



# PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

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# PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

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State law requires local governments to make a diligent effort to achieve public participation of all socioeconomic segments of the community in the development of the housing element. The comments received at the workshops and through the online survey were considered in the preparation of this Housing Element, specifically in the goals, policies, and implementation programs.

The Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element update effort completed public outreach at the local and regional levels to encourage community involvement and comply with the requirements of State law. These efforts included:

- Project Website
- Stakeholder Consultations and Focus Groups
- Study Sessions with Planning Commissions, City Councils, and the County Board of Supervisors
- Community Workshops
- Community Survey

## PROJECT WEBSITE

The Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element project website is a clearinghouse for all information related to the project, with information in English and Spanish. For meetings in the City of Fresno, event fliers were also made available in Hmong and Punjabi. Community members can visit the site to access all public materials, learn about the Housing Element and upcoming opportunities to get involved, sign up for email updates, and submit comments directly.

The project website also includes direct links to each of the participating Fresno County jurisdictions' websites to promote specific outreach from each city and the county, share updates, and highlight upcoming opportunities for involvement, including individual Housing Element meetings.

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

To ensure that each jurisdiction solicits feedback from all segments of the community, consultations were conducted with service providers and other stakeholders who represent different socioeconomic groups.

Throughout the fall of 2022, staff consulted with stakeholders from 11 individual organizations and a multiorganization initiative that provides services in the Fresno County region to obtain input on housing needs and programs. The following stakeholders were contacted for an interview and either completed an interview or provided written responses to questions by email.

- Travis Alexander, Northern California Carpenters Regional Council

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- Harvey McKeon, Field Representative, Northern California Carpenters Regional Council
- Laura Moreno, Fresno Madera Continuum of Care/County of Fresno Social Services
- Mariah Thompson, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA)
- Karla Martinez, Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability (LCJA)
- Patience Milrod, Law Office of Patience Milrod
- Sarah Harris, Resources for Independence Central Valley
- Eric Payne, The Central Valley Urban Institute
- Doreen Eley and Michael Duarte, Fresno Housing Authority
- Mike Prandini, BIA
- Greg Terzakis, California Apartment Association
- Mirna Garcia, Envision Fresno and Llaves De Tu Casa
- Reyes Ruiz, Union Bank
- Sabrina Brown, California Association of Realtors (C.A.R) and National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB)
- Rick Gonzales and Alicia Bohigian, Self Help Enterprises
- Pablo Estrada, CORE Home Loans
- Lucy Sandoval, Realtor; Vice President of National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP), Fresno
- Aldiva Rubalcava, NAHREP Fresno
- Rosie Lopez, Self Help Credit Union
- Charles Ratanavanh, Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREA)
- Martin Macias, GPUSD Superintendent, Golden Plains Unified School District
- Lori Villanueva, CHUSD Superintendent, Huron/Coalinga School District

Requests for consultation were extended to the following stakeholders but either no response was received or no one-on-one interview was completed. Some of these stakeholders participated in other community input processes, such as focus groups or stakeholder meetings:

- Janine Nkosi, Faith in the Valley
- Christine Barker and Jack Chang, Director of Special Projects, FIRM
- Adriana Cave, Assemi Group
- Sharrah Thompson, Tenants Together
- Nick Jones, SERVE Reedley
- Candie Caro, Proteus, Inc
- Priscilla Meza, Rape Counseling Services of Fresno (RCS)
- Jenny, Marjaree Mason Center
- Maria Pacheco, Kerman Care Center
- Edgar Olivera, Centro La Familia Advocacy Services
- Steve Hair, Mendota-area developer
- Roberto Castillo, Westside Family Preservation

In each consultation, the stakeholders were asked all or some of the following questions, depending on the type of organization interviewed:

