



## 2023-2031 Fremont Housing Element Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*Updated March 2021*

### **Q1: What is a Housing Element?**

Under State law, all local governments in California, including cities, are required to adequately plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community by adopting a Housing Element as part of their General Plan. The Housing Element identifies housing conditions and needs and establishes the goals, objectives, and policies that are the foundation of the City's housing strategy.

### **Q2: Does the City of Fremont currently have a Housing Element? Why does it need to be updated?**

Yes. The City of Fremont currently has an adopted Housing Element which addresses the community's housing needs from 2015-2023. State law requires local governments to update their Housing Element every eight years to periodically address the changing housing needs of their communities, to establish action plans to meet those goals, and to report on progress toward meeting those goals.

Fremont's 2015-2023 Housing Element includes 22 policies and 69 programs that advance the following eight goals:

- Goal 1: Preserve, Maintain, and Improve the Existing Affordable Housing Supply and Neighborhoods
- Goal 2: Ensure Availability of High Quality, Well-Designed, and Environmentally Sustainable New Housing of All Types and Income Levels throughout the City
- Goal 3: Facilitate the Development of Affordable and Market-Rate Housing in Order to Meet the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)
- Goal 4: Ensure All Persons Have Equal Access to Housing
- Goal 5: Promote Regional Collaboration to Maintain and Expand the Range of Housing Alternatives in Fremont

- Goal 6: Ensure Availability of Supportive Services to Help People Stay Housed
- Goal 7: Address and Mitigate Constraints to Housing Challenges
- Goal 8: Maintain an Updated Housing Element that is Reviewed, Updated, and Effectively Implemented

The preparation of an updated Housing Element provides an opportunity to revisit these goals, policies, and programs to determine how they might be improved to better fit the needs of the community.

### **Q3: What is included in a Housing Element?**

The components of a Housing Element are largely dictated by the State and typically must include:

- A detailed analysis of the City’s demographic, economic, and housing characteristics
- A comprehensive analysis of the barriers to producing and preserving housing
- A review of the City’s progress in implementing current housing policies and programs
- An identification of goals, objectives, and policies, in addition to a full list of programs that will implement the vision of the plan
- A list of sites (aka the Suitable Sites Inventory) that could accommodate new housing, demonstrating the City’s ability to meet the quantified housing number established in the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)

### **Q4: Why is having a Housing Element important?**

The State has declared that “the availability of housing is a matter of vital statewide importance and the attainment of decent housing and a suitable living environment for all Californians is a priority of the highest order” (Gov. § Code 65580). At the local level, the Housing Element allows cities to prepare a community-specific approach to “how” and “where” housing will be addressed to meet the needs of the community.

Plan Bay Area 2050, the region’s long range Sustainable Communities Strategy and Transportation Plan, forecasts that the population of the Bay Area will increase by 2.7 million people between 2015 and 2050. Local Housing Elements will play a critical role in ensuring that a decent and affordable supply of housing is available to the expanding population and that the region grows in a sustainable and equitable manner.

## **Q5: What is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)?**

Since 1969, California has required that all local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in their communities. To meet this requirement, each city or county must develop a Housing Element as part of its General Plan (the local government's long-range blueprint for growth) that shows how it will meet its community's housing needs. There are many laws that govern this process, and collectively they are known as Housing Element Law. The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process is the part of Housing Element Law used to determine how many new homes, and the affordability of those homes, each local government must plan for in its Housing Element. This process is repeated every eight years, and for this cycle the Bay Area is planning for the period from 2023 to 2031.

## **Q6: Who is responsible for RHNA?**

Responsibility for completing RHNA is shared among state, regional, and local governments. The role of the State is to identify the total number of homes for which each region in California must plan in order to meet the housing needs of people across the full spectrum of income levels, from housing for very low-income households all the way to market rate housing. This is developed by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and is known as the Regional Housing Needs Determination (RHND). The role of the region is to allocate a share of the RHND to each local government in the region. As the Council of Governments (COG) for the nine-county Bay Area, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is responsible for developing the methodology for sharing the RHND among all cities, towns, and counties in the region. ABAG does this in conjunction with a committee of elected officials, city and county staff, and stakeholders called the Housing Methodology Committee (HMC). The role of local governments is to participate in the development of the allocation methodology and to update their Housing Elements and local zoning to show how they will accommodate their share of the RHND, following the adoption of the RHNA methodology.

## Q7: Why is the Bay Area’s Regional Housing Needs Determination for the upcoming Housing Element cycle (2023-2031) so much higher than the previous Housing Element cycle (2015-2023)?

The RHND for the Bay Area for 2023-2031 is 441,176 new housing units, which is more than twice the size of the RHND for 2015-2023 (187,990 new housing units). This increase is due in large part to recent changes in State Housing Element Law which now require the RHND to account for existing unmet need, rather than only projected housing need. HCD now must consider overcrowded households, cost burdened households (those paying more than 30% of their income for housing), and a target vacancy rate for a healthy housing market (with a minimum of 5%) when establishing a RHND.

