

## C2 Public Participation

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This section documents the efforts the City of Dos Palos made to engage the public and gather input to inform development of this Housing Element update. There were several public engagement efforts conducted at a regional level, including a community survey and stakeholder interviews. These efforts are described in Chapter 1, *Regional Introduction and Community Engagement*.

### C2.1 Community Workshops

Flyers advertising the workshops were distributed by the City of Dos Palos in advance of the workshop series to encourage public attendance and participation. The flyers provided meeting details (dates, times, locations, zoom links), the Housing Element Update website and email list, and were bilingual (English and Spanish).

A workshop was hosted in Dos Palos on August 30, 2023. The workshop was held at Dos Palos City Hill and had 19 participants. The workshop consisted of an informative PowerPoint presentation on housing sites, a questionnaire about the proposed sites, and a Q&A and public discussion period. The workshop activities invited participants to share their opinions on what makes their neighborhood great and their experience finding housing, take part in a sticker activity to rank the most effective housing programs, and reasons it is difficult to find housing in their communities. Participants were also asked to weigh in on the selected housing opportunity sites. The PowerPoint presentation was available in Spanish via written translation. Live Spanish translation was available upon request.

Nineteen participants attended the workshop. Participants in Dos Palos addressed their concern that inclusive and affordable housing is difficult to find. They hope to see an increase in homeownership for all levels of income, race, and age.

Key findings from the workshops are as follows:

- The lack of available housing and affordable housing, particularly for farmworkers, makes it difficult to find housing. Almost all farmworkers are cost burdened.
- Homeownership is very difficult.
- There is a lack of housing with supportive services, particularly for residents with mental health disabilities.
- Lack of public transportation options makes it difficult for people to find housing that meets their needs. Additionally, there is limited access to commercial services, which means that people must drive to other cities.
- Residents desire rent control.
- Historic pattern of racial segregation in Dos Palos has segregated neighborhoods.
- Housing rehabilitation and repair was the most voted programs to address housing needs with nine votes. This was followed by rent-restricted affordable housing development and housing for special needs populations, which both received eight votes. Renter protections and support received six votes. One participant commented that renter protections is needed, as there are not enough attorneys for renters.

- Many seniors are on Social Security and are severely cost burdened and homes are not ADA accessible.

## C2.2 Survey

The County conducted a community survey to inform the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element update. The survey was made available from March 27 through December 22, 2023. The survey was also made available during various community outreach events. The survey consisted of 16 questions and used different formats for questions: checkbox, ranking, and open-ended questions. A total of 172 people responded to the survey. Of these, 10 participants, or six percent of responses, either live, work, attend school, or own a business or property in Dos Palos.

The input provided by the participants included the following major themes:

- Affordability and quality were the most important aspects when looking for new housing, followed by close to resources such as commercial, medical facilities, and work and school. Safe neighborhoods were also noted as important when searching for housing. Participants want housing near public transit stops, employment, and shopping centers.
- The largest barriers to affordable desirable housing are cost of housing and the limited supply of housing, particularly affordable housing. Respondents also noted the lack of good paying jobs to be able to afford housing.
- In addition to affordability and availability of housing, respondents noted that homelessness and fair housing/discrimination were also urgent issues in the Merced Region.
- Respondents would like to see programs related to housing vouchers, homebuyer loan counseling services, and home rehabilitation assistance.
- Housing with three or more bedrooms, housing with one or two bedrooms, and accessory dwelling units are the most needed housing in the region.
- In Dos Palos, participants recommended housing development throughout the city, including along Nero Avenue and State Route 33.

Full survey results can be found in Appendix 1 to the Regional Housing Element, Community Survey Results.

## C2.3 Stakeholder Interviews

The City also participated in a series of stakeholder interviews with service providers, residents, and housing developers held between August 8, 2023, and August 23, 2023. A complete summary of the stakeholder interviews can be found in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, to the Regional Housing Element.

Key findings included:

- Service providers stated there is a need for affordable housing throughout the county with access to resources.
- Residents expressed that rental units need maintenance and repair.
- Additional housing services are needed throughout communities in the county include transitional housing, rental assistance, first-time homebuyer assistance, and education on tenants' rights.
- Residents expressed concern over the high cost of housing, particularly for renters.