- **Opportunities and Concerns:** What 3 top opportunities do you see for the future of housing in this jurisdiction? What are your 3 top concerns for the future of housing in this jurisdiction?
- **Housing Preferences:** What types of housing do your clients prefer? Is there adequate rental housing in this community? Are there opportunities for home ownership? Are there accessible rental units for seniors and persons with disabilities? Do your employees live in this jurisdiction? If not, why? Are there accessible rental units for seniors and persons with disabilities?
- **Housing Barriers/Needs:** What are the biggest barriers to finding affordable, decent housing? What are the unmet housing needs in this jurisdiction?
- **Housing Constraints:** Are there any city/county processes that you find difficult to navigate, increase costs, increase time, and/or increase uncertainty?
- **Housing Conditions:** How would you characterize the physical condition of housing in this jurisdiction? What opportunities do you see to improve housing in the future?
- **Equity and Fair Housing:** What factors limit or deny civil rights, fair housing choice, or equitable access to opportunity? What actions can be taken to transform racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity (without displacement)? What actions can be taken to make living patterns more integrated and balanced?
- **How has COVID affected the housing situation?**

Common themes in stakeholder responses across service areas included concerns about lack of reliable access to water and other infrastructure such as internet access and cell phone reception. Several stakeholders mentioned overcrowding in many units and a strong need for maintenance in affordable rentals and in mobile homes throughout the region.

Stakeholders highlighted the unique needs of farmworker communities and the challenges they face in finding necessary information about affordable housing opportunities and applying for deed-restricted rental housing. For community members who are undocumented, it can be impossible to achieve homeownership and challenging to have the required proof of income for rental housing. Several stakeholders also identified lack of credit and low incomes as a barrier to many residents in accessing stable housing.

## STUDY SESSIONS

The participating jurisdictions held study sessions with their respective planning commission and/or city council to review the Public Review Draft Housing Element. At each of the study sessions, staff and the consultants presented an overview of the draft Housing Element, facilitated a discussion with the planning commission and/or city council, and requested input before submitting the document to HCD for review.

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The participating jurisdictions provided public notice about these study sessions using their standard meeting notice procedures. Additionally, staff directly contacted local housing advocates, developers, social service providers, and key stakeholders to notify them of the study sessions.

The following study sessions were held in the county:

- **Fresno County:** September 15 and 20, 2022 (Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, respectively)
- **City of Fresno:** September 29, 2022 (City Council Study Session)
- **City of Kerman:** August 24, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Firebaugh:** September 12, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Kingsburg:** August 11, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Coalinga:** September 15, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Mendota:** October 25, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of San Joaquin:** October 4, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Reedley:** October 11, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Orange Cove:** September 28, 2022 at (City Council Study Session)
- **City of Selma:** September 19, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Fowler:** August 2, 2022, (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Huron:** September 7, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Parlier:** October 20, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)
- **City of Sanger:** October 6, 2022 (Planning Commission/City Council Joint Study Session)

Council, commission, and board members had the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback about the project. Common themes included concerns about lack of water access and the tension between limits to water use and the ability of each jurisdiction to meet its RHNA requirements. Others highlighted the tension between State and local land use controls and expressed a desire for more local control.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Throughout the summer and fall of 2022, the participating jurisdictions held workshops for key stakeholders and community members interested in housing issues in the county. Participants listened to a short introductory presentation about the Housing Element Update and were asked to provide input on key issues, barriers, and opportunities for creating affordable housing in the county. In total, 122 community members attended the workshops.

Individual jurisdictions made efforts to encourage participation, including handing out flyers at community events, advertising the meetings on the City's website and in the City's email newsletter, sending press releases to local newspapers, posting flyers at key locations, and contacting residents of affordable housing developments. Further efforts included posting the workshop information on an electronic reader board for

visibility as people enter the city, and making the event a push item on the City’s app. See Appendix 1 for a sample of the publicity materials.

