

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2009-2014 Housing Element is a component of the Porterville 2030 General Plan. The Housing Element contains the City's goals, policies, and strategic plan for addressing the most critical housing needs in the community over the next eight years. The Housing Element is designed to provide the City with a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for promoting the production of safe, decent, and affordable housing within the community.

A. COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The City of Porterville is located in southeast Tulare County, along the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, 165 miles north of Los Angeles, 171 miles east of the Pacific Coast. Roughly between the major market areas of Northern and Southern California, Porterville is a key gateway city to Sequoia National Park and the southern Sierra Nevada region.

Tulare County is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the nation, and Porterville is significantly influenced by agriculture and supportive industries, although the economy is more diversified today than in past years. Specifically, Porterville has grown into a regionally important medical and educational center. More recently, the City has become a desirable location for shipping and warehousing business, due to its advantageous location between Northern and Southern California.

Incorporated in 1902 with a population of 2,906, Porterville has grown to a community of 51,863 in 2008, according to the Department of Finance population and housing estimates. Similar to Tulare County, Porterville has experienced rapid growth since 1960, with a 50 percent or greater increase during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) predicts less rapid growth through 2008, with an expected annual population increase of 2.8 percent. As the City continues to grow into areas where urban services and infrastructure are not yet in place, this expected population growth will pose a challenge in helping ensure that all members of the community have access to decent and affordable housing.

Porterville has undergone significant changes in ethnic composition, with an increasing Hispanic population that now accounts for almost half of all residents. The City is also home to an increasing proportion of younger residents, as the City has seen an increase in the proportion of families with children.

The housing stock in Porterville consists predominantly of single-family homes. Housing prices in the City are low compared to other areas in the County and region. Approximately 44 percent of the households in Porterville are renters, compared to 39 percent Countywide.

In preparing a housing plan to address the housing needs of residents, the City has set forth policies and programs that:

- Preserve existing housing;
- Provide sites for new housing construction;
- Expand housing opportunities for low income and special needs households;
- Reduce governmental constraints to housing development; and
- Ensure equal housing access for all residents.

B. STATE POLICY AND AUTHORIZATION

The California Legislature has identified the attainment of a decent home and suitable living environment for every resident as the State's primary housing goal. Recognizing the important role of local planning programs in pursuing this goal, the Legislature has mandated that all jurisdictions prepare a housing element as part of the comprehensive general plan. Section 65302(c) of the Government Code sets forth the specific components to be contained in a community's housing element.

Previously state law required housing elements to be updated at least every five years to reflect a community's changing housing needs. The 2003 Housing Element covered the five-year period spanning 2003 through 2008. Special legislation extended the deadline for Housing Element updates in Tulare County by one year. This new update covers the planning period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2014.

A critical measure of compliance with the State Housing Element Law is the City's ability to accommodate its share of the regional housing needs, as allocated in the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) Plan prepared by the Tulare County Association of Governments. For Tulare County, the RHNA covers the period between January 1, 2007 and July 1, 2014. Therefore, while the Housing Element is an five-year document, the City has seven and one-half years (January 1, 2007 to July 1, 2014) to fulfill the RHNA.

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSING ELEMENT

The Housing Element consists of the following major components:

1. An introduction that explains the purpose and scope of the Housing Element (Chapter 1).
2. An analysis of the City's demographic and housing characteristics and trends (Chapter 2).
3. Review of potential market, governmental, and environmental constraints that impact the City's ability to address its housing needs (Chapter 3).

4. An evaluation of land, financial, and administrative resources available to address the City's housing goals (Chapter 4).
5. An evaluation of the accomplishments of the 2003 Housing Element (Chapter 5).
6. A Housing Plan to address the City's identified housing needs, including housing goals, policies and programs (Chapter 6).

D. RELATIONSHIP TO PORTERVILLE GENERAL PLAN

The Housing Element is a component of the Porterville General Plan, which provides policies and programs to guide development in the City. State law requires consistency among sections of the General Plan. As such, goals and policies contained in the Housing Element should be consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the other elements of the General Plan.

LAND USE ELEMENT

The following General Plan “Guiding Policies” relate to housing in the City:

- LU-G-6** *Provide for residential development with strong community identities, appropriate and compatible scales of development, identifiable centers and edges and well-defined public spaces for recreation and civic activities.*
- LU-G-7** *Guide new development into compact neighborhoods with defined, mixed-use center including public open space, a school or other community facilities, and neighborhood commercial.*
- LU-G-8** *Allow and encourage efficient infill development in existing neighborhoods.*
- LU-G-9** *Provide sufficient land with appropriate parcel sizes to support a full range of housing types and prices.*

LAND USE ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

The following Housing Element Implementation Policies relate to the land use policies in the General Plan:

- LU-G-I-10:** *Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include:*
- *Minimum lot sizes and densities consistent with the Plan's land use classifications;*
 - *Development standards that permit townhouses and zero-lot line attached or detached single-family dwellings on sites designated for low-medium, medium, or medium-high densities;*

- *Development standards that permit second units, small family daycares, and residential care homes in neighborhoods in accordance with State law; and*
- *Sustainable design standards that will achieve compact, walkable neighborhoods and provide an interconnected network of local streets.*

LU-I-11 *Only allow gated communities in very low density, planned development areas, and Resort Residential areas.*

LU-I-12 *Require residential development on slopes over six percent to comply with the Hillside Development Ordinance.*

This ordinance establishes a Hillside Development Zoning District with standards and review procedures tailored to the City's needs and expectation for hillside development.

