

A7 Housing Plan

This eight-year Housing Plan (2024-2032) sets forth a strategy, including goals, policies, and programs, to address housing issues identified in the County of Merced.

A7.1 Goals and Policies

Goal 1: Regional Collaboration	Work collaboratively with jurisdictions in the county to efficiently address housing issues and find regional solutions.
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Policy 1.1 Proactively coordinate with cities, Merced County, and other agencies and organizations to create effective policies and programs and respond to opportunities for achieving common housing goals.

Policy 1.2 Participate in, as appropriate, pursuit of state and federal housing funds to address regional housing issues.

Goal 2: Housing Development	Provide an adequate supply and range of housing types to meet the diverse needs of residents.
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Policy 2.1 Provide adequate sites for new housing development to accommodate the regional housing needs allocation (RHNA) throughout the planning period.

Policy 2.2 Facilitate a range of housing development that will meet the needs of all income levels including extremely low, very-low, low-, moderate- and above moderate households.

Policy 2.3 Encourage a range of housing types and sizes in large-scale development and annexations.

Policy 2.4 Promote infill development on vacant and underutilized sites within developed areas.

Policy 2.5 Encourage higher-density and mixed-use residential development along major transportation and transit corridors and/or near existing or planned community facilities and services.

Policy 2.6 Enact programs that facilitate well-designed, energy-efficient development and flexible standards to encourage high-quality projects.

Goal 3: Affordable Housing Options

Facilitate the development of affordable housing and protect the existing supply of affordable housing to extremely low, very low-, low- and moderate-income households.

- Policy 3.1** Provide a range of incentives and tools to encourage affordable housing for all lower-income levels, including extremely low-income.
- Policy 3.2** Support the Merced County Housing Authority (MCHA) by promoting Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) opportunities.
- Policy 3.3** Ensure permit processing procedures to ensure streamlining is available for affordable housing development projects (SB 35).
- Policy 3.4** Support the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as an affordable housing option.
- Policy 3.5** Promote home ownership for lower- and moderate- income households by pursuing grant funding for downpayment assistance and other homeownership loan programs.
- Policy 3.6** Monitor existing affordable housing developments and pursue preservation strategies to maintain their affordability.

Goal 4: Housing and Neighborhood Preservation

Maintain and improve the County’s existing housing stock.

- Policy 4.1** Preserve existing residential neighborhoods by promoting balanced design and architecture.
- Policy 4.2** Support code enforcement efforts to work with property owners with repairs and rehabilitation of housing to preserve existing housing stock.
- Policy 4.3** Utilize Capital Improvement Programs for repairs and improvements of public infrastructure and facilities in existing neighborhoods.

Goal 5: Housing for Persons with Special Needs

Support and provide housing and services for people with special needs in the community. People with special needs include, but are not limited to, seniors, families with children, people with disabilities, single-parent families, farmworkers, and people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

- Policy 5.1** Assist in local and regional efforts that address the housing needs of special needs residents.
- Policy 5.2** Provide reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities to access housing opportunities.
- Policy 5.3** Support the development of affordable housing units for farmworkers and farmworker families by encouraging the use of federal, state, and local resources.

Policy 5.4 Coordinate with regional agencies and local non-profit/private developers on housing options and services for people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

Policy 5.5 Proactively apply for and utilize available resources to provide and maintain housing for special needs groups.

Goal 6: Resource Conservation and Sustainable Development

Utilize energy conservation and sustainable measures for new and rehabilitated housing.

Policy 6.1 Support and, as appropriate, incentivize the use of green building techniques for new housing and rehabilitation.

Policy 6.2 Promote energy conservation and efficiency in residential developments.

Goal 7: Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Promote housing opportunities and access for residents regardless of age, race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, disability, or economic level in compliance with local, state, and federal fair housing laws.

Policy 7.1 Promote meaningful and informed participation of residents, community groups, and governmental agencies in all local housing and community development activities.

Policy 7.2 Comply with federal, state, and local fair housing anti-discrimination laws ensuring equal access to housing regardless of circumstances as protected by fair housing laws.

Policy 7.3 Provide fair housing services to County residents and ensure that residents are aware of their fair housing rights.

Policy 7.4 Provide residents with housing mobility options by facilitating the development of a variety of housing types and expanding access to housing services.

Policy 7.5 Protect tenants from discriminatory housing practices and displacement.

Policy 7.6 Promote the integration of affordable and special needs housing in existing and planned neighborhoods.

A7.2 Implementing Programs

Program 1: Regional Collaboration

Collaborate with other jurisdictions in the region on housing efforts, including funding opportunities, best practices, and other efforts to address housing, transit, economic development, and homeless issues in Merced County.

