

Planning and Development Department
Land Use Planning Division

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED CITY OF BERKELEY HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

Notice is hereby given that the City of Berkeley is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the City's Housing Element Update ("the project") and is requesting comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR. The EIR is being prepared by the City of Berkeley, which is the Lead Agency for the project, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and local CEQA guidelines.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15082, this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being sent to the California State Clearinghouse, Alameda County Clerk, responsible agencies, trustee agencies, adjacent cities, and members of the public including individuals and organizations in order to solicit comments on the scope and content of the analysis in the EIR.

WRITTEN COMMENTS: Responses to this NOP and any questions or comments should be directed in writing to: *Grace Wu, Senior Planner, Land Use Planning Division, 1947 Center Street, 2nd Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704; or GWu@cityofberkeley.info*. Comments on the NOP must be received **on or before 5pm on Monday, February 21, 2022**. In addition, comments may be provided at the EIR Scoping Meeting (see details below). Comments should focus on significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures.

EIR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: The City of Berkeley will conduct a public scoping session on **Wednesday, February 9, 2022** as part of a scheduled Planning Commission meeting to receive comments on the scope and contents of the EIR. The meeting will start at **7:00 PM** and be held via video and teleconference. Interested parties should check the Planning Commission website for information on how to join the meeting and to confirm the meeting date, time, and agenda: https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/Commissions/Commissions_Planning_Commission_on_Homepage.aspx The agenda will be posted by 5pm on Friday, February 4, 2022.

PROJECT TITLE: City of Berkeley 2023-2031 Housing Element Update

PROJECT LOCATION: The project, which is an update to the Housing Element of the General Plan, is applicable to the entire City of Berkeley (citywide). The City of Berkeley is located in the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area in northern Alameda County. Berkeley is bordered by the cities of Oakland and Emeryville to the south and the city of Albany and the unincorporated community of Kensington to the north, the Berkeley Hills (Contra Costa County) to the east, and the San Francisco Bay to the west. The city

encompasses approximately 17.2 square miles (approximately 7.2 of which is underwater in the San Francisco Bay) with a population of approximately 122,580 residents and 51,500 housing units. The city contains a combination of residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Interstate 580/880, San Pablo Avenue (SR-123), Sacramento Street, Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and Shattuck Avenue provide the major north-south routes through the city, as does Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). Major east-west routes include Marin Avenue, University Avenue, and Ashby Avenue.

The regional setting and existing city limits are depicted on Figure 1.

PROJECT SPONSOR: City of Berkeley

PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND: The proposed project consists of a comprehensive update to the Housing Element and related edits to the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Berkeley Municipal Code.

The Housing Element is one of the seven state-mandated elements of the local General Plan and is required to be updated every eight years. The City of Berkeley is preparing the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update to comply with the legal mandate that requires each local government to identify adequate sites for housing to meet the existing and projected housing needs for varying income-levels in the community. It is intended to provide the city with a comprehensive strategy for promoting the production of safe, decent and affordable housing, and affirmatively furthering fair housing during the housing cycle. The Housing Element Update establishes goals, policies, and actions to address the existing and projected housing needs in Berkeley.

The goals, policies, and actions in the Housing Element are required to meet Berkeley's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation. Berkeley's latest RHNA allocation calls for 8,934 new housing units, including 3,854 new units for residents in the low- and very low-income categories. The City must demonstrate to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) that the City's Housing Element has adequate land capacity and implementing policies to accommodate its RHNA allocation. In addition, HCD recommends that cities identify a "buffer" of 15% to 30% above RHNA for lower- and moderate-income categories. Thus, overall, the City's zoning and other land use regulations must accommodate between approximately 9,750 and 10,500 new units.

To identify the housing sites to be included in the Housing Element, the City will identify suitable and available housing sites and their capacity, screen for vacant and underutilized parcels, evaluate and analyze sites, and calculate potential buildout.

In conjunction with the Housing Element Update, the City anticipates amendments to the General Plan including revising the Land Use Element to maintain consistency with the updated Housing Element. The Land Use Element revisions are to ensure consistency among all General Plan Elements upon implementation of the updated Housing Element.

More information about the proposed project can be found on the City's website:

<https://www.cityofberkeley.info/housingelement/>

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: Approval of the proposed Housing Element Update would not approve any physical development (e.g., construction of housing or infrastructure). However, the EIR will assume that such actions are reasonably foreseeable future outcomes of the Housing Element Update. As such, the EIR will evaluate the potential physical environmental impacts that could result from future actions for implementing the policies proposed under the Housing Element Update at a programmatic level, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168.

The topical areas that will be addressed in the EIR are: Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Noise, Land Use and Planning, Population and Housing, Public Services and Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

The Draft EIR will also examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA-mandated No Project Alternative and other potential alternatives that may be capable of reducing or avoiding potential environmental effects while meeting most of the basic objectives of the project. In addition, the EIR will address cumulative impacts, growth inducing impacts, and other issues required by CEQA.



Grace Wu, Senior Planner

Date of Distribution: January 21, 2022

Attachments: Figure 1: City of Berkeley Location Map

Figure 1 City of Berkeley Location Map



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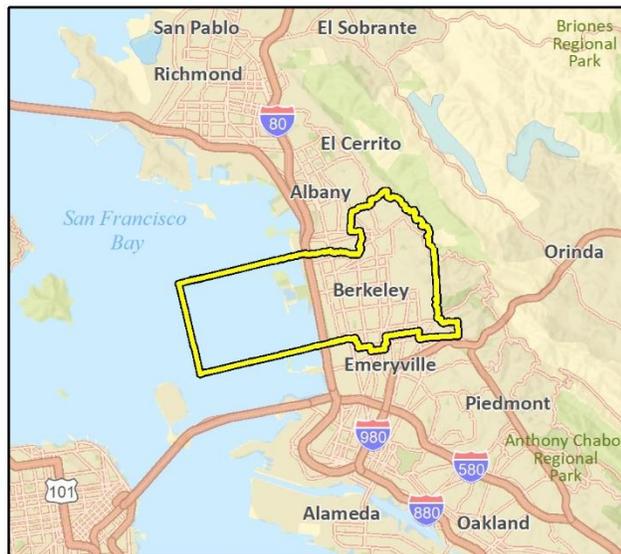


Fig. 1 Regional Location