- Residents identified a need for more community engagement efforts that allow residents to participate in a meaningful way, including workshops and translation services during outreach events.

## C2.4 Response to Community Input

During community outreach, community members identified the following overarching themes regarding housing in Dos Palos. Below is a summary of how each theme is addressed in the Housing Element.

### **Need more affordable housing for both renters and buyers.**

The City will accommodate at least 175 units affordable to very low-, low-, and moderate-income households. The City will accommodate these units on sites that are currently vacant or underutilized, including seven sites that will be rezoned to allow higher residential densities, which includes two sites that will be annexed from Merced County. Of the sites to be rezoned, six sites that currently allow commercial uses will be rezoned to allow multifamily housing.

Approximately 85percent of moderate and above-moderate housing units will be on sites that support multifamily housing, encouraging the development of townhomes and condominiums for more affordable homeownership opportunities.

Through Housing Program 8 the City looks to expand multifamily housing stock through contacting non-profit and private developers to facilitate the production of affordable housing as well as pursue funding opportunities available at the local, regional, state and federal levels. Multi-family housing provide affordable housing options to add into the city's housing stock.

The City has 109 housing units that are deed restricted as affordable housing for lower-income households. Although these are not at risk of conversion, under Program 9, the City will work to preserve these units as affordable housing and will proactively monitor all other units to encourage continued affordability beyond existing covenants and work proactively with owners of affordable units to assist in rehabilitation needs.

### **Support for transit-oriented development and increasing density in areas with existing services.**

Housing opportunity sites were prioritized by location, including proximity to transit, job centers, and community services. Site selection focused heavily on infill development of vacant and nonvacant sites along strategic corridors and in neighborhoods with existing services.

Housing Program 1 directs the City to collaborate with other jurisdictions on housing efforts, including funding opportunities, best practices, and other efforts to address housing, transit, economic development, and homeless issues in Merced County. This Program included participation in MCAG to manage and implement regional transit services, including an annual community workshop to identify transportation needs for Dos Palos residents.

Housing Program 13 encourages the development, design, and infrastructure for infill projects. This will aid infrastructure improvements, including public transit.

Housing Program 14 directs the City to create a well-maintained city infrastructure to provide a safe and accessible urban environment. The City will collaborate with Merced County Transit (the Bus) to determine locations of bus stops to serve new developments in annexed neighborhoods. The city

will also partner with local employment organizations to connect Dos Palos residents with job opportunities such as collaborating with the Bus to provide free bus passes to residents attending job fairs and interviews.

**Need for rental assistance for low-income families and rent-restricted housing.**

Housing Program 11 directs the City to assist in the development of housing to meet the needs of extremely low-, very low- and low-income households and special needs households. By continuing to work with Housing Authority of the County of Merced, housing choice vouchers, public housing, project-based voucher program, and migrant housing centers will be provided. The City intends to assist 200 Dos Palos households through Housing Choice Vouchers.

**Need to increase the variety of available rental and for sale housing types, including apartments and townhomes, and more options for three-bedroom units.**

In order to facilitate a variety of housing types, especially housing for lower-income households and those with special needs, the City will remove constraints to housing development by amending the Zoning Code through Housing Program 6.

Through Housing Program 8 the City looks to expand multifamily housing stock by contacting non-profit and private developers to facilitate the production of affordable housing as well as pursue funding opportunities available at the local, regional, state and federal levels. Multi-family housing and mobile units will increase the variety of available rental and for sale housing types.

**Need for housing rehabilitation services homeowners with aging housing stock and those with flood damage.**

Housing Program 10 directs the City to utilize various programs and community partnerships to encourage the rehabilitation of housing units, as well as maintaining the supply of affordable housing. The City will work with non-profits in their community to assist with rehabilitation, annually research funding opportunities, with a goal to assist with 10 rehabilitation projects over eight years.

**Need increased education on housing rights and legal resources for tenants and landlords.**

Under Housing Program 15 the City works with the Merced County Housing Authority to provide fair housing information and resources to residents and housing providers. Educational flyers and factsheets will be distributed and shared on the City's website, and annual staff trainings will start in 2025 on how to refer residents for fair housing complaints.