The following community workshops were held in the county:

- **Fresno County:** September 19, 2022, from 2 to 3:30 pm and October 3, 2022, from 2 to 3:30 pm
- **City of Firebaugh:** August 18, 2022, from 1 to 2:30 pm
- **City of Fresno:** August 31, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Huron:** September 1, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Kerman:** October 5, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Kingsburg:** August 16, 2022, at 6:00 pm
- **City of Coalinga:** October 5, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Mendota:** October 6, 2022, from 6 - to 7:00 pm
- **City of Reedley:** September 20, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Selma:** September 2, 2022, from 2 to 3:30 pm
- **City of Parlier:** September 21, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Sanger:** August 30, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm
- **City of Orange Cove:** September 22, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm

Across the 15 meetings, 101 community members registered and 122 attended. Depending on community need, language interpretation services were made available in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi. Interpretation in Spanish was provided at events in the City of Fresno and the Fresno County unincorporated areas and for the web live stream in Huron.

Additionally, in the following cities outreach took place at existing local events:

- **City of San Joaquin:** On August 10, 2022, from 5:00 to 6:30 pm, outreach consultants attended a community event hosted by the City of San Joaquin and the Golden Plains Unified School District.
- **City of Fowler:** On August 24, 2022, from 5:30 to 8:00 pm, outreach consultants attended a Wednesday Nights at the Park event.
- **City of Orange Cove:** Outreach consultants attended a Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission Food Distribution event to distribute fliers and collect community feedback.

Common themes in the feedback provided by attendees included concerns about the limitations caused by a lack of water access, a desire for more opportunities for home ownership and a more diverse mix of unit types, and concerns about increased housing costs and associated overcrowding.

## STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

Two stakeholder focus groups were held as part of the Housing Element development process. Stakeholders were presented with information about the Housing Element process, particularly sections regarding community needs and fair housing, and were given the opportunity to weigh in on community needs.

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The first focus group was held on October 25, 2022, from 9:30 to 11:30 am. The following stakeholders registered for the event, though not all were able to attend:

- Gregory Terzakis, CAA
- Mirna Garcia, Envision Realty Inc./NAHREP Fresno
- Kayla Camargo, Lance-Kashian
- Bernard Jimenez, County of Fresno
- Sharrah Thompson, Tenants Together
- Karl Schoettler, City of Firebaugh
- Michelle Zumwalt, City of Fresno
- Lily Cha, City of Clovis
- Thomas Gaffery, City of Fowler
- Kristine Cai, Fresno Council of Governments
- Tyrone Williams, Fresno Housing
- Jeff O'Neal, City of Parlier
- Sophia Pagoulatos, City of Fresno Planning & Development Dept
- Rodney Horton, City of Reedley
- Rob Terry, City of Selma
- Casey Lauderdale, City of Fresno
- Yvette Quiroga, Fresno County
- Clancy Taylor, CCRH
- Dr. K Jones, Jr., Handle It Helping Hands, Inc.
- Gregory Terzakis, CAA
- John Holt, City of Clovis
- Mariah Thompson, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
- Andy Hausler, City of Clovis

Participants expressed concerns about corporate investment groups purchasing large amounts of local housing. Housing quality was identified as an opportunity for local investment, particularly in unincorporated areas, and participants cited mobile home repair funding as a current gap in available programming, along with mobile home financing. One participant suggested that a program to help mobile homeowners pay for back taxes is necessary, as a statewide amnesty program ended, and that a program to help mobile home renters purchase their units from corporate acquisition companies would help them to stay in their homes. Lack of internet access among residents of mobile home parks has made it difficult for those residents to apply for necessary building permits in order to comply with eviction notices.

According to participants, undocumented community members don't seem to be served by current housing stock or programming. One participant expressed a concern that monolingual speakers of languages other than English may be taken advantage of by the current housing environment.



Credit and income levels were two major barriers to decent housing in local communities that participants identified. Attendees noted that programs with a “sweat equity” component, such as those offered by Self Help Enterprises, might serve the community well. Additionally, housing types that promote intergenerational housing without forcing overcrowding situations would allow families to share costs.

