



NOTICE OF PREPARATION
of an Environmental Impact Report for the
Novato 6th Cycle Housing Element Update

Date: June 1, 2022

To: State Clearinghouse
Responsible Agencies
Trustee Agencies

NOP Comment Period: Written comments must be submitted to the City’s
Community Development Department no later than
July 1, 2022 by 5:00 p.m.

Project Location: City of Novato (citywide) – see Figure 1 (attached)

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INTRODUCTION

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been issued to notify interested parties of the preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Novato 6th Cycle Housing Element Update (Housing Element Update). The City will be the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and will prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) to evaluate the environmental effects associated with the Housing Element Update.

This NOP and background documents associated with the Housing Element Update are available for review on the City’s **Housing Element Update** webpage at: <https://www.novato.org/housingelement>.

This NOP has been issued to provide an opportunity for responsible and trustee agencies to submit comments on the scope of the EIR, relative to the project description. Agencies should comment on such information as it relates to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the Housing Element Update.

The City has determined that zoning and land use changes under the Housing Element Update may have a significant effect on the environment; therefore, an EIR is being prepared. The EIR is intended to be a

program-level document that will analyze the effects of the proposed Housing Element Update. Program EIRs generally analyze broad environmental effects of the program, with the acknowledgment that site-specific environmental review may be required for future actions (14 CCR 15168(a)). The purpose of a Program EIR is to allow the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts. Because no specific development projects are being proposed as part of the Housing Element Update, the analysis will not be parcel-specific. Rather, the analysis will focus on the reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect physical environmental effects that could result from zoning and land use changes under the Housing Element Update and project alternatives. The analysis will compare any changes and resulting impacts related to policies that may have been updated between the previous Novato Housing Element (5th Cycle) and the Housing Element Update (6th Cycle), as well as land use changes from the Novato General Plan 2035 adopted in October 2020.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The City must update its Housing Element as mandated by the State, under California Government Code Section 65580 through 65589. The objective of a Housing Element is to provide an analysis of a community’s housing needs for all income levels, and strategies to respond to provide for those housing needs. The City’s Housing Element adopted in 2014 guided housing changes occurring in Novato from 2015 to 2022. For the last Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) cycle, the City was allocated a total of 415 units to be accommodated in its Housing Element inventory of adequate sites.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Housing Element Update will encompass the entirety of Novato, as shown in Figure 1. The Housing Element Update presents a comprehensive set of housing policies and actions for the years 2023-2031. The Housing Element Update will be based on the City’s latest RHNA estimates, which determined that the City needs to plan for 2,090 residential units, plus a buffer of units to ensure ongoing compliance with the No Net Loss provisions of State housing law. As a built-out City, Novato may be required to find additional sites – some in areas not previously targeted as opportunity sites – as well as upzone¹ other areas. For purposes of the EIR, the City will evaluate sites that could accommodate the entire RHNA estimate plus a 20 percent buffer, as recommended by California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), totaling approximately 2,508 residential units.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND SCOPE OF THE EIR

The EIR for the Housing Element Update will focus on the resource areas/issues germane to this particular project. The EIR will evaluate the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Housing Element Update and will evaluate whether there are feasible mitigation measures that may lessen or avoid such impacts. As the Housing Element Update does not include any specific construction or development, but rather the potential for land use changes or development to be constructed in the future, the impact analysis

¹ Upzoning refers to rezoning parcels to allow higher-density housing.

will be programmatic and cumulative in nature. The EIR will also identify and evaluate alternatives to the Housing Element Update that could lessen or avoid any significant environmental impacts. The EIR will evaluate potentially significant environmental effects related to all environmental issue areas identified in Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

NOP Comment Period: In accordance with the time limits identified in State law, your response to this NOP must be submitted to the City at the earliest possible date, but **not later than 5:00 p.m. on July 1, 2022** (30 days following the date this notice was first posted). Please submit written comments to the Novato Community Development Department (including the contact person’s full name and address) to:

Vicki Parker
City of Novato: Community Development Department
922 Machin Avenue
Novato, CA 94945
Email: HousingElement@novato.org

Scoping Meeting: A scoping meeting will be conducted on Tuesday, June 21 at 6:00 pm, which will be held via videoconferencing (Zoom). The call-in details are as follows:

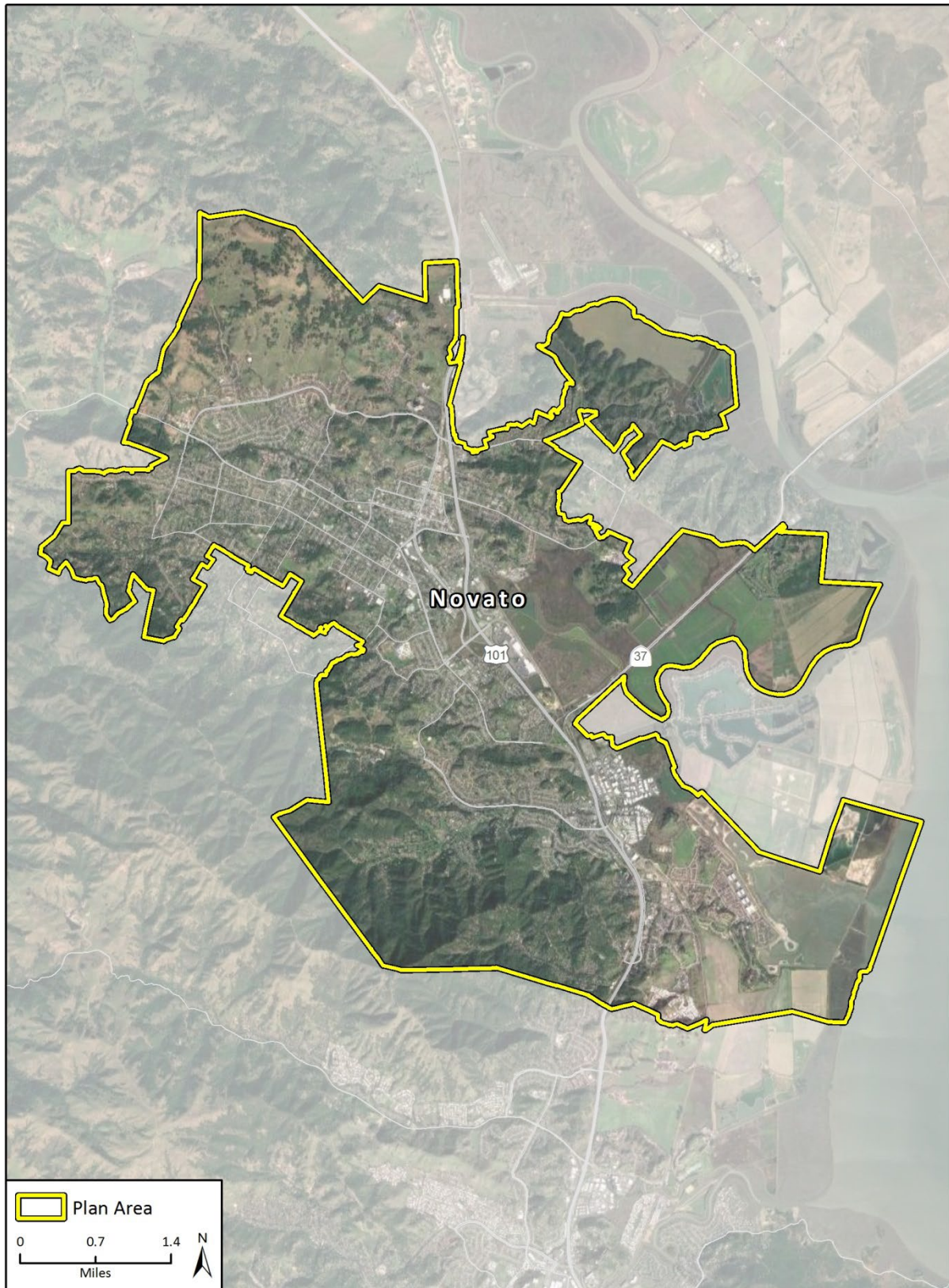
Click this URL to join.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89138405839?pwd=cVcwOVRVVIRmMTdVRkFxUHBDMnZLUT09>

Passcode: 753716

This NOP, the Draft Housing Element Update, and background documents are available for review on the City’s Housing Element Update webpage at: <https://www.novato.org/housingelement>

Figure 1 - City of Novato



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Fig 2-2 Plan Area