UNFINISHED BUSINESS

SUBJECT: HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE: PROPOSED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN, AND EVALUATION PROCESS

PREPARED BY: HUMAN SERVICES & RENT STABILIZATION DEPARTMENT
(Cori Planck, Acting Director)
(Pete Noonan, AICP, Rent Stabilization & Housing Manager)
(Alicen Bartle, Project Development Administrator)

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
(John Keho, AICP, Director)
(Bryan Eck, Acting Long Range Planning Manager)
(Rachel Dimond, AICP, Senior Planner)
(Gurdeep Kaur, Assistant Planner)

STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:
The purpose of this report is to provide the City Council with an update on the 2021-2029 6th Cycle Housing Element Update. The City engaged consulting firm Veronica Tam & Associates, Inc. along with subconsultant Rincon Consultants to assist a team of staff working to update the West Hollywood Housing Element of the General Plan, in compliance with state law. This report includes an update on the community engagement plan, which includes the development of a task force and two focus groups, the social justice component of the Plan, and the draft schedule for the project.

RECOMMENDATION:
1. Review, provide input as needed, and confirm community engagement strategy for the upcoming Housing Element update and proposed evaluation process including a racial equity toolkit approach for assessing current and future housing goals, policies, programs, and actions as a means of meeting State requirements for affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH).

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:
This report provides an update on the 2021-2029 6th Cycle Housing Element and overview of the proposed community engagement plan.

Staff is requesting the City Council confirm the proposed community engagement plan summarized in this report, which includes creation of a task force and two focus groups to review and contribute to defining and confirming the housing goals, policies, and programs necessary to address housing needs; and ensure the draft plan reflects the community’s needs.

With City Council confirmation staff will begin outreach to the 15 Advisory Boards and Commissions to select representatives for the task force. Additionally, staff will begin public outreach and will work with the City’s outreach consultant, Rincon Consultants, to expand on
the preliminary analysis, including development of the Site Inventory. With more input and additional analysis following stakeholder and community workshops, staff will return to the City Council to report back on the input received and the status of the update process.

**Housing Element Overview**

The Housing Element is a state-required chapter in the City of West Hollywood General Plan. It provides an indication of the need for housing in the community, particularly the availability, affordability, and adequacy of housing. It is the only chapter of the General Plan that requires periodic updating per State law. The Housing Element provides the City of West Hollywood’s goals, policies, actions, and objectives for housing development, and development and preservation of housing affordability during each state planning cycle.

Currently, California is nearing the end of the fifth state planning cycle for housing, which ends in Southern California October 14, 2021. Each state planning cycle for housing lasts eight years and the upcoming cycle, which will be the state’s sixth planning cycle, will be for the time period of October 2021 to October 2029. State law requires the City to update and submit its Housing Element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for state certification by October 15, 2021.

This requires the City to first review and evaluate current housing programs and assess housing needs for the community, and then identify the existing and new programs that will continue meeting the community’s housing needs for the next eight years. This also includes demonstrating that existing housing programs and residential zoning in West Hollywood has adequate capacity to accommodate the City’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation, and if not, that programs and residential zoning can be adjusted to meet RHNA to the satisfaction of HCD.

On August 3, 2020, the City Council authorized a contract with Veronica Tam & Associates, Inc and with subconsultant Rincon Consultants to assist staff with the Housing Element Update. Staff held a kick-off meeting with the consultant team and created a road map for moving forward with this project. A team of City staff from Long Range Planning, Current and Historic Preservation Planning, and Housing and Rent Stabilization, has since been meeting twice monthly with consultants to begin the expedited process of updating the Housing Element. Staff has begun to map out a process to assess the effectiveness of current housing programs, evaluate existing capacity for additional housing in commercial and residential areas, and engage the community and appointed officials in order to develop a suite of policies and programs for the City Council to consider for the Housing Element Update.

**Public Outreach**

The City of West Hollywood Housing Element Update includes substantial requirements established by the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). The community outreach program will help to establish current housing conditions and community housing needs. Having a thorough understanding of West Hollywood’s current housing conditions in addition to requirements set by RHNA will allow housing goals, policies, and programs to be identified and considered for inclusion in the draft Housing Element Update. The community outreach program
will provide opportunities for community members to review and contribute to defining and confirming the housing goals, policies, and programs necessary to address housing needs; and ensure the draft plan reflects the community’s needs.

Due to the COVID-19 state-wide shelter in place mandate by the California governor, the outreach strategy for the City of West Hollywood General Plan Housing Element Update will need to be responsive, flexible, and able to shift accordingly. Therefore, the community outreach campaign prioritizes strategies that facilitate meaningful public input whether or not in-person meetings will be allowable.