One participant identified small lot sizes and overreliance on commercial zoning in the past Housing Element cycle as an issue to avoid while developing this cycle’s sites inventories. Another expressed an interest in seeing large lots in the unincorporated county area subdivided into smaller lots. Local residents fear displacement and so have concerns about the development of new housing.

Increased construction costs were a concern raised by several attendees. One participant noted that there is an active market for the development of ADUs within the region, but that there are few housing developers in some cities. Material costs are also unsustainable in the area.

The second focus group was held on November 15th from 9:30 to 11:30 am and was attended by the following stakeholders:

- David Rivas, NCCRC
- Mike Prandini, BIA
- Doa Lur, The Fresno Center
- Mirna Garcia, Envision Fresno
- Phil Skei, City of Fresno
- Rob Terry, City of Selma
- Karl Schoettler, City of Firebaugh
- David Brletic, City of Sanger
- Sophia Pagoulatos, City of Fresno

Some participants expressed concern that some of the data in the Housing Element might be outdated, particularly in light of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, though others felt it was accurate.

Attendees highlighted the gap between program eligibility and the ability to afford available housing, as some applicants for affordable housing programs make too much money to qualify but still can’t afford housing without the program’s assistance. At a recent workshop for community members interested in participating in a down payment assistance program, none of the attendees qualified because their incomes were higher than 80 percent of the area median income. For other community members, being able to show an income level of at least twice the rent of an apartment in the area is impossible.

Lack of cultural competency of homeless services has caused issues for some local members of the Asian/Pacific Islander community. One attendee mentioned that members of this community who are experiencing homelessness prefer to couch surf within the community rather than use formal homeless services, which leads to an undercounting of community members experiencing homelessness.

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Several participants expressed concern about the siting of recent affordable housing projects. In the city of Fresno, a recent project was sited near a rendering plant and far from amenities. Many families in the area require a car to access work and school as well as other amenities, and in many cases families only have one car, which limits their access to these resources if they are far away.

Increases in housing construction and development costs were highlighted as a barrier to meeting community housing needs. Infrastructure costs and district fees, along with increased labor and materials costs, have added to construction costs by a significant amount. This is compounded by competing interests among State agencies, such as limiting water supply while also increasing the amount of housing available. One participant expressed a concern that inclusionary zoning and rent control might provide further cost pressure.

*Note: One additional focus group meeting will occur in April 2023. Feedback will be summarized and included.*

## FARMWORKER AND FARM EMPLOYER SURVEYS

Fresno County completed a survey of farm employers and farmworkers about local housing needs. From September 2021 to January 2022, 170 farm employers were surveyed, and from February to July 2022, 240 farmworkers were surveyed.

Farm worker survey questions included the status of participants' current housing situation and their preferred housing. Surveys were conducted verbally by County Public Works and Planning staff, and the answers were recorded on paper by the surveyors.

Outreach efforts were scheduled in advance, primarily in April and May 2022. Staff contacted multiple food processing plants, farmers, and labor contractors in Fresno County regarding the on-site surveys or permission to collect an interest list of agriculture workers willing to participate in the survey. All employers were initially contacted by phone. Many of the agencies contacted refused to participate during the initial call. Some employers provided an email contact and attempted to set up dates to conduct the surveys with their employees, but the staff did not receive any responses to email requests. Most of the employers were unwilling to work with the "County" or a government agency.

Additional methods of outreach had to be utilized to reach the farmworkers. These methods included outreach to churches in unincorporated areas of Fresno County, attending community meetings hosted by the County and other agencies such as Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability, door-to-door outreach, and outreach to food distribution sites throughout Fresno County.