Regional collaboration efforts can include, but are not limited to:

- Affordable housing development opportunities
- Regional housing programs and outreach efforts
- Economic development opportunities
- Creation of a regional Housing Trust Fund

- Coordination on funding applications and administration
- Identify transit opportunities and access near new and established residential areas
- Develop environmental mitigation that can improve the quality of life for residents
- Efforts for the development of emergency shelters, low barrier navigation centers, transitional and supportive housing as well as support services for persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless in the county, including participation in services offered by the County

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in regional meetings related to housing and homeless issues to pursue funding and coordination opportunities. Annually pursue funding opportunities for regional housing issues. ▪ Partner with the Merced County Human Services Agency and/or the Merced County Community Action Agency to proactively address shelter, housing and support services for people experiencing homelessness. ▪ Participate in the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) Authority to manage and implement regional transit and services, while providing a public forum for cross-jurisdictional issues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Hold at least one community workshop to identify transportation needs and apply for funding to implement projects using Measure V funds. ▪ Work with the Merced Continuum of Care to complete and implement the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness during the planning period.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund; federal, state, and local grant funds
Relevant Policies	1.1, 1.2
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outreach and Education ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources ▪ Anti-Displacement and Tenant Protection
AFFH Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	N/A

Program 2: Adequate Sites for RHNA and Monitoring of No Net Loss

For the 6th Cycle Housing Element, the County of Merced has been assigned a RHNA of 4,250 units, including:

- Very Low Income: 1,042 units
- Low Income: 714 units
- Moderate Income: 736 units
- Above Moderate Income: 1,758 units

The County is committed to ensuring that adequate sites at appropriate densities remain available during the planning period, as required by law. As of December 2023, the County has identified capacity for 177 units through projects under construction, approved, or permitted, that will be

available during the RHNA projection period. The County also projects 16 ADUs affordable to above moderate-income households will be developed during the planning period. Accounting for these units, the County has a remaining RHNA of 4,057 units (1,042 very low income, 714 low income, and 736 moderate income, and 1,565 above moderate income) for which the County must identify adequate sites for potential development.

The County has identified vacant and nonvacant sites with potential for development/redevelopment, or adaptive reuse of existing uses over the next eight years. The County is divided into seven Census Designated Places (CDPs), identified as Urban Communities for the purpose of the Site Inventory. Forty vacant and 12 nonvacant (agricultural uses) opportunity sites have been identified throughout the CDPs that do not require rezoning and have a capacity of 2,625 units (358 lower income, 747 moderate income, and 1,520 above moderate income). Therefore, based on units in progress, ADU projection and existing capacity, the County has incurred a shortfall of 1,432 units (1,398 lower- and 45 above moderate-income units) for which the County must identify sites for rezoning. Based on an average density of 24 units per acre, at least 59 acres of rezoning would be required to address this shortfall.

Specifically, an additional 20 sites (17 vacant, 3 nonvacant with agricultural uses) have been identified for rezoning, with a potential capacity totaling 1,597 units (1,523 lower-, 37 moderate-, and 37 above moderate-income units). These rezone sites are subject to the by-right approval requirements of AB 1397 as the appropriate zoning was not in place as of the beginning of the statutory deadline of the Housing Element (January 31, 2024).

This program describes the actions the County will take to ensure that adequate sites are designated consistent with Government Code Section 65583c)(1)(A) and 65583.2. The rezoned sites shall include the following components pursuant to Government Code Section 65583.2(i):

- Permit owner-occupied and rental multi-family uses by-right for developments in which 20 percent or more of the units are affordable to lower-income households. By-right means approval without discretionary review.
- Permit the development of at least 16 units per site.
- Establish a minimum density of 20 units per acre and a maximum density of at least 20 units per acre for all rezone sites to accommodate lower income RHNA.
- Ensure that either: a) at least 50 percent of the shortfall of low- and very-low-income regional housing need can be accommodated on sites designated for exclusively residential uses; or b) if accommodating more than 50 percent of the low- and very-low-income regional housing need on sites designated for mixed uses, all sites designated for mixed uses must allow 100 percent residential use and require that residential uses occupy at least 50 percent of the floor area in a mixed-use project.

To ensure that the County complies with SB 166 (No Net Loss), the County will monitor the consumption of residential and mixed-use acreage to ensure an adequate inventory is available to meet the County's RHNA obligations. To ensure sufficient residential capacity is maintained to accommodate the RHNA, the County will develop and implement a formal ongoing (project-by-project) evaluation procedure pursuant to Government Code Section 65863. Should an approval of development result in a reduction in capacity below the residential capacity needed to accommodate the remaining need for lower and moderate-income households, the County will identify and if necessary, rezone sufficient sites to accommodate the shortfall and ensure "no net loss" in capacity to accommodate the RHNA.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate the development of 4,250 units over eight years (1,042 very low-income, 714 low-income, 736 moderate-income, and 1,758 above moderate-income units). ▪ By January 31, 2025, rezone properties as outlined above and detailed in the Housing Resources section of this Housing Element to provide additional capacity, estimated at 1,597 units (all at a density that is feasible for lower income units). Specifically, at least 59 acres of rezoning to R-4 (20-33 du/ac) based on an average density of 24 du/ac will be needed to meet the 1,432-unit shortfall. As part of the rezoning, establish appropriate development standards (including parking, height, setback, lot coverage, etc.) to ensure maximum allowable densities at the respective zones can be achieved. ▪ Facilitate the development of 16 ADUs during the planning period. ▪ Maintain an inventory of available vacant and prospective sites that can accommodate new housing and update annually. Make this inventory available to the public and interested developers on the County website. ▪ Annually meet with property owners and interested developers to pursue housing development in the County. ▪ By January 31, 2025, develop a formal procedure to monitor no net loss in capacity pursuant to SB 166.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources
Geographic Targeting	N/A
AFFH Outcomes	N/A

Program 3: By-Right Approval

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65583.2, reusing the following types of sites in the County’s site inventory for lower-income RHNA are subject to by-right approval exempt from CEQA and subject only to design review based on objective standards when a project includes 20 percent of the units affordable to lower-income households and no subdivision is proposed:

Reuse Sites (No Rezoning Required):

- Vacant sites that were identified in the County’s 4th and 5th cycle Housing Elements as sites for lower-income RHNA; and
- Nonvacant sites that were identified in the County’s 5th cycle Housing Element as sites for lower-income RHNA.

The by-right approval requirement of reuse sites is effective January 31, 2024. Currently, the sites inventory does not include any sites that are considered reuse sites. Reuse sites that are proposed for rezone are subject to the by-right requirement under the rezone provisions.

Rezoning of sites past the statutory deadline of the Housing Element to meet the lower income RHNA are subject to the by-right approval requirement. The by-right approval requirement of rezone sites is triggered by the rezoning.

By-right shall mean the local government’s review shall not require:

- A conditional-use permit
- A planned unit development permit
- Other discretionary, local-government review or approval that would constitute a “project” as defined in Section 21100 of the Public Resources Code

This provision does not preclude local planning agencies from imposing design review standards. However, the review and approval process must remain ministerial, and the design review must not constitute a “project” as defined in Section 21100 of the Public Resources Code.

Parcels that are subject to by-right approval pursuant to state law are identified in Table 6.4-8 in Chapter A4, *Housing Resources and Site Inventory Analysis*. There are 22 sites identified in the site inventory that are subject to by-right approval due to rezoning past the statutory deadline of the Housing Element update, with a capacity totaling 1,818 units (all lower income).

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	By January 31, 2025, concurrent with the Zoning Code update to provide adequate sites for the RHNA (see Program 2), update the Zoning Code to address the by-right approval requirements.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	2.1, 2.2, 3.1
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	N/A

Program 4: Replacement Housing

Development on non-vacant sites with existing residential units is subject to replacement requirements, pursuant to AB 1397. Specifically, AB 1397 requires sites with a residential use within the last five years the replacement of units affordable to the same or lower income level as a condition of any development on a non-vacant site consistent with those requirements set forth in state Density Bonus Law.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	By January 31, 2025, amend the Zoning Code to address the replacement housing requirements.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	2.2, 3.6
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources ▪ Anti-Displacement and Tenant Protection
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	N/A

Program 5: Accessory Dwelling Units

ADUs provide an important affordable housing option in the County. The County’s ADU Ordinance will be updated in May 2024 to meet the height requirements that are outlined in AB 2221 and SB 897. The County is in the process of developing pre-approved ADU plans.

Consistent with Government Code, Section 65583 and Health & Safety Code, Section 50504.5 County will continue to encourage the production of ADUs and work to provide affordable units for lower-income households.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The County ADU Ordinance is scheduled to be amended in May 2024 to be in compliance with state law. Facilitate the development of 16 ADUs over 8 years. ▪ Adopt pre-approved ADU plans by January 31, 2025. Once ADU pre-approved plans are complete, add the information to the County webpage. ▪ By January 31, 2025, facilitate the production of ADUs through efforts including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Adding an ADU webpage to include available resources for ADU production, such as grants for pre-development costs available to lower-income homeowners through California Finance Agency (CalHFA). ▫ Offering expedited reviews for ADU applications. ▫ Conduct three educational workshops, campaigns, or outreach events to promote ADU development. ▫ Develop an ADU application checklist and publish the checklist on the County’s website by January 2025. ▫ Add information on the ADU permitting process, as well as available resources and incentives, on the County’s website by January 2025. ▪ Participate in regional collaboration efforts regarding pre-approved ADU plans. ▪ Explore an ADU amnesty program. If feasible, establish an ADU amnesty plan by December 2026.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outreach and Education ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources
Geographic Targeting	Countywide with emphasis on high-resource, single-family neighborhoods (Franklin/Beachwood CDP, Hilmar CDP)
AFFH Outcomes	Support the development of at least 16 ADUs in the unincorporated County during the planning period.

Program 6: Zoning Code Amendments

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

<p>Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines</p>	<p>Include the following Zoning Code Amendments by January 31, 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Standards: Revise the Zoning Code to allow larger multi-unit dwelling development by right and conditionally allow new single-family dwellings in the R-3, R-4, and M-U districts. ▪ SB 35 and SB 330 Procedures Establish written procedures for the processing of SB 35 and SB 330 projects pursuant to state law. ▪ Density Bonus: Revise the zoning code to provide additional density bonuses under the criteria set forth by AB 1287 (see Program 8). ▪ Transitional and Supportive Housing: Revise the Zoning Code to reduce minimum parking requirements for transitional and supportive housing located within one-half mile of a public transit stop. ▪ Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing: Revise the Zoning Code to allow the development of SROs in residential zones allowing multifamily uses and/or commercial zones allowing hotel and motel uses (C-2, C-3, and H-I-C). ▪ Emergency Shelters: Revise the Zoning Code to expand the definition of emergency shelters to include interim housing options and to clearly identify that emergency shelters are permitted in multi-family residential zones by-right without discretionary action. Amend the standards to comply with parking requirements under AB 139. ▪ Low Barrier Navigation Centers: Amend the Zoning Code to comply with AB 101 and allow Low-Barrier Navigation Centers in mixed-use and nonresidential districts that allow residential uses. ▪ Group Homes/Residential Care Facilities: Amend the Zoning Code to allow care facilities of seven or more residents in all zones that permit residential uses, with objectivity and certainty, and subject only to the requirements of residential uses of similar type and form. ▪ Employee Housing: Amend the Zoning Code to comply with Health and Safety Code Section 17021.5 of the Employee Housing Act, which requires that housing provided by an employer for up to six employees is considered a residential use, subject to the same standards as single-family residences. ▪ Farmworker Housing: Review and revise the Zoning Code to ensure compliance with the Employee Housing Act (H&S Code Section 17021.6), which requires that any farmworker housing consisting of no more than 36 beds in group quarters or 12 units or spaces designed for use by a single family or household shall be deemed an agricultural land use for the purposes of this section. For all local ordinances, farmworker housing shall not be deemed a use that implies that the farmworker housing is an activity that differs in any other way from an agricultural use. No conditional use permit, zoning variance, or other zoning clearance shall be required of this farmworker housing that is not required of any other agricultural activity in the same zone. The permitted occupancy in farmworker housing in a zone allowing agricultural uses shall include agricultural employees who do not work on the property where the farmworker housing is located. Also see Program 12. ▪ Objective Design Standards/Guidelines: In accordance with SB 330 remove subjective judgement from the site plan, conditional use permit, design review, minor deviation and variance findings and replace with objective standards to promote certainty and objectivity for the applicant.
<p>Primary Responsible Departments</p>	<p>Planning Division</p>
<p>Funding Sources</p>	<p>General Fund</p>

Relevant Policies	2.2, 3.1, 3.4, 5.2, 5.3, 7.4
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources ▪ Anti-Displacement and Tenant Protection
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	Facilitate the development of 50 units for special needs populations during the planning period.

Program 7: General Plan and Community Plan Amendments

The County will implement the following General Plan and Community Plan Amendments to facilitate the development of a variety of housing types, specifically multi-family housing and affordable housing.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise the General Plan to accommodate higher densities, and to rezone more areas to densities of at least 30 dwelling units per acre to accommodate more forms of low-income housing. ▪ Review and revise the County’s Community Plans to ensure consistency with the General Plan, with densities that are adequate to facilitate affordable housing.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Department
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	2.2, 2.3
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	Support the development of 4,250 housing units during the planning period.

Program 8: Facilitating Affordable Housing Development

The County is committed to expanding affordable housing options for households of all income levels using development tools such as density bonus provisions, waiving or reducing development fees and streamlining the application process. The County will contact local non-profit and private developers to facilitate the production of this housing as well as pursue funding opportunities available at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.

