

City of Exeter Housing Element

Introduction

The City of Exeter

Exeter is located in Tulare County at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley. It is bisected by State Route 65 (Kaweah Avenue), which runs north and south, and it is situated one and one-half miles south of State Route 198, a major east/west route in Tulare County that connects Highway 99 to Sequoia National Park. (see Exhibit 1: Regional Location).

Exeter is a compact community occupying approximately two square miles of land and containing a population of 10,656 (Jan. 1, 2008). The urban growth has extended in all directions from the original 1888 townsite (see Exhibit 2: City of Exeter). Exeter's downtown and its older residential neighborhoods are contained within a triangular area that is formed by the SP Railroad on the west, the Visalia Electric Railroad on the north and State Route 65 (Kaweah Avenue) on the east. Single family residential development has occurred in all quadrants of the city, with most of this type of development occurring on the west side of town since 1980. Development of multiple family residential development has been limited. Scattered corner lots in the original townsite have been developed with duplexes and triplexes, and larger multi-family developments have been constructed on the northeast corner of Visalia Road and Jacobs Place and the northeast corner of F Street and Palm Avenue.

The Housing Element

Government Code Section 65580 declares: *"The availability of housing is of vital statewide importance, and the early attainment of decent housing and a suitable living environment for every Californian, including farmworkers, is a priority of the highest order."*

State law also recognizes the most critical decisions about supply and affordability of housing occur at the local level. To that end, the housing element update process plays a critical role in identifying and addressing housing needs for all members of the community. In addition, the State has a fundamental interest in housing supply and affordability because of the critical role of housing as an engine for economic stability and growth. In general, a housing element must include the following components:

A Housing Needs Assessment:

Existing Needs - The number of households overpaying for housing, living in overcrowded conditions, or with special housing needs (e.g., the elderly, large families, homeless) the number of housing units that need rehabilitation, and assisted affordable units at-risk of converting to market-rate.

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Projected Needs - The city or county's share of the regional housing need as established in the Regional Housing Needs Plan (RHNP) prepared by the COG. The allocation establishes the number of new units needed, by income category, to accommodate expected population growth over the planning period of the housing element. The RHNP provides a benchmark for evaluating the adequacy of local zoning and regulatory actions to ensure each local government is providing sufficient appropriately designated land and opportunities for housing development to address population growth and job generation.

A Sites Inventory and Analysis:

The element must include a detailed land inventory and analysis including a sites specific inventory listing properties, zoning and general plan designation, size and existing uses; a general analysis of environmental constraints and the availability of infrastructure, and evaluation of the suitability, availability and realistic development capacity of sites to accommodate Exeter's share of the regional housing need by income level. If the analysis does not demonstrate adequate sites, appropriately zoned to meet the jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need, by income level, the element must include a program to provide the needed sites including providing zoning that allows owner-occupied and rental multifamily uses "by-right" with minimum densities and development standards that allow at least 16 units per acre.

An Analysis of Constraints on Housing:

Governmental and Non-Governmental - Includes land-use controls, fees and exactions, on- and off-site improvement requirements, building codes and their enforcement, permit and processing procedures, and potential constraints on the development or improvement of housing for persons with disabilities.

Housing Programs

Programs are required to identify adequate sites to accommodate Exeter's share of the regional housing need; assist in the development of housing for low- and moderate-income households; remove or mitigate governmental constraints; conserve and improve the existing affordable housing stock; promote equal housing opportunities; and preserve the at-risk units identified.

Quantified Objectives

Estimates the number of units, by income level, to be constructed, rehabilitated, and conserved over the planning period of the element.

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I. Public Participation

The Exeter Housing Element was prepared with public outreach and participation. To ensure the broadest community involvement, particularly among low-income and special needs groups, the City used several strategies, including:

- A focus issue meeting conducted between January and April with stakeholder organizations representing a broad range of community interests. The meetings covered topics related to land availability, constraints to the production of housing, housing special needs, affordable housing development, the preservation of affordable rental housing, and housing rehabilitation. Specific interest groups invited to the meeting included Self-Help Enterprises, Tulare County Housing Authority, local realtors and land owners.

The meeting was conducted both in Spanish and English. Prior to the focus meeting, fliers were prepared and posted in public places throughout the community. Also, ten days prior to the meeting a public notice was published in the local newspaper to indicate the time and location of the forum on housing issues.

Two joint study sessions were held between the Planning Commission and City Council on housing issues. Major topics of discussion were location and appearance of multi-family housing, use of low and moderate income redevelopment funds, high density zoning, and housing rehabilitation and conservation.

The Planning Commission held one public hearing on the proposed housing element. The meeting was conducted in Spanish and English.

The City Council held one public hearing on the proposed housing element. Interpreters were available at the meeting if Spanish translation was required.

The Exeter Redevelopment Agency reviewed and approved its 5-year Redevelopment Implementation Plan in July of 2006. The Plan provided for the following objectives:

- The Plan will eliminate blight through management of housing and community development in a manner that will promote the long-term integrity and value of each new housing unit and the environment in which it is located.

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- The Plan will eliminate blight by providing a choice of housing locations for all residents.
- The Plan will eliminate blight through maintenance and improvement of the quality of the existing housing stock and the neighborhoods in which it is located.
- The Plan will eliminate blight by promoting equal access to safe and decent housing for all economic groups.
- The Plan promotes energy conservation activities in all residential neighborhoods.
- The Plan includes information of specific programs and estimated expenditures to be made during the next five (5) years , and an explanation of how the aforementioned will eliminate light within the area.
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Community Input Helps Form the Housing Element

The input gathered from the forums and study sessions was analyzed and prioritized. Housing element goals, policies and programs were written to respond to issues and problems surfaced in the housing forums and study sessions.

The most productive input in regards to issues contained in the housing element involved Self-Help Enterprise's multiple public hearings on the CDBG and HOME applications. These hearing secured public input on matters of home rehabilitation, first-time home buyers program and weatherization.

Most of the significant public input does not come at the public hearings but when Self-Help officials work with individual families on matters of purchasing a home under the First-Time Home buyers program or the rehabilitation of an existing home that the lower-income family lives in.

The City will hold a Town Hall meeting on the issue of housing prior to the public hearings before the City Council. This input may provide additional insight on the concerns and ideas about housing in Exeter.