

HOUSING ELEMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. What is the Housing Element and how does it relate to the General Plan? What issues does the Housing Element address?

The Housing Element is one of six elements of the Signal Hill General Plan. The General Plan is essentially a blueprint for future development and focuses on big-picture and long-term goals. The Housing Element focuses on providing an assessment of the current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the City's population. The Housing Element is unique in that it is the only Element reviewed and certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to determine its compliance with state law.

2. What is a RHNA?

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation is a mandated number of residential units for which the City must find adequate sites to accommodate their fair share of projected population grown on a parcel specific level. This fair share is determined on a regional level by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

3. What is a Housing Element Update?

Assuming a jurisdiction has a current Housing Element that has been certified by the State, it is required to be updated every eight years. During each eight year cycle, the State issues a new allocation for projected housing needs; a RHNA allocation. The RHNA allocation is the number of residential units, in a given income category that the City must provide lands and appropriate zoning on, to allows future residential development.

4. What happens if Signal Hill does not have its Housing Element certified by the State (HCD)?

There are a number of potentially significant consequences:

- Risk of litigation from housing advocacy groups, an aggrieved housing developer, or other entity or person based on the City having a legally inadequate General Plan. If a court rules that a Housing Element is invalid, it can impose a range of sanctions including placing the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) into the role of reviewing and approving City housing development projects, or having such matters decided ministerially (no hearings) via a court-appointed official; and placing a moratorium on non-residential development and other local land use authorities

- until the Housing Element is brought into compliance. Furthermore, the jurisdiction is responsible for paying the litigant’s attorney fees. Settlement agreements between the parties often include stipulations for mandatory rezoning and affordable housing production requirements.
- State housing and related parks and infrastructure grant and loan funds typically require verification of Housing Element compliance for eligibility, so failure to secure an HCD certification can result in a loss of funding.
 - If a jurisdiction’s prior Housing Element failed to identify adequate sites to address the RHNA, this unmet RHNA carries over to the next Housing Element, rendering HCD compliance in future housing element cycles tremendously challenging.
 - AB 72 now expands HCDs enforcement authority to refer non-compliant jurisdictions to the State Attorney General’s Office for litigation.

5. What is Signal Hill’s RHNA?

The State mandated RHNA for the City of Signal Hill is 517 units, distributed among the following income categories:

Income Level	6th Cycle RHNA/Units	Percent of Total Allocation
Extremely and Very Low	161	31.1%
Low	78	15.2%
Moderate	90	17.4%
Above Moderate	188	36.3%
Total:	517	100.0%

6. How is Signal Hill intending to meet their RHNA?

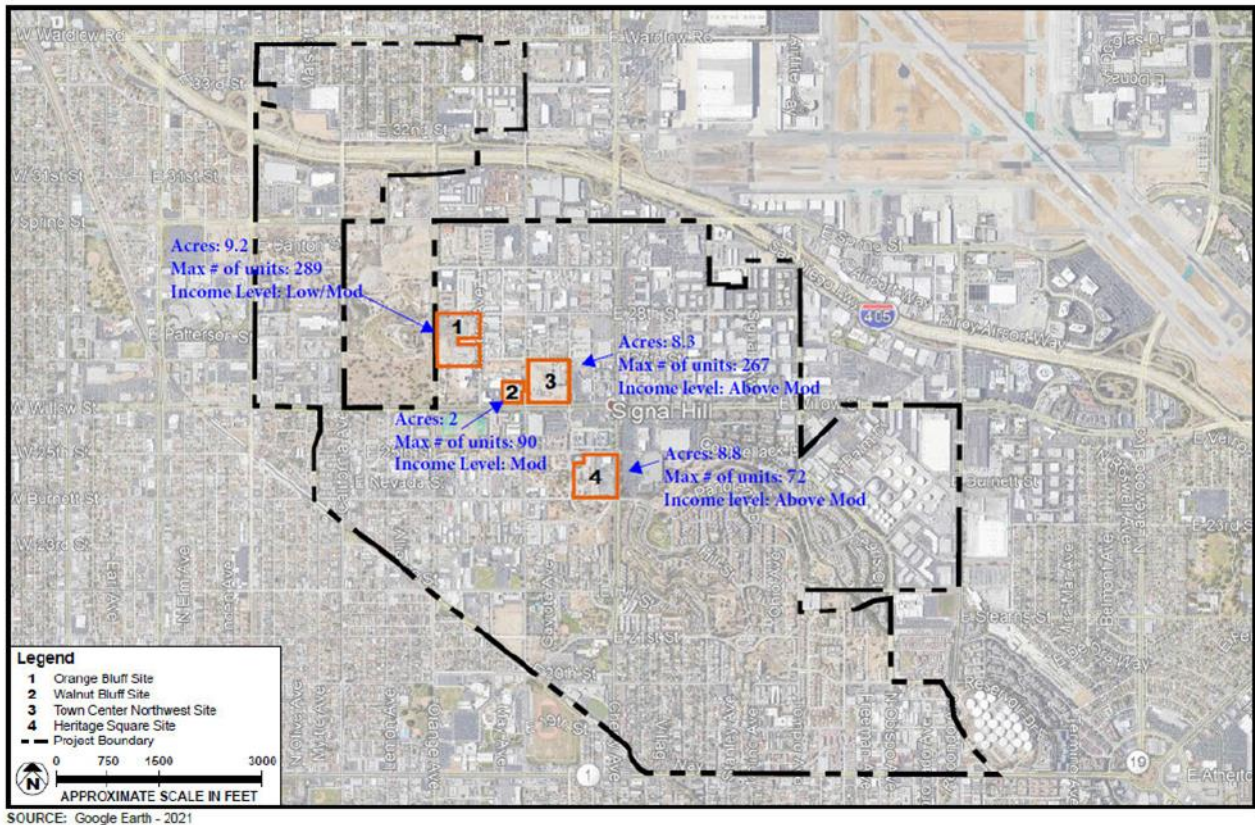
The City made multiple efforts to identify adequate housing sites, such as:

- A review of State and Federal guidelines for financing tax credits was conducted;
- A Community survey and multiple outreach methods were used to engage and receive comments from the public; and
- Citywide surveys of all known available sites were conducted; and
- Property and business owners were engaged.

Four sites were selected to accommodate the 6th Cycle Housing Element RHNA plus a minimum of 15% surplus units in each of the income categories.

These sites are known as Orange Bluff, Walnut Bluff, Town Center Northwest and Heritage Square and are identified as 1 through 4 in the image below:

Inventory Site Map



7. What are the consequences if a City falls short of its RHNA goals?

The City’s RHNA represents a planning target and is not a building quota. However, the City must provide sufficient sites, which are realistic and probable for housing development within the prescribed timeframe, and the City cannot impose constraints to development. If the City falls short of its RHNA goals, the City can be penalized. For example, in jurisdictions that did not permit enough housing consistent with RHNA goals for the current (5th Cycle) planning period, residential projects that meet certain conditions may proceed under a streamlined approval process with no public hearings, meaning a loss local control and public input.

8. What is considered “Affordable Housing”?

“Affordable housing cost” for lower-income households is defined in State law as not more than 30 percent of gross household income with variations (Health and

Safety Code Section 50052.5). The comparable federal limit, more widely used, is 30 percent of gross income, with variations.

How are income levels determined?

The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) publishes annual tables of official federal and state income limits for program eligibility. Income limits are identified as the local area median income (AMI). Commonly used income categories and are as follows:

- Extremely Low Income: 0-30% of AMI
- Very Low Income: 30% - 50% of AMI
- Lower Income: 50% to 80% of AMI; the term may also be used to mean 0% to 80% of AMI
- Moderate Income: 80% to 120% of AMI

9. What is the 6th Cycle Housing Element Update Timeline?

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| • PC Public Workshop #1 | May 18, 2020 |
| • PC Public Workshop #2 | Aug.17, 2021 |
| • Draft Submittal to HCD (60 days to comment) | Sept.15, 2021 |
| • PC Public Workshop #3 | Sept. 21, 2021 |
| • Draft CEQA Circulation for Public Comment (45 day review) | Sept. 30, 2021 |
| • CC Status Report | Oct. 26, 2021 |
| • 45- Day Review Period Ends | Nov. 15, 2021 |
| • Receive Draft Comments from HCD | Nov.15, 2021 |
| • Complete Responses to HCD and OPR Comments | Nov. 30, 2021 |
| • PC PH for ZOA/GPA/CEQA | Dec. 21, 2021 |
| • CC Introduction of ZOA/GPA/EIR Certification. | Jan. 11, 2022 |
| • CC 2 nd Reading and Approval ZOA/GPA/CEQA | Jan 25, 2022 |
| • HCD Deadline for Submittal
(Oct. 15 +120, AB 1398 = Oct. 15, 2022) | Oct. 15, 2022 |