

**TOWN OF FAIRFAX  
STAFF REPORT  
Department of Planning and Building Services**

**TO:** Fairfax Planning Commission

**DATE:** February 15, 2024

**FROM:** Jeffrey Beiswenger, AICP, Planning & Building Director

**ACTION:** Study Session: General Plan Annual Progress Report

**CEQA STATUS:** Not applicable to study session

**BACKGROUND**

California Government Code Section 65400(a)(2) requires that each jurisdiction completes an annual progress report (APR) on the status of the General Plan and Housing Element and their implementation in the previous calendar year. A copy of the APR must be sent to both the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) by April 1st of each year. Town staff is in the process of preparing this report.

The intent of the legislation is to ensure the Town's General Plan is relied upon for land use decisions and that it remains an effective tool for guiding development. The report provides the Town Council and other decision makers with information regarding the status of the General Plan policies and their implementation during the past year.

The APR is comprised essentially of two reports required by two different agencies, with the directions for completing and forms for the General Plan Annual Progress Report provided by the Office of Planning and Research and the directions for completing the Housing Element form provided by and reviewed by the Housing and Community Development Department.

**Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)**

A key component of the APR is to report on progress towards meeting the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The RHNA is determined by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The RHNA is a State-mandated process intended to ensure every jurisdiction plans for enough housing to accommodate future growth. For the fifth cycle Housing Element RHNA (2015-22) the Fairfax allotment was 61 units and for the current sixth cycle RHNA (2023-31) the Fairfax allotment is 490 units, a significant increase. The RHNA is broken down into income groups as depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1  
RHNA Allocated by Income Level**

Income Category	2015-2022 Period		2023-31 Period	
	RHNA	Total Units Achieved	RHNA	Total Units Achieved
Very Low	16	17	149	--
Low	11	71	86	--
Moderate	11	41	71	--
Above Moderate	23	18	184	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>--</b>

During the previous RHNA cycle, the Town achieved over double the units called for by the RHNA allotment, exceeding the number of units within each income category except in above moderate. Only 18 above moderate units were constructed, five short of the RHNA number.

The first two years of the previous RHNA cycle were quiet from a construction perspective with only a couple of new homes built. After that new construction picked up pace, with the most significant year for affordable housing production in 2018. Permits were issued for Victory Village (54 units) in 2018, as well as other affordable units. Over this past RHNA cycle, the Town experienced an increase in ADU production and an increase in the number of new single-family residences being built. In 2019 the Town issued building permits for 6 ADU's and 1 single-family residence, in 2020 building permits were issued for 13 ADU's and 2 single-family residences. In 2021 permits were issued for 12 ADU's and 3 single-family residences and in 2022 permits were issued for 8 ADU permits and 2 single-family residential permits.

The Town is expecting to see additional construction during the current RHNA cycle (2023-31) with ADU construction increasing year-after-year and a few larger projects constructed in the later part of the cycle. Numbers for 2023 have not been tabulated at the time of this staff report.

In addition to reporting on RHNA, the Town is also required to report on progress towards implementing the 2010-2030 General Plan (which now includes the 2023-31 Housing Element). Town staff is preparing the APR for Town Council consideration prior to submittal to HCD.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY SESSION**

The purpose of the study session will be to go through each of the General Plan Elements to allow for the Planning Commission to provide input and comments to staff on areas of interest and identify programs that the Planning Commission would like to prioritize. A detailed PowerPoint presentation will be prepared to guide this discussion. The following is a summary of each general plan element along with the goals and some sample implementation programs.

Housing Element

The 2023-31 Housing Element was adopted in December of 2023. It contains five goals with supporting policies and programs:

- Goal 1: Increase the range of housing options to meet the housing needs for all economic segments of the community. This goal is implemented with programs to facilitate the construction of new housing, such as the School Street Plaza

development and new accessory dwelling units.

- Goal 2: Address housing affordability by addressing regulatory, process, and market factors that limit housing production and preservation in Fairfax. This goal is implemented primarily with code amendments, many of which were adopted in 2023 or early 2024. The code amendments include the workforce housing overlay, objective design and development standards and clustered residential development standards. Significant progress has already been made on implementing this goal.
- Goal 3: Promote suitable and affordable housing for special needs populations, including housing for lower income households, large families, single parent households, the disabled, older adults, and people experiencing homelessness. Programs to implement this goal include code amendment to allow for supportive housing, residential care facilities and other housing types. Many of the necessary code amendments were made in 2023. Tenant protection is also a program under this goal.
- Goal 4: Foster equal housing opportunity for all residents of Fairfax, regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color or ability. Programs to implement this goal include marketing of affordable housing opportunities, providing fair housing information and other programs that include on-going staff activity. The Town is in the process of hiring a new housing planner to help further implement this goal.
- Goal 5: Monitor the effectiveness of housing programs to ensure that they respond to housing needs. Programs under this goal include various monitoring activities including the submittal of the APR each year.

