

St. Helena Housing Needs Assessment: Overview of Key Findings

Review of Existing Housing Element

- The City has successfully removed many of the previously identified governmental constraints to housing production, maintenance, and rehabilitation.
- The City increased the production and funding of affordable housing with assistance from the private sector under Municipal Code Chapter 17.146, Housing Trust Fund, Housing Impact Fee, and Inclusionary/In Lieu Fee Requirements.
- The City could improve upon its policies related to special needs populations including the homeless, persons with disabilities, farmworkers, and senior citizens.

Demographic and Economic Trends

- St. Helena experienced a slight population decline since 2000, though the number of households increased. As a result, average household size in St. Helena fell.
- The median age of St. Helena residents decreased slightly while the average age of Napa County and Bay Area residents continued to rise.
- The median household income in St. Helena (\$79,200 in 2008) exceeds the medians of both Napa County and the Bay Area; however, approximately 35 percent of local households still qualify as very low- or low-income.
- Many people travel into St. Helena from the surrounding area for work, and that pattern will continue as local population and household growth projections lag strong employment growth estimates for the next three decades.

Existing Housing and Market Conditions

- There are approximately 2,750 housing units in St. Helena in 2008, an increase of about 40 units since 2000.
- Almost all of the new homes are single-family units.
- An estimated household income of nearly \$210,000 a year would be necessary to purchase the median priced single-family home in St. Helena.
- Monthly rents for one-bedroom apartments range from \$700 to \$1,000, and two-bedroom units range from \$650 to \$1,500.
- Rental units in St. Helena are limited in supply and are unaffordable to some very low-income households and all extremely low-income households.
- Only seven percent of households in St. Helena live in overcrowded conditions, but most households experiencing overcrowding are renters.

Special Housing Needs

- Both St. Helena and Napa County have high concentrations of disabled persons compared to the Bay Area, with elderly residents representing a large share in St. Helena.
- A disproportionately large number of St. Helena's elderly households have severe (over 50% of income) housing cost burdens compared to the overall population.
- St. Helena has a high percentage of single female-headed households compared to the County and Bay Area.
- Farmworkers and homeless persons in need of permanent or transitional housing have an

unmet need for housing in Napa County as a whole.

Potential Governmental and Non-Governmental Constraints

- Risk of flooding will continue to restrict development in portions of the City until the Flood Protection Project is completed.
- Current national credit market conditions impact both housing developers and buyers in St. Helena.
- Vacant land in St. Helena ranges in price between approximately \$1.8 million and \$2.5 million per acre, necessitating increased density to achieve affordability.
- City should revise policies to provide “reasonable accommodation” with regard to regulations affecting housing for the disabled.
- City should align local zoning regulations regarding farmworker housing with State law.
- St. Helena can address the local need for emergency shelters as required by Government Code Section 65583(a)(4) by either, 1) designating zone(s) within one year that allow emergency shelters as a permitted use or 2) adopting and implementing a multi-jurisdictional agreement, with no more than two adjacent jurisdictions, to develop at least one year-round emergency shelter within two years.
- Possible opportunities to streamline housing approval process:
 - Streamline design review process for some projects?
 - Relax Conditional Use Permit requirement for certain multifamily projects over 4 units?
- Preliminary findings indicate that the following City requirements and regulations do not place an undue burden on development:
 - Growth Management System
 - Affordable housing requirements for developers
 - Water, parking, and other miscellaneous on-and-off site improvement standards
 - St. Helena Building Code
 - Building permit and development impact fees (estimated at \$56,000 per single-family unit in 2008)

Sites Inventory and Analysis and Zoning for a Variety of Housing Types

- St. Helena received a RHNA of 121 total units
 - 30 very low-income units
 - 21 low-income units
 - 25 moderate-income units
 - 45 above moderate-income units
- 66 units were built, issued building permits, or approved between January 2007 and December 2008.
- St. Helena has a sufficient number of housing sites at various densities to accommodate the City’s 2007-2014 Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA).
- Although the current St. Helena Zoning Ordinance allows for a variety of housing types, changes to the codes regarding agricultural employees and emergency homeless shelters are necessary to comply with State law.