On a case-by-case basis, the County will provide opportunities for public, private and non-profit groups to develop affordable housing by constructing off-site improvements and physical infrastructure as Capital Improvement Projects. Assistance provided by the County may include traffic, street, and sewer upgrades as well as other pedestrian and mobility improvements.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annually pursue funding at the local, regional, state, and federal levels such as state CDBG, CalHome, PLHA, and Project Homekey funds. ▪ Work with other jurisdictions in Merced County to create a regional list of affordable housing developers. Annually conduct outreach to these developers with information on potential sites, available regulatory concessions and incentives, and potential funding opportunities. ▪ By January 31, 2025, revise the Density Bonus Ordinance in compliance with state law (Government Code Section 65915) to equally provide for density bonuses in all zoning districts where residential uses are permitted and to include provisions relative to density bonuses, incentives, and concessions as required by state law. ▪ Facilitate the development of affordable housing by allowing improvements to be negotiated. ▪ Facilitate the development of affordable housing through the provision of the following regulatory concessions and incentives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Density increases under the County’s Density Bonus Ordinance. ▫ Potential fee waivers/reductions/deferrals. ▫ Fast track processing and expediting plan checks and building inspections to meet construction deadlines associated with the award of federal tax credits. ▪ Review permit fees annually to ensure fees do not inhibit the development of affordable housing. ▪ Inform housing development community about state-level streamlining policies (please see Program 6) by utilizing print and digital materials. ▪ Ensure infrastructure is in place to accommodate new housing. ▪ Adopt an ordinance that establishes specific procedures to grant priority service within a year of the certification of the Housing Element to housing with units affordable to lower-income households whenever capacity is limited.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	Local, state, and federal resources, General Fund, CDBG
Relevant Policies	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3, 7.4
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of Higher Resources
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	Facilitate the increase of the percent of the County’s housing stock that is multifamily from 16 percent to 19 percent by December 2031, using 2017-2021 ACS data as a baseline.

Program 9: Preservation of At-Risk Housing

There are 204 assisted units in the County, none of which are at risk of conversion to market-rate units by 2033. The County will proactively monitor all units to encourage continued affordability beyond existing covenants and work proactively with owners of affordable units to assist in rehabilitation needs.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor affordable units during the planning period. ▪ Ensure tenants are properly noticed by the property owners should a Notice of Intent to opt out of low-income use is filed. Notices must be filed three years, one year and six months in advance of conversion. ▪ Maintain annual contact with property owners of affordable housing regarding any change in status/intent or need for assistance, such as rehabilitation assistance. ▪ Maintain the AB 987 database to include detailed information on all subsidized units, including those that have affordability covenants. Update annually.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	3.6, 5.5
AFFH Themes	Anti-Displacement and Tenant Protection
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	Preserve all affordable housing units.

Program 10: Housing Preservation and Rehabilitation

Approximately 50 percent of the housing stock in the County of Merced is more than 40 years old (built before 1980). The County’s Buildings & Safety Division, which administers the Substandard Housing Program, estimates that approximately 50 units require major rehabilitation and fewer than 15 units countywide are beyond the point of repair. Inspections are conducted in response to public complaints or an inspector’s observation that construction is occurring without proper permits. The County’s Code Enforcement staff regularly distribute information about the County’s home rehabilitation program to property owners undergoing enforcement. The County currently receives CDBG and HOME funds to assist in the rehabilitation and conservation of existing housing units for income eligible households through the County’s Housing Rehabilitation Program.

The County Community and Economic Development Department continues to provide information on energy efficiency and to refer homeowners to the Community Action Agency for assistance with energy conservation and weatherization. The County will utilize information dissemination programs such as the County website and newsletter to educate the public on low-cost preventative maintenance, as well as energy conservation measures.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize the Code Enforcement Division to track areas where rehabilitation needs are heightened. ▪ Continue to review funding opportunities and apply for funds when appropriate. The County currently receives CDBG and HOME funds to assist in the rehabilitation and conservation of existing housing units for income eligible households. ▪ Conduct a housing conditions survey in the Urban Communities by December 2028. ▪ Utilize the County’s website and newsletter to educate the public on low-cost preventative maintenance, as well as energy conservation measures, they can take to prolong the life and quality of their home and reduce their long-term utility and maintenance costs.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division, Building and Safety Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.5

AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outreach and Education ▪ Place-Based Strategy for Neighborhood Improvements
Geographic Targeting	Countywide with emphasis on areas with larger proportions of substandard housing units (areas near Dos Palos, Planada CDP and Winton CDP)
AFFH Outcomes	<p>If feasible, apply for one funding opportunity for residential rehabilitation assistance annually.</p> <p>Assist five units annually through the Weatherization Program.</p>

Program 11: Lower-Income and Special Needs Housing

To assist in the development of housing to meet the needs of extremely low-, very low-, and low-income households, the Housing Authority of Merced County (HACM) offers the following programs:

- **Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs):** Offers affordable, decent, and safe housing in open market rentals selected by voucher holders. Voucher holders receive a fixed subsidy, which the Housing Authority pays directly to the landlord, and tenants are responsible for payment of the remainder of the rent.
- **Public Housing:** Provides rental assistance to low- and moderate-income families and individuals. The HACM owns and manages all 421 rental units offered under this program, located in communities throughout Merced County.
- **Project-Based Voucher Program (PBVs):** The Housing Authority released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the PBV Program in November 2023, seeking proposals from owners/developers who will commit up to 150 units of their rental housing to receive assistance through project-based vouchers.

