



STAFF REPORT

CITY of YORBA LINDA

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

DATE: APRIL 25, 2024

TO: HONORABLE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE TRAFFIC COMMISSION

FROM: JAMIE LAI, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR / CITY ENGINEER
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SUBJECT: 2021-2029 HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Traffic Commission provide the Planning Commission with its comments and recommendations on the revisions to the 2021-2029 Housing Element and implementation programs, primarily focused on the traffic impacts described within the Traffic Analysis from the Addendum to the certified PEIR for the 2021-2029 Housing Element.

BACKGROUND

A Housing Element is a State-mandated policy document within a City's General Plan that identifies existing and future housing needs determined by the State and establishes clear goals and zoning changes needed to meet those goals. The State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is tasked with reviewing Housing Elements for compliance with State housing laws.

RHNA is a State-mandated process quantifying the need for housing in each city and county throughout the State. The RHNA process assigns a total number of housing units that each local government must plan for with its land use policies and outlines the general price points that the housing should seek to target. The RHNA Housing Allocation for Yorba Linda is 2,415 units for the 6th Cycle (2021-2029), meaning the City must devise a plan and related zoning to allow for the potential development of 2,415 housing units in the City to be built by 2029.

Importantly, the City does not build housing. The market and market influences, such as certain subsidies, the macroeconomy, interest rates and more determine what housing gets built. The City's role is to create zoning that would theoretically allow that number of housing units to be built over the RHNA period, in this case, 2021 to 2029.

California state housing policy and RHNA allocation are all subjects of discussion and policy debate for their merits and actual impact on the housing market. However, the City must develop a compliant Housing Element and related zoning, or it will face the loss of local

control for land use, risk substantial fines, lose access to State grant funds, become vulnerable to lawsuits from developers and affordable housing advocates and open the gates to ‘Builder’s Remedy’ applications that completely bypass many local land use rules. Builder’s Remedy promises the loss of City authority to review and limit developments.

Measure B, or the Right-To-Vote Amendment (RTVA), enacted in 2006, is a citizen-sponsored, voter-approved initiative, incorporated within the City’s Municipal Code. It requires citywide elections for the approval of certain “Major Amendments” to the City’s Planning Policy Documents, including the Housing Element. Although this measure highlights the value of community participation, it creates an additional important step for the community to navigate to adopt a compliant Housing Element.

Between October 2020 and August 2022, City staff conducted numerous study sessions and community workshops with stakeholders, consultants, and members of the public to comment and provide direction on the content of the City’s draft housing element, and conducted numerous public hearings related to the adoption of several General Plan Amendments and Zoning Code Amendments to implement the 2021-2029 Housing Element that was conditionally certified by HCD on April 8, 2022. The Zoning Code Amendments and General Plan Amendments included in the Housing Element were presented to the voters in November 2022; however, the voters did not support the proposal.

In order to retain its conditional certification of its Housing Element from HCD, the City is required to present a rezoning plan to the general electorate of the City by the General Election in November 2024. In an effort to evaluate next steps and to expand overall resident engagement on this important and complex policy issue, the City determined that a robust and extended dive into housing policy with a broad swath of residents would be helpful. The idea was to talk directly with residents about the background, policy choices and tradeoffs of land use policy, and to listen deeply to their ideas and suggestions for how to best address land use in the future of Yorba Linda. Additionally, the hope was to start with a group of these residents (referred to as the Working Group) who were willing to dedicate several hours to the discussion and learning in order to gather effective feedback that recognized the policy challenges in addition to general resident sentiment.

The City Council gave no mandate for the outcome of the Working Group. The only direction was that City Staff and City consultants would facilitate meetings of this group, bring the group information, answer their questions, and offer suggestions on possible approaches, tradeoffs, and direction for the Working Group to consider. The Working Group concluded key observations and suggestions. More information about the Working Group can be found on the City’s website: <https://yllocalcontrol.com/>.

The City of Yorba Linda hosted a series of virtual and in-person workshops in 2023 to engage residents about proposed changes to the City’s 2021-2029 Housing Element in order to comply with State law and retain local land use control. Each workshop covered the same material and offered residents an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the Housing Element Process and nearly 400 residents from a diversity of backgrounds, ethnicities, age groups, political affiliations, geography within the city, housing tenure, and varying perspectives on housing, participated in these discussions.

