b), the County submitted the Draft Housing Element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) on February 29, 2008 for the mandatory 60-day review and comment period. The County received HCD's comment letter on April 29, 2008.

The Regional Planning Commission conducted a public hearing and heard testimony from the public regarding the Draft Housing Element on April 2, May 28, and June 18, 2008. In total, three members of the public testified with concerns regarding inadequate infrastructure, insufficient efforts to preserve the County's affordable housing stock, and the importance of providing accommodations, or flexibility in the application of zoning and land use regulations, for persons with disabilities. In addition to these testimonies, the County received 17 public comment letters and 17 housing survey replies regarding the Draft Housing Element. During this time and at the instruction of the Commission, the staff also met with multiple groups and individuals to discuss and address their concerns.

A public hearing is required pursuant to Section 22.16.200 of the County Code and §§65353-65356 of the Government Code. Required notice must be given pursuant to the procedures and requirements set forth in Section 22.60.174 of the County Code. These procedures exceed the minimum standards of §65090 of the Government Code relating to notice of public hearing.

The County incorporated the State's comments, as well as the public comments, into the Draft Housing Element.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The staff has prepared a Draft Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the Draft Housing Element in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the environmental reporting procedures of the County of Los Angeles.

The Housing Element serves as a policy guide for meeting the existing and future housing needs of all economic segments of the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. It analyzes adopted land use policies to ensure that Los Angeles County properly plans for its fair share of the regional housing need. For these and other reasons, the Initial Study determined that there is no substantial evidence that the

adoption of the Draft Housing Element will have a significant effect on the physical environment, and therefore, a Negative Declaration was prepared.

A copy of the proposed Negative Declaration was transmitted to all County libraries for public review. Public notice was published in 13 newspapers of general circulation between February 28 and March 3, 2008, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092. The staff received two general form letters from SCAG and State of California Native American Heritage Commission regarding the proposed Negative Declaration, and a recommendation from the Department of Parks and Recreation to add a minor point of clarification to the Draft Initial Study.

Based on the attached Negative Declaration, the adoption of the Draft Housing Element will not have a significant effect on the environment.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the Draft Housing Element will not significantly impact County services.

Respectfully submitted,

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

Bruce W. McClendon, FAICP
Director of Planning

BWM:RH:CC:AR

Attachments:
1. Resolution of the Regional Planning Commission
2. Project Summary
3. Draft Housing Element
4. Draft Initial Study and Negative Declaration
5. HCD 60-Day Review Letter, April 29, 2008
6. Summary of Regional Planning Commission Proceedings
7. Public Comment Letters
8. Legal Notice of Board Hearing
9. List of Persons to be Notified

c:

Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors