

D2 Public Participation

This section documents the efforts the City of Gustine 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*.

D2.1 Community Workshops

Flyers advertising the workshops were distributed by the City of Gustine 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 Gustine on August 29, 2023 at the Al-Goman Community Center. One participant 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.

Participants addressed concerns regarding a lack of housing opportunities for all income levels and housing with supportive services. They expressed a desire to live in a clean, safe, inclusive community with greater access to essential services.

Key findings from the workshops are as follows:

- Housing affordability makes it difficult to find housing
- In looking for housing, residents care about safety, access to parks, access to medical care and commercial resources, and public services and maintenance.
- Lack of housing with supportive services was voted the most important housing issue in Gustine. This was followed by rent affordability or increases, community opposition to new housing, and lack of housing close to stores, schools, or work.
- Residents identified sites in Southwest and Southeast Gustine that they believe are appropriate for housing development.

D2.2 Survey

The City conducted a community survey to inform the 6th Cycle Housing Element update. The survey was released to the public online on April 6, 2023, and remained open until 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, two respondents either live, work, attend school, or own a business or property in Gustine.

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

- Close to resources such as commercial, medical facilities, and work and school is the most important aspect when looking for new housing, followed by accessibility and having the ability to build an accessory dwelling unit and land to grow crops/have a ranch. Safe neighborhoods were also noted as important when searching for housing. Respondents want housing in the town center, and near public transit stops, employment, and shopping centers.
- The largest barriers to affordable desirable housing are the limited supply of housing, particularly affordable housing, and discrimination based on race/ethnicity, religion, number of children in household, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or another characteristic. Respondents also noted the lack of good paying jobs to be able to afford housing.
- Respondents noted that homelessness and overcrowding were the most urgent housing issues in the Merced region.
- Respondents would like to see programs related to housing assistance for residents with special needs, homebuyer loan counseling, landlord/tenant mediation services, and home rehabilitation assistance.
- Housing with one or two bedrooms and housing with three or more bedrooms are the most needed housing in the region.

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

D2.3 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.

D2.4 Other Community Outreach

The City offered additional several community engagement opportunities to gather further feedback on housing issues throughout the City. The City held additional community workshops on September 27 and November 16, 2023, an informational meeting on October 25, 2023, and a community outreach event on November 3, 2023. "Donuts with a Planner," held on November 3, 2023, provided an opportunity for the community to meet one-on-one with the City to discuss

housing needs, and ask questions regarding the Housing Element Update process. An additional Community Planning Workshop was held at Perry's and More Pizza on November 16, 2023.

The City distributed an online community survey in addition to the multi-jurisdictional housing survey, offered in both English and Spanish, through the City of Gustine website from November 3 to December 8, 2023. The survey asked participants various housing, environmental justice, and safety-related question regarding the community. Most survey participants reported that they own their home and live in a single-family home.

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

- The most important aspects when looking for housing are the quality and size of housing, affordability, close to shopping and services (groceries and medical), and close to work and/or school.
- The type of housing that is most needed in Gustine is single-family housing primarily for double-income families or higher-wage earners, followed by housing affordable to public service workers and multifamily housing with at least three bedrooms.
- The single largest barrier to affordable, desirable housing in Gustine is the insufficient supply of housing, followed by the lack of availability of housing that is rent-restricted and high cost of quality housing.
- The most urgent housing challenges in Gustine include the affordability of desired housing, availability of desired housing, and housing quality.

D2.5 Response to Community Input

During community outreach, community members identified the following overarching themes regarding housing in Gustine. Each one is discussed with how it is addressed in the Housing Element.

Need more affordable housing for both renters and buyers.

The City will accommodate at least 228 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 four sites that will be rezoned to allow higher residential densities.

All 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.

Housing Program 5 includes actions to encourage the development of at least 16 accessory dwelling units (ADUs) during the planning period by creating standard plans and streamlining the permit process. ADUs often provide relatively affordable rental options.

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

The City has 33 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 includes participation in MCAG to manage and implement regional transit services, including an annual community workshop to identify transportation needs for Gustine residents.

Housing Program 13 directs the City to create a well-maintained city infrastructure to provide a safe and accessible urban environment. The City will implement an Active Transportation Plan and seek funding for and include pedestrian and bicycle improvements in Capital Improvement Planning, as feasible. This Plan will foster street connections and pedestrian/bicycle networks.

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 (HCV), public housing, project-based voucher program, and migrant housing centers will be provided. Starting in 2025, the City will annually conduct an outreach event for landlords on the HCV program, with a goal of seven events during the planning period.

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 amend the Zoning Code remove constraints to housing development through Housing Program 6. This would include zoning amendments for items like development standards, density bonus, ADUs, single-room occupancy, emergency shelters, residential care facilities, farmworker housing, and supportive housing.

In order to facilitate a variety of housing types, specifically multi-family housing, the City will revise the General Plan to include a minimum of one multi-family or mixed-use designation through Housing Program 7.

Through Housing Program 8, the City looks to expand multi-family 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 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 the community to assist with rehabilitation, annually research funding opportunities, with a goal to assist with five units annually through the Weatherization Program.

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

Under Housing Program 14, the City will work with the Merced County Housing Authority to provide fair housing information and resources to residents and housing providers. The City will coordinate with Central California Legal Services (CCLS) or other fair housing nonprofit organizations to provide fair housing and tenant/landlord services. By January 2025, the City will update its website to include fair housing rights and responsibilities for landlords and lenders and continue to offer information on the electronic marquee, at City Hall, City libraries, and local media.

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