Policy Framework

This chapter sets forth the City’s vision, goals, and the policies to facilitate and encourage a range of housing opportunities to meet current and future housing needs of Santa Ana’s residents and workforce.

HOUSING VISION

Santa Ana’s vision is to be the dynamic urban center of Orange County, acclaimed for its investment in children, neighborhood pride, enriching cultural experiences, appreciation of diversity, thriving economic climate, quality governmental services, and leadership among California cities. This vision underpins the Santa Ana General Plan—the blueprint for community development—and guides decision making regarding how resources should be allocated to different priorities.

Santa Ana community and civic leaders recognize the importance and value of together creating a community that provides opportunities for residents and workforce to meet their varied needs. In 2009, the City Council adopted the following housing vision amended in 2014 to add reference to “healthy,” thereby acknowledging the importance of health in all housing policies:

Santa Ana residents have an equal right and opportunity to find suitable housing in quality residential neighborhoods that allow themselves, their families, and neighbors to live the fullest lives. We support an inclusive community that is multigenerational, culturally diverse, healthy, sustainable, and economically broad. The City will facilitate the production, rehabilitation, and improvement of rental and homeownership opportunities at different affordability levels consistent with these principles.

Santa Ana is committed to this vision of a diverse community that increases housing choice and improves neighborhoods for all residents. This Housing Element is the City’s approach to achieving this vision. The following describes key topic areas for the Housing Element and provides goals and policies to provide a foundation for the Housing Plan.
HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS:

The City of Santa Ana has a rich mosaic of neighborhoods distinguished by their history, architecture, housing types, and amenities. The City has a number of neighborhoods with historic resources, including French Park, Floral Park, Wilshire Square, West Floral Park, Washington Square, and Heninger Park. The City is also known for its original Mexican barrios, including the Logan, Lacy, Delhi, and Santa Anita neighborhoods, some of which date back to the later 1880s.

Rich in history and culture, Santa Ana’s neighborhoods are more than simply collections of housing; in fact, our neighborhoods are the fundamental building blocks of the community. They profoundly define the quality of life experienced. Neighborhoods are where residents feel safe, where friendships and social ties develop, and where people identify with their community. Ultimately, neighborhoods are home. Therefore, the design and maintenance of neighborhoods—their buildings, streets, parks, open space, trees, and infrastructure—are critical to quality of life.

Some residential neighborhoods in Santa Ana are well preserved: streets are lined with trimmed canopy trees; physical infrastructure is sufficient in size and in proper working order; and housing is well maintained. Some neighborhoods are stable, but are beginning to show signs of deterioration and could benefit from neighborhood improvement. Yet other neighborhoods require significant reinvestment in housing, infrastructure, parks/open space, and public services.

Recent research also underscores how neighborhood conditions directly influence health. Important features that improve health include, among others: 1) the availability of parks, trails, and recreational facilities; 2) the availability of affordable and healthy food options; 3) safety of residents from crime and traffic; and 4) the mitigation or removal of environmental hazards. All of these pieces are as essential as the quality of housing and are critical to promoting more complete and healthy neighborhoods.

As a City committed to fostering neighborhood pride, investing in the lives of children and families, and providing a safe and supportive environment for its residents, Santa Ana’s highest priority is creating livable neighborhoods. This will require the implementation of multifaceted strategies tailored for different neighborhoods. The City continues to direct substantial resources to achieving these objectives and has set forth the following goals and policies to guide quality and sustainable housing and neighborhoods in Santa Ana.
Goal 1

Livable and complete neighborhoods of quality housing conditions, ample parks and community services, well-maintained infrastructure, and public facilities that inspire neighborhood pride and ownership.

Policies

HE-1.1 **Housing Conditions.** Promote the rehabilitation, repair, and improvement of single-family, multiple-family, and mobile homes and, if needed, the demolition of substandard housing that presents a health and safety hazard.

HE-1.2 **Neighborhood Involvement.** Encourage active and informed participation in neighborhood organizations to help identify needs and implement programs aimed at the beautification, improvement, and preservation of neighborhoods.

HE-1.3 **Complete Neighborhoods.** Improve neighborhood quality by locating or providing access to complementary services and public facilities, including the integration of community gardens and access to healthy food options in neighborhoods.

HE-1.4 **Healthy Neighborhoods.** Create and maintain parks and open spaces; plant trees, green parkways and medians; support healthy food options, and maintain a continuous pattern of pathways that encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.

HE-1.5 **Infrastructure and Public Services.** Provide quality community facilities, physical infrastructure, traffic management and parking control, and other public services to promote the livability, safety, and vitality of neighborhoods.

HE-1.6 **Proactive Code Enforcement.** Rigorously enforce building and property maintenance standards by proactively conducting property inspections, educating landlords and tenants, and removing blighting or unhealthful conditions.

HE-1.7 **Historic Preservation.** Support preservation and enhancement of residential structures, properties, street designs, lot patterns, and other visible reminders of neighborhoods that are considered local historic or cultural resources.