The County will continue to work with the Housing Authority to obtain HCVs and provide the community with information about other available programs.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist 2,700 households in unincorporated Merced through HCVs. ▪ Work with the Housing Authority to continue providing assistance in the community. ▪ Over the eight-year planning period, subsequent to each Point-in-Time Count, conduct workshops for the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to share the data from the count. ▪ Develop an inventory of affordable housing, with contact information and the number of affordable units, and publish the inventory on the County’s website by January 2025. ▪ Connect low-income residents with housing assistance resources, including the HCV program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Add information on the HCV Program and other housing assistance programs to the County’s website by January 2025. ▫ Promote the availability of assistance programs through all County’s social media pages. ▫ Attend at least two community events to spread awareness and distribute fact sheets on available financial assistance programs. ▪ In collaboration with the Housing Authority, provide education to property owners and managers to expand awareness of the HCV program to increase acceptance of tenant-based HCVs and to facilitate mobility and provide choices for lower-income households throughout the County. Identify and address challenges that property owners/managers have with existing or prospective HCV holders.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Starting in 2025, annually conduct one outreach event for landlords on the HCV program, for a total of seven events during the planning period (i.e., workshops, community events, mailings, etc.). ▪ Actively advertise the availability of the First Time Homebuyers Program. ▪ Connect property owners and developers with the priority permitting process for special needs housing through information on the website and planning/building counter. ▪ Encourage the use of the Density Bonus Provision to allow a 50% increase in the number of units allowed in medium and high-density zones dedicated exclusively for Senior Housing, if at least 50% of the units are affordable to very low-income households. ▪ Continue to work on the development of the University Community Plan. ▪ For extremely low-income housing projects, provide information referral, consultation regarding applications and assisting private individuals and nonprofit organizations in applying for state and federal funds. ▪ Work with other agencies to assist in identifying and procuring funding for extremely low-, very low-, and low- income rental programs. The County continues to work with the Merced County Housing Authority, the Community Action Agency, the Salvation Army, and other Continuum of Care partners to provide funding for income-eligible households. ▪ The County will continue to work with the Merced County Association of Governments to implement the Continuum of Care to address the homeless issues in Merced.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	HUD, Community Action Agency funding sources
Relevant Policies	3.2, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 7.4
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outreach and Education ▪ Housing Mobility ▪ New Housing Opportunities in Areas of High Resources ▪ Anti-Displacement and Tenant Protection
Geographic Targeting	Countywide with emphasis on low resources areas (Le Grand CDP, Planada CDP and portions of Delhi CDP) and areas of higher percentage of low- and moderate-income households (e.g., Grand CDP, near Planada CDP, Santa Nella CDP)
AFFH Outcomes	<p>Promote, with the goal of expanding, the use of HCVs in the County by 10 percent by December 2030, using 2023 data as baseline.</p> <p>Conduct one HCV outreach event annually for a total of seven events during the planning period.</p>

Program 12: Farmworker Housing

The unincorporated County had 5,656 farmworkers in 2021, representing 10 percent of the total farmworker population across the county. The Housing Authority manages four Migrant Centers throughout the County. The Migrant Housing Centers provide temporary housing to migrant farm workers available to them during the peak growing and harvest season, which is typically April through November. Migrant Centers managed by the Housing Authority are located in Atwater, Merced, Los Banos, and Planada.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the additional dwelling occupancy monitoring permit (ADOMP) program to facilitate the provision of private farmworker housing in agricultural zones. • Apply for or support applications for funding for farm worker housing with the goal of achieving 150 housing units for farmworkers and farmworker households. • Periodically review available funding programs to identify additional funding sources for farmworker housing. • Work with farm owners and central labor providers to determine the number of farmworkers who may need housing. The resulting report should address permanent workers, seasonal resident workers, and migrant workers. • Seek partnerships with farm owners, central labor providers, housing developers and other agencies to achieve housing for farmworkers and farmworker households. • Provide fast-track permit processing: offer a reduction in the number of parking spaces required based on the number of vehicles used for transportation; Explore the use of modified site development standards, e.g., street widths, paving, curbs/gutters, placement of public works improvements, or landscaping.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	2.1, 3.3, 3.5, 5.1, 5.3
AFFH Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Mobility
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	Achieve 150 housing units for farmworker and farmworker households.

Program 13: Water and Sewer Service

In the unincorporated county, CDPs special independent districts, with independent governance from the County, provide water and wastewater to urban unincorporated communities. This Housing Element analyzes the availability of water and sewer capacity in the CDPs.

The County will provide a copy of the Housing Element to the unincorporated county’s water and sewer service providers within one month of the Housing Element adoption. The County of Merced will follow the requirement to prioritize water and sewer service allocation for new affordable housing development (Government Code Section 65589.7).