One of the most successful methods was the outreach to various food distribution sites throughout the county. Outreach efforts focused on sites with a dense farmworker population, unincorporated areas of Fresno County (Biola, Caruthers, Del Rey, Easton, Huron, Lanare, Laton, Raisin City, Riverdale, Cantua Creek, and Tranquility), and the participating city of Mendota. Survey participants completed surveys while they waited in line at food distribution sites. County staff also completed surveys at two apartment buildings in the communities of Biola and Del Rey that had been specifically funded to house farmworkers. Staff conducted

surveys on two separate occasions by going door to door in unincorporated communities and asking occupants if they would like to participate in the survey.

### ***Farm Employer Survey Results for Desired Farm Labor/Worker Housing***

County staff surveyed a total of 170 farm employers, 25 of whom currently have some type of farm labor housing on site, though not all of this housing is necessarily currently in use. Five of those employers would consider retaining the existing farm labor housing. Of the 145 farm employers who do not have any farm labor housing on-site, 28 would consider adding labor housing as single houses or cottages. One farm employer specified labor housing as apartments. The type of farm operation was not explicitly captured through the survey, but staff was able to determine through the phone conversations that dairy farmers were the most interested in providing on-site housing because their industry requires 24-hour staffing. All respondents said that they would consider providing on-site housing if financing was provided by the government or through grants.

### ***Farmworkers Survey Results for Desired Farm Labor/Worker Housing***

County staff surveyed 240 farmworkers, including 100 homeowners. Of the nonhomeowners surveyed, five specified a desire to live in owned farm labor housing; four of those specified housing as single-family residences. Only five farmworkers surveyed desired to live in some type of farm labor housing. Further analysis revealed that 47 percent of nonhomeowner households desired homeownership, with single-family residence as the majority choice.

In summary, the surveys indicate that traditional farm labor or worker camp housing is not desired by the Fresno County farmworkers or laborers. Even though a small number of Fresno County farm employers expressed that they might be interested, it would only be if the housing was subsidized. Survey results indicate that employers might have difficulties finding farmworkers to live at those housing units if they were constructed.

## **TRAVEL SURVEY**

The Fresno Council of Governments completed a survey of travel patterns and needs in collaboration with seven other MPOs in the San Joaquin Valley. Results from this survey are primarily used in the calibration and validation of travel demand models. Results from the first round of outreach were available at the time of the publication of the draft Housing Element. This outreach was completed in the spring of 2022 and received 3,753 responses.

Several survey questions allowed respondents to provide information about their current housing situation, current barriers to housing access, and desires for new housing options. Among those who responded to a question regarding barriers to homeownership, the largest group that selected a response (17.1 percent of all survey respondents) stated that they don't wish to own a home in the community. A slightly smaller group (16.1 percent) answered that they do not currently have the financial resources for mortgage payments. Over one-third of respondents (41.8 percent) identified their neighborhood's proximity to school, work, or shopping as the best thing about the neighborhood. More than half of respondents (56.9 percent) selected that they wanted to see more single-family homes in their community. The two housing categories that received the next-largest

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rate of responses were permanent supportive housing (7.0 percent) and apartments (6.3 percent). Most respondents to the survey had not experienced discrimination in housing. The majority of respondents had either one or two cars in their household and were nearly evenly distributed between renters and homeowners. Most respondents lived in a detached single-family house.

## **TRANSLATION**

Flyers, PowerPoints, and language interpretation services were made available in English and Spanish and, depending on community need, Hmong and Punjabi. Interpretation in Spanish was requested and provided at community workshops in the City of Fresno and the unincorporated county areas and for the web live stream of the community workshop in Huron.

## **OUTREACH NOTICING**

Community workshops were advertised through a variety of methods, including physical flyers posted and distributed at central community locations and affordable housing projects. Digital fliers were also distributed to local stakeholders and through the Fresno COG email list and were posted to the Housing Element project website as well as to City websites and Facebook pages. Materials were made available in both English and Spanish in all jurisdictions, and in Hmong and Punjabi for workshops in the City of Fresno.

Council, commission, and board of supervisor's study sessions were noticed by individual jurisdictions in accordance with the jurisdiction's standard public meeting noticing procedures.