HE-1.8 **Public Safety.** Support efforts to improve neighborhood safety through environmental design, housing maintenance, community-oriented policing, youth diversion activities, traffic safety, and other violence prevention measures.
Where should we live? Near work, family, or community amenities? What kind of housing can we best afford? Does this neighborhood, size of home, or quality of housing best meet our household needs? Where would be the safest or most desirable place to retire? All of us ask these housing questions at different times in our lives—when our children move out of town, as we look for the first job, as we begin to have families, as we contemplate retirement, or when other life-changing events occur.

As expressed in the City’s vision, an adequate housing supply for our children, our workforce, our families, and our parents is a critical goal. Housing products and prices must also be diverse, providing a range of choices and price points suited to the different incomes, lifestyles, and needs of residents and workforce. A broad housing stock includes single- and multiple-family housing, mobile homes, mixed/multiuse, and special needs housing. Ensuring affordable housing will help foster an inclusive community that welcomes all people of all ages and income levels.

To protect and enhance residential neighborhoods, the City is committed to growing strategically. Residential development is directed toward locations that can accommodate population growth, and that growth must support larger, community-wide goals. The Metro East Mixed-Use Overlay Zone, downtown, MacArthur Place, and other similar areas support our economy and burgeoning job centers. Infill housing is encouraged along selected transit corridors and existing neighborhoods as a means to reinvest in the community and create great neighborhoods.

Fostering imaginative housing solutions requires creative approaches. Market forces have driven up land and construction costs, increasing the cost of housing. Although necessary to guide growth, land use regulations, development standards, building codes, local fees and taxes, and permit procedures also increase costs. Environmental issues influence where housing should be located and how it is designed.

Santa Ana will encourage housing projects that withstand the test of time. Through the implementation of design guidelines, new housing will include the latest in creative designs and site planning techniques. Increasing efforts will be placed on making housing accessible and suitable to people of all abilities and ages. Housing will incorporate sustainable “green” practices in design, site planning, and construction. The City will support active housing designs that encourage wellness.

The following goal and policies guide the City’s efforts to improve supply and diversity of housing in Santa Ana.
Goal 2

A diversity of quality housing, affordability levels, and living experiences that accommodate Santa Ana’s residents and workforce of all household types, income levels, and age groups to foster an inclusive community.

Policies

HE-2.1 Downtown. Strengthen Santa Ana’s core as a vibrant mixed-use and mixed-income environment by capitalizing on the government center, arts district, historic downtown, transit-oriented housing, and diverse neighborhoods.

HE-2.2 District Centers. Create high intensity, mixed-use urban villages and pedestrian-oriented experiences that support the mid- to high-rise office centers, commercial activity, and cultural activities in the varied District Centers.

HE-2.3 Rental Housing. Encourage the construction of rental housing for Santa Ana’s residents and workforce, including a commitment to very low, low, and moderate income residents and moderate income Santa Ana workers.

HE-2.4 Diverse Housing Types. Facilitate diverse types, prices, and sizes of housing, including single-family homes, apartments, townhomes, mixed/multiuse housing, transit-oriented housing, multigenerational housing, and live-work opportunities.

HE-2.5 Housing Design. Require excellence in architectural design through the use of materials and colors, building treatments, landscaping, open space, parking, and environmentally sensitive (“green”) building and design practices.

HE-2.6 Affordable Component. Pursuant to the Housing Opportunity Ordinance, require eligible rental and ownership housing projects to include at least 15 percent of the housing units as affordable for lower and moderate income households.

HE-2.7 Entitlement Process. Provide flexible development review and entitlement processes that facilitate innovative and imaginative housing solutions, offer a consistent approval process, and allow for appropriate oversight.

HE-2.8 Housing Authority-Owned Sites. Maximize affordable housing on Authority-owned properties that is of high quality, sustainable, and available to various income levels.
HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Santa Ana’s community is defined by the many people who have made their way across the country or from other parts of the world, bringing with them different cultures and traditions. Many residents are first-, second-, or third-generation citizens and residents. Despite their varied backgrounds, the importance of family and shared sense of community form a common thread connecting Santa Ana residents.

There are challenges for how to assist residents in securing and maintaining adequate and affordable housing. In recent years, increases in housing prices and rents have made it increasingly difficult for lower and moderate income households to afford housing, resulting in increasing cost burdens for residents. Rising cost burdens have contributed to significant overcrowding. The recent downturn in the housing market continues to place families at risk of foreclosure or very high cost burdens.

The City of Santa Ana also faces unprecedented pressures. The California legislature has ended redevelopment and reallocated funds to address the state budget crisis. The federal government continues to cut back funding for housing and community development activities. As a result, the City must be creative in leveraging efforts with partners to pool the resources necessary to assist households. Moreover, the City must also make deliberate decisions about how best to allocate financial resources to different housing programs given the trade-offs required.

The City’s housing vision affirms and supports a vibrant Santa Ana, comprising a socially and economically diverse community of renters and homeowners. Housing our families and children is of critical concern. Assisting households of all backgrounds, circumstances, and income levels will play an important role in achieving and maintaining homeownership, providing renters a greater range of choices in housing, and protecting vulnerable individuals and families from displacement.