In December 2023, the City Council directed staff to resubmit the resident-driven revised Housing Element to HCD for consideration. On February 27, 2024, HCD sent a letter stating that the City's draft revised Housing Element was found to be in substantial conformance with State housing laws. At this time, the City is now bringing the draft revised Housing Element along with its accompanying implementation programs through the public hearing process for approval. The City will also be hosting a number of in-person community meetings to learn more about the revised Housing Element and to participate in the future of Yorba Linda's housing landscape.

The City is also in the process of preparing an Addendum to the previously certified PEIR for the 2021-2029 Housing Element and its implementation programs. At this time, the updated Traffic Analysis is being presented to the Traffic Commission for consideration and comments.

DISCUSSION

The draft Addendum to the PEIR for the 2021-2029 Housing Element and implementation programs and Traffic Analysis considers the transportation impacts resulting from implementation of Housing Element. Pursuant to Senate Bill 743, changes to CEQA Guidelines were adopted in December 2018, which require all lead agencies to adopt a vehicle mile traveled (VMT) metric as a replacement for automobile delay-based "level of service" (LOS) as the measure for identifying transportation impacts for land use projects. Automobile delay, as measured by "LOS and other similar metrics, no longer constitutes a significant environmental effect under CEQA. Lead agencies in California are required to use VMT to evaluate project-related transportation impacts. This statewide mandate went into effect July 1, 2020. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, effective January 1, 2019, "describes specific considerations for evaluating a project's transportation impacts" and provides that, except for roadway capacity projects, "a project's effect on automobile delay (or LOS)" shall not constitute a significant environmental impact."

This cumulative impact analysis considers development of the proposed Project in conjunction with other development projects and planned development within the City of Yorba Linda. The traffic analysis determined that the Project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Cumulative development projects would be reviewed for consistency with adopted programs, plans, ordinances, or policies, including but not limited to SCAG's 2016 RTP/SCS and *Connect SoCal* and City of Yorba's Linda General Plan, as applicable. Even if cumulative development projects are in conflict, the Project would not contribute to a cumulative impact and thus would not be cumulatively considerable because the Project does not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system.

Consistent with City Guidelines, in addition to evaluating the project VMT per service population (i.e., Population and Employees), the analysis must also evaluate the cumulative effects of the Project on VMT. To complete this cumulative analysis, the analysis must compare the citywide VMT per service population "with project" with "no project" VMT per service population. This analysis is performed using the boundary method, which includes all vehicle trips with one or both trip-ends within a specific geographic area of interest the

City of Yorba Linda boundary. Once the areawide VMT value is calculated, it is then normalized by dividing by the number of population and employees in the City of Yorba Linda (based on the OCTAM model). OCTAM forecasts travel demand with a base year and a future forecast year of 2045 and incorporates the most recent socio-economic data for Orange County and the surrounding region at the time it was developed. Baseline and Cumulative link-level boundary VMT per service population (City) is calculated for both “No Project” and “With Project” conditions. If an increase occurs for the “With Project” condition as compared to “No Project” condition, then the impact is considered significant. As found in the VMT Analysis, Citywide VMT per service population was found to decrease under cumulative conditions and would also have a less than significant impact.

The Project’s VMT analysis findings for project generated VMT per service population was found to not exceed the City’s threshold. In addition, the Project’s cumulative effect to citywide VMT per service population was found also to decrease with the inclusion of the proposed housing element changes as compared to without changes. Therefore, the Project’s cumulative impact on VMT is presumed to be less than significant.

Furthermore, implementation of the Project would not result in hazardous conditions or conflict with emergency access. Impacts on a cumulative level would also be less than significant.

Next Steps

On May 15, 2024, the Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing to consider the revised 2021-2029 Housing Element and the accompanying General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments associated with the implementation of the revised Housing Element. It is anticipated that the City Council will be considering these General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments on June 18, 2024. Any action by the City Council to approve the proposed General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments would be subject to voter approval through the Yorba Linda Right-to-Vote Amendment (commonly referred to as Measure B).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Traffic Analysis

Attachment 2 - Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Analysis
