

# Shape Our Fremont

## The Status of Housing in Fremont

Every year, Fremont reports on how well the city is doing in meeting our state-mandated goals to provide housing for residents at all levels of income. During the April 9 City Council meeting, the Fremont Planning Department presented the latest report.

So, how are we doing? The short answer might be that we're making good progress, but not fast enough in some areas, and too fast in others.

### Numbers, numbers

The Fremont General Plan governs our growth and development for the future. It consists of twelve components, or Elements, which include such broad subjects as Land Use, Safety, Mobility, and Housing.

Under California State law, each city's Housing Element must be updated every eight years to keep up with changing conditions. The current Housing Element covers the period of 2015-2023 and sets specific goals for various income levels of housing. Those goals are based on the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA - pronounced Ree-Nah), which specifies how many housing units each city must plan to provide. For example, Oakland's total RHNA goal for the period 2015-2023 is 14,775 new housing units. Pleasanton's is 2,067, Union City's is 1,106, and Fremont's goal is 5,455. All cities are assigned RHNA numbers under California's "Fair Share" Process, which requires each city must plan to provide its share.

The income levels for housing are defined by the Area Median Income (AMI), which can vary greatly from one year to another and one area to another. In Alameda County, the 2018 AMI was \$104,400 per year. Families with incomes less than 50 percent of the AMI are considered to be very low income. Those earning 51 to 80 percent of the AMI are low income, 81 to 120 percent are moderate income, and above 120 percent are above moderate income. In turn, housing prices are equated to income levels by a set of calculations that depends on whether the housing is for-rent or for-sale. The term "market-rate" housing usually equates to above moderate income.

### Progress - yes or no?

At the beginning of 2019, Fremont was at the halfway mark of the 2015-2023 Housing Element period. In theory, that would mean we should be at the halfway mark in meeting our RHNA goals, but theory and reality don't always agree.

At the low income level, Fremont is supposed to provide 1,714 housing units, but so far we have only issued building permits for 317 units, or about 19 percent of our goal. Jumping to the moderate income level, Fremont's goal is 978 units, but so far we have issued permits for only 20, or just 2 percent of our goal. At the upper end of the income range, our goal for the above moderate level of income is 1,837 units, but we have already overshot that by issuing permits for 4,177 units so far -- more than twice our goal for the entire eight-year period.

The problem of overbuilding at the upper income level and underbuilding at the lower income levels is one that affects all cities in the Bay Area. Fremont is not alone in facing that problem. When compared to other cities, however, Fremont is doing better at solving the problem than most. For example, even though our numbers for below-market-rate housing are still low, they are significantly higher than many other cities. Fremont also has several pending affordable housing projects that have not been issued building permits yet. These projects would bring a total of almost 400 more affordable units in the City Center, Irvington, and Warm Springs districts.

### **Need for local control**

One of the biggest challenges facing Fremont and other cities right now is the constant stream of legislation being proposed by various individuals and special-interest groups. This legislation would strip cities of their authority to control housing growth and would delegate the authority to regional or state agencies. In most cases, local standards on density, height, parking, and other factors would be eliminated. To counter this trend, the mayor and councilmembers have been active in advocating for continued local control in cities like Fremont where good progress is being made to provide housing for all income levels.

Another problem is the impact of various regional transportation proposals that would cut through Fremont and potentially allow additional high density housing to be constructed as part of new transit oriented development (TOD) areas. The East-West Corridor and Dumbarton Transportation Corridor are two of these proposals, and residents need to voice their concerns.

---

To learn more about these proposals and other housing developments in Fremont, go to **[www.ShapeOurFremont.com](http://www.ShapeOurFremont.com)**