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AGENDA ITEM NO.: 8 (Public Hearing and Action Item)

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING DATE:** March 25, 2009

SUBJECT: 2009 General Plan Housing Element Update
(General Plan Amendment No. 2009-
02/Inyo County)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inyo County is in the process of updating its General Plan Housing Element. The update will incorporate the requirements of new relevant legislation, the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) stipulated by the State, and new demographic information. A draft updated Housing Element is provided for the Planning Commission's review and comment.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: County-wide

Recommended Action: **Hold a public hearing and recommend that the Board of Supervisors conceptually adopt the Draft 2009 Housing Element and direct staff to submit the Element to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for its preliminary review**

Alternatives:

- 1.) Recommend modifications to the report.
- 2.) Continue the item to a future date, and provide specific direction to staff regarding additional information and analysis needed.

Project Planner: Joshua Hart, AICP, Senior Planner

BACKGROUND

The General Plan Housing Element is required pursuant to California Government Code Section 65580 et seq., and works to provide housing for all of Inyo County's residents. Housing Element law is one of the most complicated of the General Plan Elements, and the Housing Element is the only one that must be approved by the State. The County's Housing Element was last updated in 2004¹, and the current update is due August 31.

Due to the complexities of the Housing Element, the County has contracted with PMC, a planning firm with housing expertise, to assist with the update. County and PMC staff have prepared a draft Element for the Commission's review, which is attached. The draft Housing Element incorporates the RHNA for unincorporated portions of the County, as well as other pertinent updated demographic and land use information; new regulations, requirements, and practices; and other relevant County, State, and federal regulations that have changed since 2004.

Following the Commission's and the Board of Supervisor's subsequent review, the draft Housing Element will be submitted to HCD for its first evaluation. The final Housing Element will then be prepared and reviewed by the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and finally HCD later in the summer.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Housing Element law declares that the availability of housing is of vital Statewide importance, and the early attainment of decent housing and a suitable living environment for every Californian is a priority of the highest order. Inyo County's Housing Element works to provide for adequate housing for its population, address the County's lack of private land, and minimize the impact of its relatively high housing costs compared to incomes.

The following discussion provides highlights from the draft updated Element. The full draft Element is attached.

Demographic and Housing Data

Generally, demographics in the County have not changed significantly since 2004. Race/ethnicity is predominantly White, with substantial Hispanic/Latino and Native American minorities. Compared to the rest of California, the County has a higher than average share of senior households, a lower than average proportion of overcrowding, and a higher than average share of mobile homes. The population has increased approximately 1.3 percent since 2000, and the number of households has increased by about 2.7 percent. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 12 percent of the County's households are classified as Extremely Low Income, 12 percent as Very Low

¹ Refer to the following website for the 2004 Housing Element - <http://inyoplanning.org/documents/FinalInyoCoHousingElement04.pdf>.

Income, and 16 percent as Low Income. The remaining 59 percent are classified as Moderate and Above Moderate Income.

According to the California Department of Finance (DOF), about 208 housing units were added to the unincorporated housing supply between 2000 and 2008. The largest increase in supply of all housing types between 2000 and 2008 was for mobilhomes, at 11 percent. Data reported by homeowners for assessments between 2005 and 2008 indicate that roughly 10 percent are reported are in “Poor” condition, 19 percent “Fair”, 34 percent “Average”, and 36 percent “Good”. The vacancy rate for 2008 in unincorporated Inyo County is reported by DOF to be about 16 percent.

The table below provides affordable rents and home purchase prices for a four-person household in the County, according to 2008 State Income Limits. Affordability means that no more than 30 percent of gross household income is spent on either rent or a monthly mortgage payment.

Income Category	Yearly Gross Income	Maximum Rent	Maximum Home Purchase Price
Extremely low	\$17,250	\$431	\$41,097
Very low	\$28,750	\$719	\$89,033
Low	\$46,000	\$1,150	\$160,937
Moderate	\$69,000	\$1,725	\$256,859
Above Moderate	>\$69,000	>1,725	>\$256,859

Additional family size categories are provided in the draft Element. Approximately 19 percent of households were overpaying for housing according to the 2000 Census.

Regional Housing Need and Site Inventory

Housing Element law requires that HCD identify a projected housing need (i.e., the RHNA) for Inyo County; 567 units have been allocated to the County for the period extending from January 2007 to June 30, 2014. HCD determined that the RHNA for unincorporated portions of the County is 457 units in the following income categories:

- 116 Very Low (including 58 Extremely Low and 58 Very Low),
- 70 Low,
- 83 Moderate, and
- 188 Above Moderate.

Building permits issued since 2007 total 34. The remaining RHNA for the unincorporated County is 423. In past Housing Element cycles, the projected regional housing need has not been realized because the population increases forecast for the County have not occurred.

Housing Element law requires the County to identify specific sites to accommodate the RHNA. The draft Element provides a list of known approved and pending projects that provide approximately 200 units. Capacity to provide for the remaining units is

identified on four Department of Water and Power parcels that have been selected for release. Although not included in the land inventory, other areas in the County provide for additional residential development opportunities throughout the planning period.

Policy Changes

The policy section has been reformatted to provide for easier reference. County staff and PMC also reviewed the goals, policies, and programs from the 2004 Element, evaluated their effectiveness and identified areas for improvement or elimination, and devised appropriate new goals, policies, and programs. The following summarizes several of the changes proposed.

Legislation over the past several years requires the County to undertake the following:

- (1) Allow flexibility for the location of residential care facilities by permitting facilities for six or fewer persons by right in all residential zones;
- (2) Incorporate reasonable accommodation provisions into its Zoning Code to provide a means for persons with disabilities to request exceptions to zoning and building regulations;
- (3) Allow second units ministerially in all residential zones;
- (4) Allow both supportive and transitional housing types in all residential zones; and
- (5) Allow for permanent emergency shelters as a permitted use in at least one zone.

The updated Element includes measures to implement these requirements in the Zoning Ordinance.

Affordable housing, energy assistance and weatherization, and homeless programs have evolved over the years. The goals, policies, and programs have been updated with this information to the extent possible. Also, one service provider (i.e., Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action) requested that specific references to the organization be removed from the Element, and the goals, policies, and programs have been revised accordingly.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The draft 2009 Housing Element Update is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guidelines Section 15306. Prior to final adoption, an appropriate level of CEQA review will be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Commission recommend that the Board of Supervisors conceptually adopt the Draft 2009 Housing Element and direct staff to submit the Draft Update to HCD for its preliminary review.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft 2009 Inyo County General Plan Housing Element

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Approved By:

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