Table 1: ABAG Regional Housing Needs Determination from HCD

INCOME CATEGORY	PERCENT	HOUSING UNIT NEED
<b>Very Low*</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>114,442</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>65,892</b>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>72,712</b>
<b>Above Moderate</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>188,130</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>441,176</b>

\* Extremely Low

15.5%

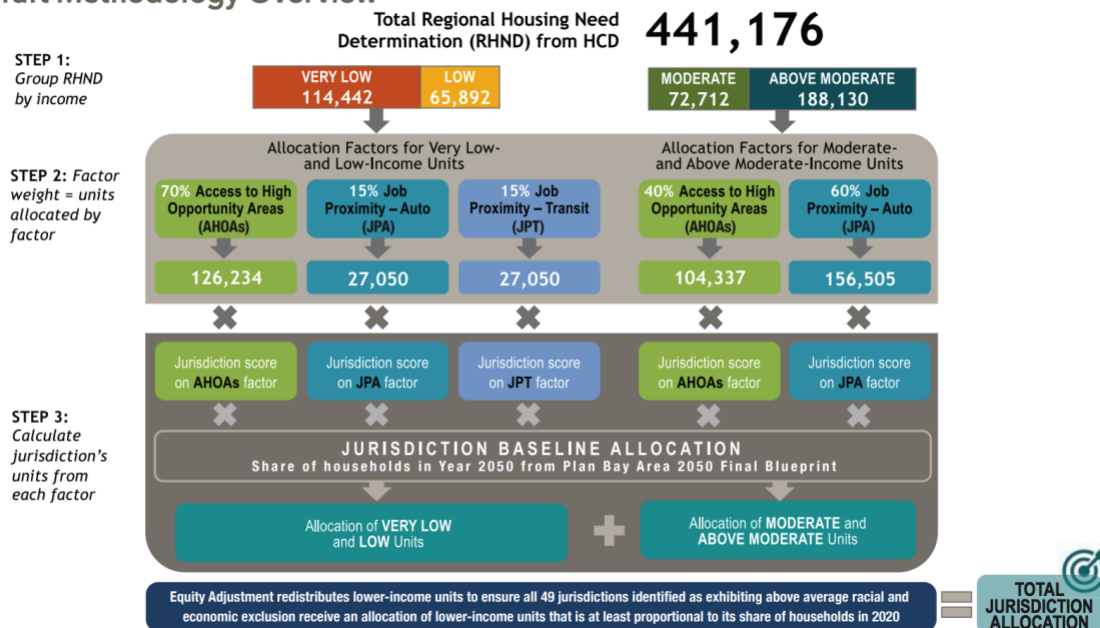
Included in "Very Low" Income Category

## Q8: How was ABAG's RHNA methodology developed?

At its core, RHNA is about connecting regional housing needs with the local planning process and ensuring local Housing Elements work together to address regional housing challenges. Working with the Housing Methodology Committee, ABAG developed a methodology, or formula, that shares responsibility for accommodating the Bay Area's Regional Housing Needs Determination (RHND) by quantifying the number of housing units, separated into four income categories, that will be assigned to each city, town, and county to incorporate into their Housing Element. For a detailed overview of the draft RHNA methodology and how it furthers the RHNA objectives and addresses the methodology factors in Housing Element Law, please see the following report:

[Regional Housing Needs Allocation Draft Methodology: San Francisco Bay Area, 2023-2031](#)

Figure 1: Draft Methodology Overview



## Q9: Based on ABAG’s draft RHNA methodology, what will be Fremont’s fair share of the RHND?

Based on ABAG’s draft RHNA methodology, Fremont’s fair share of the region’s housing need is expected to be 12,897 new housing units, including 3,640 very-low income units (less than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI)), 2,096 low income units (50%-80% of AMI), 1,996 moderate income units (80%-120% of AMI), and 5,165 above-moderate income units (>120% of AMI). ABAG’s proposed RHNA methodology is not yet final. The ABAG Executive Board is anticipated to adopt a final RHNA methodology in late 2021, following California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) review and an appeal period.

Figure 2: ABAG’s Draft RHNA Methodology

Jurisdiction	VERY LOW INCOME (<50% of Area Median Income)	LOW INCOME (50-80% of Area Median Income)	MODERATE INCOME (80-120% of Area Median Income)	ABOVE MODERATE INCOME (>120% of Area Median Income)	TOTAL
<b>ALAMEDA COUNTY</b>					
Alameda	1,421	818	868	2,246	5,353
Albany	308	178	175	453	1,114
Berkeley	2,446	1,408	1,416	3,664	8,934
Dublin	1,085	625	560	1,449	3,719
Emeryville	451	259	308	797	1,815
<b>Fremont</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>2,096</b>	<b>1,996</b>	<b>5,165</b>	<b>12,897</b>
Hayward	1,075	617	817	2,115	4,624
Livermore	1,317	758	696	1,799	4,570
Newark	464	268	318	824	1,874
Oakland	6,511	3,750	4,457	11,533	26,251
Piedmont	163	94	92	238	587
Pleasanton	1,750	1,008	894	2,313	5,965
San Leandro	862	495	696	1,802	3,855
Unincorporated Alameda County	1,251	721	763	1,976	4,711
Union City	862	496	382	988	2,728

## **Q10: How does a City demonstrate it has sufficiently zoned sites to accommodate RHNA?**

A local jurisdiction must demonstrate it has adequate capacity to accommodate its fair share of the region's RHND in its Housing Element through the preparation of a "site inventory." The purpose of a site inventory is to identify and analyze specific land that is available and suitable for new or intensified residential development in order to determine the jurisdiction's capacity to accommodate residential development and reconcile that capacity with the jurisdiction's RHNA. The available and suitable sites are referred to as "adequate sites." Sites are suitable for residential development if zoned appropriately and available for residential use during the planning period. If the inventory demonstrates that there are insufficient sites to accommodate the RHNA for each income category, the inventory must identify sites for rezoning to be included in a housing element program to identify and make available additional sites to accommodate those housing needs early within the planning period.