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annually, conduct outreach and education on water conservation measures through a social media campaign. Include staff from the unincorporated County’s water and sewer districts. ▪ Pursue/provide rehabilitation assistance that includes energy conservation and weatherization improvements as eligible activities. ▪ Work with the unincorporated County’s water and sewer districts to prioritize water and wastewater infrastructure improvements to accommodate additional growth and density, with a special focus on affordable housing.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Fund
Relevant Policies	3.1, 4.4

AFFH Themes	N/A
Geographic Targeting	Countywide
AFFH Outcomes	N/A

Program 14: Community and Economic Development

Well-maintained infrastructure creates a safe and accessible urban environment, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Moreover, investing in such improvements attracts businesses and investments, contributing to economic growth and ensuring equal access to essential services. The County will implement the following actions to expand community and economic development countywide.

Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide assistance in developing long-term infrastructure financing for new communities, such as the formation of a Mello-Roos or special assessment district to support a long-term, low-interest revenue bond to fund infrastructure improvements. ▪ Monitor state and federal funding opportunities for infrastructure projects. ▪ Work with MCAG on a multi-jurisdictional Active Transportation Plan (ATP) and Local Road Safety Plan. ▪ Similar to the ATP being prepared for the Franklin-Beachwood area, coordinate ATPs in the other unincorporated urban communities. ▪ Incorporate connected street and pedestrian/bicycle networks in Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs) for existing Urban Communities and proposed new communities. Priority should be given to disadvantaged communities.
Primary Responsible Departments	Planning Division
Funding Sources	General Funds
Relevant Policies	3.1, 4.4
AFFH Themes	Place-based Strategies for Neighborhood Improvement
Geographic Targeting	Countywide with emphasis on low resources areas (Le Grand CDP, Planada CDP and portions of Delhi CDP) and areas of higher percentage of low- and moderate-income households (Le Grand CDP, near Planada CDP, Santa Nella CDP)
AFFH Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete five CIP projects during the planning period.

Program 15: Fair Housing Outreach and Enforcement

The County of Merced has information about fair housing available at the Community and Economic Development counter and the Merced County Human Services Agency. The County of Merced coordinates with the Housing Authority of the County of Merced (HACM) to provide fair housing information and resources to residents and housing providers. In addition, the County refers fair housing inquiries and complaints to Central California Legal Services (CCLS), a nonprofit organization that provides fair housing information and resources to residents and housing providers. The CCLS helps tenants in disputes with their landlords and bring cases to ensure local governments follow the law to provide low-income housing. The County also refers individuals with fair housing complaints to HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO).

<p>Specific Actions, Objectives and Timelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate with Central California Legal Services (CCLS) and other fair housing nonprofit organizations to provide fair housing and tenant/landlord services, including investigation of discrimination complaints, fair housing counseling and education, fair housing testing, and tenant/landlord counseling and mediation. ▪ Promote meaningful cross-cultural participation in the decision-making process by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Providing County-sponsored material in multiple languages. ▫ Organizing outreach events and conducting surveys directly to specific demographic groups. ▫ Partnering with community-based organizations that have relationships, trust, and cultural competency with target communities to conduct outreach for local initiatives and issues. ▫ Tailoring activities and the venues where they take place to accommodate the cultural preferences of different racial/ethnic groups. ▪ Make meetings and other public engagement forums accessible to a wide range of residents and encourage greater attendance by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Ensuring any materials are distributed far enough in advance of meetings to allow sufficient time for review and comment. ▫ Using communication methods that convey complex or technical information in an easily understandable manner. ▫ Facilitating meetings using diverse methods that can engage all participants and can appeal to multiple styles of learning. ▫ Focusing on methods to effectively engage younger residents. ▪ Partner with local organizations to distribute information on fair housing services and homebuyer education programs by distributing flyers, attending local events, social media campaigns, and educational workshops in both English and Spanish. ▪ Coordinate with non-profit organizations, local community groups, and service organizations to increase awareness of and access to housing resources and fair housing assistance. ▪ Update the County’s website to include fair housing education materials including rights and responsibilities for landlords and lenders. Offer this information online, the County’s newsletter, County government buildings and local media. Complete updates by January 2025. ▪ In coordination with other Merced County jurisdictions, develop a Fair Housing factsheet to be included with the ADU application packet to inform property owners of their responsibility with state and federal fair housing laws. Publish fair housing guide with ADU applications on or before January 2025. ▪ Conduct fair housing outreach, including dissemination of the ADU Fair Housing factsheet, at one workshop or community event annually.
<p>Primary Responsible Departments</p>	<p>Department of Development Services</p>
<p>Funding Sources</p>	<p>General Fund</p>
<p>Relevant Policies</p>	<p>3.1, 4.4</p>
<p>AFFH Themes</p>	<p>Planning Division</p>
<p>Geographic Targeting</p>	<p>Countywide with emphasis on low resources areas (Le Grand CDP, Planada CDP and portions of Delhi CDP) and areas of higher percentage of low- and moderate-income households (Le Grand CDP, near Planada CDP, Santa Nella CDP)</p>