**Goal 3**

*Increased opportunities for low and moderate income individuals and families to find quality housing opportunities and afford a greater choice of rental or homeownership opportunities.*

**Policies**

**HE-3.1 Rental Assistance.** Support the provision of rental assistance for individuals and families earning extremely low, very low, and low income with funding from the federal government.

**HE-3.2 Homeownership.** Increase and expand homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income residents and employees.
working in Santa Ana through the provision of financial assistance, education, and collaborative partnerships.

HE-3.3 **Housing Preservation.** Initiate and support collaborative partnerships, identify state and federal funding, and offer technical assistance to preserve the affordability of publicly subsidized affordable housing at risk of conversion.

HE-3.4 **Supportive Services.** Support the provision of employment training, childcare services, rental assistance, youth services, and other community services that enable households to attain the greatest level of self-sufficiency and independence.

HE-3.5 **Collaborative Partnerships.** Collaborate with nonprofit organizations, developers, business community, special interest groups, and government agencies to develop affordable housing opportunities for residents and our workforce.

HE-3.6 **Homeownership Preservation.** Take a leadership role in forming partnerships, educating residents, and providing resources that enable residents to make informed decisions on their homes and prevent foreclosure.

HE-3.7 **Workforce Housing.** Work with Orange County Business Council and major employers to explore opportunities for creating workforce housing, including for artists, veterans, and other residents working in Santa Ana.

HE-3.8 **Affordable Housing.** Maintain affordable housing by prohibiting the conversion of apartments to condominiums until the vacancy rate in the City is 5% or greater. Support the preservation of mobile home parks as affordable housing.

HE-3.9 **Fair Housing.** Continue to fund services and organizations that work to prohibit discrimination in the rental, sale, and occupancy of housing and provide education, support, and enforcement services to address discriminatory practices.
SANTA ANA is unique in Orange County, containing a diversity of people of all backgrounds, family types, lifestyles, and income levels. While adding to the richness of Santa Ana, many residents have special housing needs. Some special needs are common to all, while others are more common to people of different ages and incomes. These groups include, but are not limited to, seniors, large families with children, people with disabilities, female-headed households, single-parent families, and homeless people.

Fashioning an appropriate, creative and effective response to this challenge requires a better understanding of the nature of special needs. Special needs may arise due to one’s income, family characteristics, disability, health condition, or many other circumstances. This complexity requires a broad range of strategies for housing and services.

Providing housing for an aging population is one example. The retirement and aging of baby boomers have created the need for new housing options. While many seniors desire to age in place in their home, new forms of housing, such as lifecare facilities, offer a broader continuum of care. These types of facilities reduce the need for seniors to relocate multiple times to new housing. Single-family homes for the elderly are another popular option that give residents the ability to stay within their community, and are typically affordable to moderate incomes.

Equally important is the changing nature of families. A growing trend is multigenerational households, defined as those consisting of more than two generations living under the same roof. This trend is due in part to the aging of residents, economic conditions and challenges of finding affordable housing, lifestyle preferences, and the cost of senior housing. Whereas the granny flat or room addition concept is not new, developers are now building housing products for multigenerational living.

Housing for people with disabilities or who are homeless is also changing. The traditional way to address homeless people with emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing is being blended with a new housing-first model. This new approach focuses on placing people immediately into permanent housing, without going to a shelter. Increasing movement of persons with disabilities to community-based or in-homecare options require new models of supportive housing.

Santa Ana recognizes these changes and has set forth the following goal and policies to guide its approach to housing special needs groups.
Goal 4

Adequate rental and ownership housing opportunities and supportive services for seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and people needing emergency, transitional, or supportive housing.

Policies

HE-4.1 **Senior Housing.** Support development of affordable senior rental and ownership housing, readily accessible to support services; provide assistance for seniors to maintain and repair their homes to facilitate the maximum independent living.

HE-4.2 **Family Housing.** Facilitate and encourage the development of larger rental and ownership units for families, including lower and moderate income families, and the provision of childcare, after-school care, and other services when feasible.

HE-4.3 **Housing for Disabled People.** Support the development of permanent, affordable, and accessible housing that allows people with disabilities to live independent lives, and assist them in maintaining and repairing their homes.

HE-4.4 **Service-Enriched Housing.** Support the provision of supportive services and service-enriched housing for persons with special needs, such as seniors, disabled people, homeless people, families, veterans, and people with medical conditions.

HE-4.5 **Healthy Homes.** Support efforts to make homes more healthful by addressing health hazards associated with lead-based paint, asbestos, vermin, mold, VOC-laden materials, and prohibiting smoking in multi-family projects, among others.

HE-4.6 **Homeless Services.** Partner with community service organizations that address the needs of homeless people, including housing linked with case management, employment, physical, mental health, substance abuse, and other services.

HE-4.7 **Regulatory Oversight.** Exercise appropriate land use, planning, and regulatory oversight over the operation, location, and impact associated with special needs housing and facilities consistent with state and federal housing laws.

HE-4.8 **Housing Priority.** Provide that Santa Ana residents, employees, and designated need groups receive priority for affordable housing created under the Housing Opportunity Ordinance or with City funding to the extent allowed under state law.
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