LU-I-13 *Discourage residential development within the Airport Safety Zone. If residential development is approved in the County within the Airport Safety Zone, it must comply with Tulare County Airport Land Use Commissions's land-use compatibility standards and density restrictions.*

The County is currently preparing an Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan which will include updated information for a safety zone.

LU-I-14 *Allow residential developments to employ creative site design, landscaping, and architectural quality that blend with the characteristics of each location and its surroundings and offer superior design solutions.*

LU-I-15 *Adopt community design standards for new residential development. These could include but are not limited to:*

- *Maximum block length;*
- *Maximum ratio of block length to width;*
- *Limited use of dead-end streets;*
- *Orientation of residential building; and*
- *Required connectivity.*

Exceptions may be provided for infill sites and projects in the Hillside Development Zone.

LU-I-16 *Establish guidelines and incentives to promote green building techniques and materials in residential development.*

LU-I-17 *Require that all new subdivisions preserve natural, cultural, and biological resources, including stands of large trees and rock outcroppings, to the maximum extent feasible.*

LU-I-18 *Protect existing, residential neighborhoods from the encroachment of incompatible activities and land uses, and environmental hazards.*

LU-I-19 *Enforce zoning and development regulations through project review, construction inspections, and code enforcement, with fees to enable full-cost recovery for providing these services.*

State law allows cities to set permit fees to recover administrative costs.

OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

The following General Plan “Guiding Policy” relates to housing in the City:

OSC-G-9 *Improve and protect Porterville’s air quality by making air quality a priority in land use and transportation planning and in development review.*

OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

OSC-I-58 *Continue to assess air quality impacts through environmental review and require developers to implement best management practices to reduce air pollutant emissions associated with the construction and operation of development projects.*

OSC-I-60 *Require dust control measures as a condition of approval for subdivision maps, site plans, and all grading permits.*

OSC-I-61 *Coordinate air quality planning efforts with other local, regional and State agencies.*

OSC-I-62 *Be proactive in educating the public about the linkages between land use, transportation and air quality.*

OSC-I-63 *Notify local and regional jurisdictions of proposed projects that may affect regional air quality.*

These policies are consistent with the policies set forth in the Housing Element. The City will continue to ensure consistency between the Housing Element and other General Plan elements. If future changes to any element are necessary for internal consistency, any change will be proposed to the City Council for consideration.

E. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community involvement is critical to developing policies and programs that meet the housing needs of residents. In preparing this Housing Element, the City garnered community input through community workshops and through a community needs survey.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

The City held a community workshop, a public meeting and participated in an informational luncheon hosted by the Orangebelt Board of Realtors to discuss and explain the housing element process and to receive input on the housing issues most important to residents and service providers. The City also provided housing surveys at the Heritage Center, City Library, City Hall, and First Time Homebuyer Workshops held monthly from November 2008 through February 2009. .

The City advertised the workshops through direct mailings to over 70 service providers, realtors, and lenders, as well as publishing a newspaper advertisement. Flyers about the workshops were also placed at the City Hall. Workshop attendees included concerned residents, community leaders, lenders, realtors, and service providers, including those serving the homeless, disabled, and persons of lower incomes. Specifically, interested residents, civic leaders, lenders and insurers, real estate and management companies, homeless, disabled, and other special needs groups and the following agencies posted notices and/or were noticed to attend the meetings:

- CCFCC
- Salvation Army
- Rescue Mission
- PSW Independent Living Program
- Central California Legal Services
- Central California Family Crisis Center Media
- Porterville Recorder & Noticiero (Local Newspapers)
- Post Office
- Local Real Estate Offices (Melson Realty, Century 21, Home Realty, Letsinger, Remax, & Ringe/Moore Realty)
- Local Title/ Lending Companies (Chicago Title, Stewart Title, Country Club, CTX)

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

The City developed a housing needs survey to gather input from residents and service providers on housing issues, including housing needs, housing policies and programs, and fair housing issues. The survey was made available at public counters, to service providers, and workshop attendees. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix of this report.

In total, 59 people completed the survey. Among those completing the survey, 42 were renters and 17 were owners. The most common housing need indicated by both renters and owners was home improvement. Approximately half of both owners and renters indicated their units were in

need of improvement. The second highest housing need was affordable housing. The housing market has slowed as the economy has suffered and taken a fall between late 2007 through 2009. Although homes have been priced at affordable rates compared to prior years, lending institutions have also raised the criteria and qualification requirements for home loans, making it more difficult for many low-income first time home buyers and young families. Several housing policies received a favorable response from survey respondents. Policies and programs receiving the most favorable responses were:

- Offering credit counseling to first-time homebuyers;
- Policies encouraging new apartments at rents affordable to lower-income households;
- Policies encouraging new homes at prices affordable to lower-income households; and
- A first-time homebuyers workshop that informs prospective buyers of the home purchasing process.