

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

City of Monrovia General Plan Update: Housing Element, Safety Element, Environmental Justice Element

What is the General Plan?

The State of California requires that each city create a General Plan to prepare for anticipated changes in the community over about a 20 year period. The General Plan is the blueprint for the City's long range planning goals and has traditionally included seven required elements – Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Safety, Noise, Open Space, and Conservation. Some cities have adopted additional elements to address special circumstances in their communities, such as an Air Quality Element. California has recently adopted legislation that requires that cities prepare one more element – Environmental Justice.

Every year, the City reports back to the State any changes or updates that have been made to the General Plan. The Housing Element is the only element of the General Plan that is required to be updated on a cyclical basis, all of the other elements are updated on an "as-needed" basis.

What is the Housing Element?

As one of the mandatory elements of the General Plan, the Housing Element provides goals, polices, and actions that helps Monrovia plan for existing and future housing needs for all economic segments of the community, including individuals with special needs. Monrovia's Housing Element is required to be updated on a regular schedule, typically referred to as cycles. It must also be approved by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

When was Monrovia's previous Housing Element prepared?

The City's current 5th Cycle Housing Element was adopted in 2014 and was certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). It covers an 8 year planning period from 2014-2021.

What are the items that the Housing Element covers?

The Housing Element must cover the following topics:

- *Housing Needs*: An evaluation of a city's demographic and housing characteristics and trends including an analysis of existing and projected housing needs, the number of people living in overcrowded housing, residents paying more for their homes than they can sustainably afford, people with special housing needs and affordable units at risk of converting to market rate;
- *Constraints*: A review of potential market, governmental, and environmental constraints to meet a city's identified housing need;
- *Available Resources*: An evaluation of land, administrative, and financial resources available to address the housing goals (developed by the Southern California Association of Governments, SCAG);
- *Progress*: A review of a city's past accomplishments under the previous Housing Element; and
- *Path Forward*: A Housing Plan including goals, policies, and programs that the City will adopt to assist the development of housing for different income and special needs groups, ensure equal housing opportunity, and preserve and improve the existing housing stock.

What is the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and how does it relate to the Housing Element?

Every local jurisdiction (City and County) must make an "adequate provision for the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community." The estimated 2021-2029 RHNA for Monrovia is 1,665 units which is broken down into four income categories to ensure that all economic groups are accommodated. Despite

the wording, the RHNA is a "distribution of housing development capacity" that each city must zone for in a planning period. A community is not obligated to actually build the housing for all in need but it must plan for it.

Why is it important for the City to have a State Compliant Housing Element?

There are several potential consequences, the greatest of which is the risk of litigation based on a legally inadequate General Plan. Courts can impose a range of sanctions if they rule the Housing Element invalid, including a moratorium on all development and local land use authority until the Housing Element is brought into compliance. Furthermore, the jurisdiction is responsible for paying the litigant's attorney fees. Having a compliant Housing Element not only guides housing production, but offers legal protection to the City regarding housing decisions. Having a Compliant Housing Element is also a pre-requisite to being approved for certain housing-related State-funded grants.

A Housing Element is considered out of compliance with State law if one of the following applies: 1) It has not been revised and updated by the statutory deadline, or 2) Its contents do not substantially comply with the statutory requirements. If a Housing Element is certified, there is a legal presumption that it is "compliant" or adequate.

What is the Safety Element and why is it being updated?

Like the Housing Element, the Safety Element is one of the mandatory General Plan Elements and is used to protect the community from unreasonable risks associated with the effects of various geologic hazards, flooding, and wildland and urban fires. Recent State law changes require Monrovia's Safety Element to be updated to address climate resiliency planning, including the City's response to an increased risk of wildfires.

When was Monrovia's previous Safety Element prepared?

Monrovia's City Council adopted the current Safety Element in 2002.

What are the items that the Safety Element covers?

The Safety Element will address:

- fire risk for land classified as very high fire hazard severity zones,
- flooding,
- landslides and other geological hazards,
- climate adaptation strategies,
- vulnerability assessment,
- local hazard mitigation, and
- resiliency strategies.

What is the Environmental Justice Element?

The Environmental Justice Element is a recently required element, as such the City of Monrovia is preparing its first Environmental Justice Element. The new Environmental Justice Element will identify "disadvantaged communities" within the City, specifically highlighting neighborhoods that have been at a disadvantage due to a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. The new Environmental Justice Element will address these issues through goals and policies designed to promote civil engagement in the public decision making process, improve health and equity outcomes across the City, advance equity, and protect human health in these areas.

What is a Disadvantaged Community?

A disadvantaged community is a residential area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency in accordance with Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code OR a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

“Disadvantaged communities” refers to the areas throughout California which suffer the most from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. These burdens include high poverty, high unemployment, air and water pollution, and presence of hazardous wastes. These areas also tend to have high incidence of asthma and heart disease.

Who prepares and certifies the Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice Elements?

The City of Monrovia will prepare the Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice Elements with the assistance of MIG, a professional planning and environmental consulting firm. The Housing Element will be certified by the State of California Housing and Community Development Department. The Safety Element will be reviewed by the State of California, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) to ensure compliance with wildfire laws.

How can I get involved and provide comments and feedback on the Housing Element, Safety Element, and Environmental Justice Element?

The City will be conducting outreach activities during the Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice Elements preparation. Due to the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic, the City is working to identify safe and effective forms of public input. As such, the City will be conducting two community surveys, a community workshop, and two study sessions all virtually. You can view our General Plan webpage at www.cityofmonrovia.org/GeneralPlan for upcoming activities and to sign up for email updates.

For more information of the Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice Elements, please contact Sheri Bermejo, sbermejo@ci.monrovia.ca.us, 626.932.5539