



St Helena Housing FAQ

How much housing is built in St. Helena?

- 1970 - 1980: Housing approved includes Sylvaner, Grove Court, Monte Vista, Woodbridge, Mariposa, Harvest Lane, and Peppertree.
- Most of the 1980's: The moratorium was imposed by the state to improve the wastewater treatment plant. It was rescinded 1988 and the city adopted a growth management system to insure that we did not exceed future wastewater capacity.
- 1989 - 1999: Quail Court, Meadowcreek, Signorelli, Westminster, and Wallis. Affordable housing projects included Stonebridge, Hunts Grove and Wallis.
- In 2000 we had 2,708 housing units -- 1,859 single family homes and 849 multi-family homes.
- Between 2000 – 2009, 87 residential permits were issued, totaling 2,795 -- 1,936 single family homes and 859 multi-family homes. This was an average of 8.7 new units/year between 2000-2009, including both market rate and affordable housing units.
- The 1990 Census showed a population of 4,990; by 2000 that population had grown to 5,950.
- Due to slower growth since 2000, the 2010 Census will probably show an additional population growth of approximately 200 people, for a total of 6,150.

What is the City of St. Helena Residential Growth Management System (GMS)?

Municipal Code Chapter 17.152 contains the St. Helena's Residential Growth Management System (GMS) and the purpose is to regulate the residential growth of the City by 2% per year, while providing for market rate and affordable housing. Affordable housing units and second units are exempt from the GMS.

Building permits are restricted for market rate housing at 9 per year and those not used each year are carried over to the next year. Carryover permits are available only for the construction of market rate units in a housing development that includes at least 40% restricted affordable housing.



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What is the Housing Element?

The Housing Element is part of the General Plan. It is adopted separately from the rest of the General Plan because state law requires that it be updated every 5 years, in line with the RHNA allocation. This Element includes policies that make it possible for housing to be built for people of different incomes or special needs, including seniors -- and a higher number of seniors reside in St. Helena than other communities.

The state wants the city to actively work to assure the construction of enough housing to meet the allocated RHNA. It does not require the city to construct the housing itself, but does require that the city have reasonable review standards and that a fair hearing is given to housing developers.

The state checks every the housing element and certifies that it is in compliance with state law. This is very important; communities without certified Housing Elements are vulnerable to lawsuits from housing advocates and court settlements can be quite severe.

What is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)?

The RHNA is a housing unit number issued by the State to counties and cities. It is the state's estimate of how much housing will be needed within the jurisdiction for a specific time. This number is based on job growth; birth rate over death rate; and current unmet need.

The RHNA is assigned every 5 years (8 years in the future). The City of St. Helena's fair share RHNA number is 121 housing units from 2009 to 2014, or 24 houses per year. Assuming that similar RHNA numbers are allocated to 2030, then the number of housing units we need to plan for in our new General Plan is 480, or 24 per year. Since the St. Helena census average is 2.43 people/household the city must accommodate 1,166 to 2030.

What is "affordable" housing?

Within the RHNA, a certain number of housing units, either rented or sold, must be "affordable" to various income levels, that is, related to their ability to pay the housing costs.

Income levels are set relative to the median income for an area. The median income of Napa County residents is approximately \$82,000 for a family of four.

Of the 121 housing units allocated:

30 are for Very Low income households (income below 50% of median).



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21 are for Low income households (income between 50-80% of median).

25 are for Moderate income (income between 80%- 120% of median).

45 are for Above Moderate households.

We have built or approved 69 housing units so far in the current RHNA cycle. Only 27 of these units were in the affordable categories; all but 6 of the remaining 52 units to be built should be in the Very Low, Low or Moderate income categories.

There is no official definition of "Workforce" housing. It is agreed to be housing that is for those earning more than a moderate income, but not enough to purchase a market rate home. People that rent or buy in affordable housing developments are screened to make sure that they meet the income criteria.

St. Helena has some excellent affordable rental housing at the Stonebridge, Hunt's Grove and Woodbridge, ownership houses in Wallis. There are a very few other affordable, regulated housing units in town.

Why is it difficult to construct housing that is affordable?

The primary driver in the cost of housing is the cost of land, plus the fees of architects and engineers, the planning/permitting process, building and development fees, project infrastructure (water, sewer and storm drain facilities) and materials and labor. The finished product, especially in a high cost area like St. Helena, is not affordable to the income levels above unless there is federal and/or state financial aid to close the gap between the actual cost and the ability to pay. Non-profit housing organizations apply for these funds and use them to help cover construction costs.

Why should people who work here be able to live here?

Since there is no growth management for non-residential development, jobs are created that bring workers to St. Helena, without there being enough housing for them to live here if they choose to.

1,533 people commute out of St. Helena to jobs and 3,873 commuting into St. Helena for their jobs (recent transportation study). This means that there are 2,340 more people coming to St. Helena to work than are leaving St. Helena to work elsewhere. If we assumed that a small portion, say 1/4 of them, would like to live where they work, that would be 772 people. Rule of thumb is 1.5 workers per household; so 772 workers require 481 houses. All the studies on -



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reducing greenhouse gases say that the greatest impact we can have as a community is to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Getting 772 commuters off of the road would be the best thing that a small city like St. Helena could do to reduce GHAAHG.