The community outreach program will occur over three phases, each with its own objectives, outcomes, and related tasks.

*Phase I: Education and Visioning*
Phase I will provide basic, educational information related to the Housing Element Update and the RHNA requirements over the first four to six months of the Housing Element Update. This phase will also facilitate opportunities to collect insight on community priorities about current housing needs and conditions. The importance of this phase is to establish a general understanding of the community’s concerns and aspirations to conceptualize them for effective, but palatable goals, policies, and programs for the Housing Element Update.

*Phase II: Policy and Program Development*
Phase II will occur over the course of approximately three to five months. This phase will present initial findings from Phase I, in the form of preliminary concepts. Presenting initial goals, policies, and programs during the second phase will provide another opportunity for input and allow for adjustments in order to finalize concepts that will be incorporated into the Administrative Draft of the Housing Element Update.

*Phase III: Evaluation of Housing Element Update and Decision Making*
Phase III will occur over the last two to three months of the Housing Element update process. The objectives of Phase III are to present the administrative draft Housing Element to the public and decision makers. The combination of outreach efforts is intended to finalize the Housing Element Update in a manner that is representational of the community.

*Outreach Success Criteria*
The following factors will determine whether the community outreach program is successful.

- Providing a variety of online engagement tools for the public to use; and
- Number of comments received from number of residents.

*Key Stakeholders*
The community outreach program will facilitate a variety of opportunities for community members, business owners, and decision makers to safely participate in the planning process online. One method to engage key stakeholders is to establish one task force and two focus groups.
• **Task Force**
  The task force would encompass one representative, plus one alternative representative, for each of the fifteen commissions and advisory boards in West Hollywood (listed below). The intent of the task force would be to gather specific feedback on current housing needs and conditions as well as preliminary goals, policies, and programs for the administrative draft of the Housing Element Update. The task force would meet two times total during the community outreach program. All meetings would be facilitated with an agenda and survey questions in order to gather specific input. All information gathered will influence the Housing Element Update and can be presented as a memo to the City Council.

  Potential Group 1: Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Disabilities Advisory Board, Lesbian and Gay Advisory Board, Russian Advisory Board, Senior Advisory Board, Transgender Advisory Board, Women’s Advisory Board


• **Focus Groups**
  Additionally, two focus groups will be created for the Housing Element Update. The first focus group will be a group of industry representatives, including non-profit organizations, developers, and property managers. The second focus group will be tenants of affordable housing. The focus groups will meet separately, one or two times during the Housing Element Update.

  Similar to the task force, the intent of the focus groups will be to gather specific feedback on current housing needs and conditions as well as preliminary goals, policies, and programs for the administrative draft of the Housing Element Update. The focus groups will meet separately two times total during the community outreach program. All meetings would be facilitated with an agenda and survey questions in order to gather specific input. All information gathered will influence the Housing Element Update and can be presented as a memo to the City Council.

  Additionally, staff will hold a number of events for the general public to weigh in on the Housing Element, with dates of events to be determined as part of the Community Engagement Plan development. These will be planned as virtual events, with some new technologies utilized to engage the community in new ways.

  **Draft Project Schedule**

  The Housing Element Update is required to be reviewed by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and must be certified by HCD by October 2021. The following key milestones are identified in order to meet the strict statutory deadline associated with the Housing Element Update (a more detailed outline of the schedule is included as Attachment A):
• Selection of Task Force—staff will attend Advisory Board and Commission meetings in October 2020
• Stakeholder, focus groups, and general public workshops: November 2020—March 2021 (with opportunities for input and engagement ongoing throughout the process); Report back to City Council on feedback received following public workshops
• Planning Commission Study Session: January 2020
• Initiation of environmental review process pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): beginning January 2021
• Submittal of 60-day HCD review of draft 6th Cycle Housing Element: February 2021
• Planning Commission and City Council public hearings: July-September 2021
• Certification by HCD: October 2021

Next Steps

City staff will begin public outreach as described above and will work with the Consultant to expand on the preliminary analysis, including development of the Sites Inventory. With more input and additional analysis following stakeholder and community workshops, staff will return to the City Council to report back on the input received and the status of the update process.