### Land Use Element

This element is at the center of the General Plan and interacts with all the other elements. The element conveys a sense of the uniqueness of Fairfax including the village-like character, quaint neighborhoods, and busy street where many residents bicycle and walk. Minor amendments will be considered in 2024 for consistency with the Housing Element.

- Goal LU-1: Preserve scenic and natural resources.
- Goal LU-2: Preserve open space.
- Goal LU-3: Restore natural habitats in Fairfax, including creeks and watercourses.
- Goal LU-4: Minimize potential for wildfires and impacts from other natural catastrophes.
- Goal LU-5: Manage future growth with preserving the area's natural resources.
- Goal LU-6: Annex developed and undeveloped lands where advantageous to the Town.
- Goal LU-7: Preserve community and neighborhood character.

- Goal LU-8: Preserve community diversity through affordable housing opportunities primarily along transit corridors.
- Goal LU-9: Preserve and restore local historic building, features, and sites.

### Circulation Element

Since Fairfax is built-out, the primary infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, bicycle ways, and utilities) are largely in place. Therefore, this element focuses on how to use and improve the existing infrastructure to achieve Town goals. Here are the goals within this element:

- Goal C-1: Maintain Sir Francis Drake as a functional regional arterial.
- Goal C-2: Promote the safe use of collector streets by automobiles, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- Goal C-3: Maintain the narrow and curving streets of Fairfax neighborhoods as part of the Town’s distinct sense of place, with flexible street standards to preserve neighborhood character.
- Goal C-4: Ensure access by emergency service vehicles and public evacuation.
- Goal C-5: Consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities as an integral part of a complete circulation network that provides affordable, healthy and ecological means of transportation.
- Goal C-6: Promote less reliance on single-occupant vehicles.
- Goal C-7: Promote a shift from conventional to new vehicle designs, including electrification of transportation.
- Goal C-8: Improve circulation and safety in the downtown area.

### Town Center Element

This element contains strategies related to the downtown area and promoting the economic base of the community. This element will be amended in 2024 for consistency with the 2023-31 Housing Element. The Housing Element contains a program to create a Town Center Plan (also see Goal TC-3 below) which will impact revisions to the Town Center Element. The element contains the following goals.

- Goal TC-1: Develop a vision for the Town Center area of Fairfax.
- Goal TC-2: Maintain and enhance the historic character of the Town Center areas.
- Goal TC-3: Define and implement a plan for the Town Center area.
- Goal TC-4: Actively seek out and review all available funding sources that might be used to implement the Town Center Element improvement program.

### Open Space Element

The purpose of this element is to protect the Town’s open space resources, address safety issue (landslides, flooding, etc.) and balance these with the right to develop property according to the Town code. The following goals apply.

- Goal 1: Protect and preserve open space lands and native biotic resources within the Fairfax Planning Area.
- Goal 2: Manage, enhance, and restore open space to ensure long-term vitality and viability.

- Goal 3: Preserve the sensory qualities of open space for recreation, cultural, educational, and spiritual experiences.
- Goal 4: Balance the interests of public health and safety with the preservation of open space.

### Conservation Element

The stated purpose of this element is to: (1) identify and conserve natural and cultural resources; and (2) identify where the community can conserve resources generally and reduce the overall impact on the planet. A significant step towards implementing this element was the adoption of a Climate Action Plan (CAP).

- Goal Con-1: Energy Conservation and climate
- Goal Con-2: Air Quality
- Goal Con-3: Watershed and stream management
- Goal Con-4: Water conservation and quality
- Goal Con-5: Soils and vegetation
- Goal Con-6: Wildlife
- Goal Con-7: Waste Management
- Goal Con-8: Historic and cultural preservation

### Safety Element

Town staff will be updating the Safety Element in 2024 to address State requirements related to evacuation and other fire safety concerns. The Town is also working cooperatively with other Marin jurisdiction on a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan which will help implement many of the programs under the Safety Element. The Planning Commission will have opportunities in 2024 to weigh in on changes to this element and implementation strategies. The following are the current goals:

- Goal S-1: Minimize risks due to geological hazards.
- Goal S-2: Minimize risks due to flood hazards.
- Goal S-3: Minimize risks due to fire hazards.
- Goal S-4: Community Preparedness

### Noise Element

The Town has not proactively implemented any of the programs under the noise element. Noise is a significant consideration in the construction of new housing, so the element will play a role over the current RHNA cycle. The following are the goals:

- Goal N-1: Make land uses compatible with the noise element.
- Goal N-2: Reduce noise from traffic.
- Goal N-3: Maintain the current quality of the acoustical environment.