AFFH Outcomes	Assist at least 15 residents and landlords with fair housing services annually, throughout planning period. Conduct one outreach event annually to disseminate fair housing information (workshop, community event, etc.).
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Program 16: AFFH Actions

Government Code Section 8899.50 requires “meaningful actions” well beyond combating discrimination to overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities. Actions to affirmatively further fair housing include:

- Enhancing housing mobility strategies
- Encouraging development of new affordable housing in high resource areas
- Increasing fair housing enforcement and fair housing outreach capacity
- Improving place-based strategies to encourage community conservation and revitalization, including preservation of existing affordable housing
- Protecting existing residents from displacement

Actions to affirmatively furthering fair housing are summarized below.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Action Matrix

Program	Specific Commitment	Timeline	Geographic Targeting	Eight-Year Metrics
AFFH Action: Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)	The NSP assists potential low- and moderate-income homeowners with the purchase of bank owned properties within specific targeted geographical areas of eligibility. Specific eligibility areas have been identified within the unincorporated areas of the County of Merced (Delhi, Franklin/Beachwood, Hilmar, Le Grand, Planada, Santa Nella, South Dos Palos, and Winton).	2024-2032	Designated unincorporated communities (Delhi, Franklin/Beachwood , Hilmar, Le Grand, Planada, Santa Nella, South Dos Palos, and Winton)	Assist two potential homeowners through the NSP annually, for a total of 16 during the planning period.
AFFH Action: Virginia Smith Trust Specific Plan, UCP Village 1 and 2	<p>The Specific Plan has been adopted.</p> <p>Implement the following to support housing affordability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workforce Housing Incentive Program: 152 low- and moderate-income units restricted for affordability. ▪ Self-Help Housing Program: Provide 25 units for Lower Income households that would have affordability covenants. ▪ UC Workers First: Preference for purchasing and renting will be provided to UC staff, students and instructors to fulfill the commitment in the UCP that the specific plan be socially and economically integrated with the university. This program is expected to benefit 50 lower income households, 550 moderate income households, and 200 above moderate-income households. ▪ Multifamily Construction Program: provide improved sites that are adequate for up to 325 dwelling units, with sites for at least 225 units Phases 1A through 1E and 100 units in Phase 2. These sites will be provided to affordable housing providers and will be developed with a combination of market rate units, and at least 100 units for extremely low income households, 125 units for very low income households, and 100 units for low income households. 	2024-2032	UCP Village 1 and 2 (UC Merced)	Implement actions outlined in the Specific Plan and associated Development Agreement to support the development of 100 affordable units during the planning period.

Merced County Association of Governments
Merced County Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Element (2024-2032)

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Action Matrix				
Program	Specific Commitment	Timeline	Geographic Targeting	Eight-Year Metrics
AFFH Action: Walkable Winton Town Center Plan	Implement economic development recommendations outlined in the Walkable Winton Town Center Plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Streetscape enhancements (street furnishings, landscaping, wayfinding signage, tree plantings, etc.) ▪ Programming that activates the street ▪ Reduce regulatory barriers ▪ Business coordination and cooperation ▪ Business assistance ▪ Workforce training 	2024-2032	Winton	Complete five improvements outlined in the Walkable Winton Town Center Plan during the Housing Element planning period.
AFFH: Climate Action Plan (CAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to develop a CAP to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with statewide targets, lower energy costs, reduce air pollution, support local economic development, and improve public health and quality of life. 	2024-2032	Countywide	Conduct two outreach events related to the CAP during the planning period. Adopt a County CAP.
AFFH Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct studies to identify the needs of disadvantaged communities. ▪ Apply for funding that focus on addressing distressed communities. 	Conduct study by end of 2028 Funding – annually if applicable	Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6	Develop plan to address needs of disadvantaged communities by end of 2028.

A7.3 Quantified Objectives

The County of Merced has established quantified objectives for housing production and rehabilitation for the Housing Element. These objectives are based upon expected availability of resources to address the County’s housing needs, expectations regarding future housing development, as well as prior objectives established in earlier housing plans. Table A7-1 below summarizes the County’s quantified objectives for implementing its various programs and actions outlined above.

Table A7-1 Quantified Objectives 2024-2032

Target Income and Affordability Level	New Construction	Rehabilitation	Conservation
Extremely Low	555	--	--
Very Low	487	--	--
Low	714	--	--
Moderate	736	--	--
Above Moderate	1,758	--	--
Total	4,250	--	204 (none at risk)

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