RELATED HOUSING AGENDA ITEMS:

There are three housing items on this City Council agenda tonight, all interrelated in working to achieve the City’s housing goals. First, this report, which provides an update on the community engagement strategy for the Housing Element update and proposed evaluation process including a racial equity toolkit approach for assessing current and future housing goals, policies, programs, and actions as a means of meeting State requirements for affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH). This is in direct alignment with the RHNA allocation, as the Housing Element update is the next major step after the final RHNA allocation. Second, there is a Zone Text Amendment to update requirements for 100% affordable housing projects in compliance with state law, with some changes to parking requirements. This will help facilitate the affordable unit mix necessary to achieve the RHNA allocation. Finally, there is a policy discussion on underutilized lots in the City, which will play a role in achieving RHNA and Housing Element goals. Furthermore, the underutilized lots will be incorporated into the City’s Sites Inventory for the Housing Element.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

• PSG-2: Affordable Housing.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

• H-1: Provide affordable rental housing.
• H-3: Encourage a diverse housing stock to address the needs of all socioeconomic segments of the community.
• H-6: Promote equal access to housing for all.
**EVALUATION PROCESSES:**
The State of California requires jurisdictions to evaluate housing programs and actions in meeting the goals and objectives. Staff is currently developing an evaluation matrix to assess success of current housing programs and actions in relation to meeting community housing needs, and then to identify revisions needed for existing programs and new programs necessary to expand capacity to continue meeting housing needs. The evaluation process will include levels of community engagement, one-on-one meetings, focused stakeholder groups, and potentially community-wide surveys, seeking input on what is working well and what is not, and what other programs and actions should be taken to continue addressing community housing needs and accommodate the City’s share of regional housing growth through the RHNA. The measures used to evaluate success will most likely include but will not be limited to program capacities for: alleviating rent burden, preserving and recapturing existing naturally affordable housing, preventing neighborhood displacement, and achieving regional housing growth. Staff is working to develop a set of data points to evaluate existing conditions and to help set a baseline for future comparison.

**Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)**
A requirement for the upcoming Housing Element update is to incorporate means of affirmatively further fair housing, which will include assessing and developing programs and actions to address institutional and systemic racial and socio-economic disparities in housing. To accomplish this, staff will use a racial equity toolkit. This is an approach to identifying, evaluating, and taking action to correct persisting policies, programs, or actions that can tend to cause harm. The racial equity toolkit model was developed by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and is in use in several government agencies. The toolkit used in the Housing Element update will be modeled on the approach currently used by the City of Seattle to evaluate policies, initiatives, programs, and budget issues to address impacts on racial equity.

**Racial Equity Toolkit - Employing a racial equity toolkit to evaluate the City’s current and future housing goals, policies, and programs will follow a stepped approach, that includes:**

- Set outcomes – Key community outcomes determined to meet state requirements for AFFH.
- Involve Stakeholders and Analyze Data – Gather information from community and city staff on how goal, policy, program benefits or burdens the community in terms of racial equity.
- Determine Benefit and/or Burden – Analyze goal, policy, program for impacts and alignment with racial equity outcomes.
- Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm – Develop strategies to create greater racial equity or minimize unintended consequences.
- Report Back – Share information learned from analysis and unresolved issues.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:**
The Housing Element will have environmental review per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). At this time, the contract with Veronica Tam and Associates does not include authorization for an Environmental Impact Report, so if that is deemed necessary as the
process moves along, staff will need to return to Council with additional contract amendments.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**
As outlined in the staff report, staff is currently developing a Community Engagement Plan and website that should be ready for public review in mid-November. The Community Engagement Plan will include ways to engage the community while all meetings remain virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff will establish three working groups to engage during the process. These include a group of representatives from all boards and commissions run by the City, possibly split into two or three smaller groups per conversation for ease of discussion. Staff will engage each board and commission to appoint a representative and alternate at their next available meeting. The plan is to engage this group two-three times throughout the Housing Element process.

The second group will include industry representatives, including non-profit organizations, developers, and property managers. City will engage providers that build within West Hollywood, and also those that build regionally to provide a regional perspective, including, but not limited to the West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, Skid Row Housing Trust, and EAH Housing. There may be some interaction with service providers as well to round out this conversation. The third group will be comprised of current tenants of affordable housing in a focus group to understand housing needs and how the City’s programs work for tenants.

Additionally, staff will hold a number of events for the general public to weigh in on the Housing Element, with dates of events to be determined as part of the Community Engagement Plan development. These will be planned as virtual events, with some new technologies utilized to engage the community in new ways.

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:**
HUMAN SERVICES & RENT STABILIZATION DEPARTMENT / RENT STABILIZATION & HOUSING DIVISION

**FISCAL IMPACT:**
None at this time.

**ATTACHMENTS:**
Attachment A – Draft Project Schedule