

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: JULY 22, 2020

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: NATHAN HAMBURGER, CITY MANAGER

BY: RAMIRO ADEVA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO DEFER AND/OR DELAY THE HOUSING ELEMENT DEADLINE

Per the direction of the City Council, the attached letter has been drafted to request that the State consider extending the deadline for agencies to adopt a new Housing Element.

Updated Housing Elements are currently required to be adopted by Counties and Cities in California by October 2021. This process is extensive and not only includes updating the Housing Element, but consequently requires revisions to parts of the City's General Plan, namely the Land Use Element, Circulation Element, and the Safety Element. Additionally, a CEQA review is completed as part of the update.

There are two primary reasons the request is being made. First, in May 2020, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) revised its timeline for finalizing the Regional Housing and Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocations, shifting the conclusion of the appeals period from September 2020, to January 2021. In doing so, the expected adoption of final RHNA allocations moved to February 2021, which is four months later than the original SCAG timeline. However, despite the extended appeals period, the deadline for completing the Housing Element remained October 2021, which essentially means that agencies have four fewer months to prepare this important document.

The second reason is due to the impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to divert all resources and attention to assisting our local communities recover. The impacts of the virus have been immense, and the City's primary focus at this time should be spent addressing the desperate needs of the City's residents and business community. With resources limited and leaner than ever before, an extension of the Housing Element deadline would allow the City to maximize efforts in assisting the Agoura Hills community.

On July 14, 2020, the Land Use Economic Development Committee (Councilmember Northrup and Councilmember Anstead) provided feedback to staff and approved the attached draft letter to the State.

The letter will be sent to the Governor's office, as well as the offices of Senator Henry Stern and Assemblymember Richard Bloom.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends the City Council:

- (1) Approve the draft letter requesting to defer and/or delay the Housing Element deadline, and
- (2) Authorize the Mayor to sign the letter on behalf of the City Council.

Attachment: Draft Letter Requesting to Defer and/or Delay the Housing Element Deadline

July 23, 2020

Honorable Gavin Newsom
State of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Request to Defer and/or Delay the Housing Element Deadline

Dear Governor Newsom:

On May 26, 2020, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) revised its timeline for the 6th cycle Regional Housing and Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocations, shifting the conclusion of the appeals period from September 2020, to January 2021. This means the expected adoption of final RHNA allocations shifted from October 2020, to February 2021. Despite the extended appeals period of approximately four months, the deadline of October 2021 for cities to adopt a new Housing Element remained unchanged.

Preparation of new Housing Elements require significant effort, oftentimes taking upwards of one full year to complete. The City of Agoura Hills believes strongly in doing our part to address the housing crisis in California, but extending an appeals period four months without subsequently extending the Housing Element deadline as well, compromises the ability to do that process thoroughly and effectively.

In addition to SCAG's extended appeals period is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created an unprecedented time of need warranting our full, undivided attention and focus at this time. Our residential and business communities are in desperate need of assistance, and it is our responsibility as elected officials to provide leadership and guidance to aid in their recovery.

It is with this in mind, that we implore the State to listen to the immediate needs of agencies at the local level, granting lenience in the form of an extension of the October 2021 deadline, to allow for all available resources to be diverted towards addressing the immediate recovery needs of our local communities. Agoura Hills is 1 of 88 cities in Los Angeles County, which as of July 8, 2020, had over 130,000 positive cases of COVID-19 infections. This pandemic has impacted our community in unimaginable ways.

The majority of Agoura Hills' retail and restaurant community is comprised of smaller businesses, which are most susceptible and at risk to not making it through this challenging time. Jobs are being lost daily, retail shops and restaurants are closing

permanently, home and property owners are facing issues involving evictions, foreclosures, and potential homelessness due to the uncertainties caused by the virus. Now, more than ever, our prime focus should rest solely on what we can collectively do to aid in the recovery of our beloved community.

We at the City have not been spared from making our own drastic cuts and have been forced to make difficult decisions to downsize staff, and implement layoffs and furloughs. And yet, with staff and fiscal resources leaner than ever before, we must still find a way to meet the growing needs of the community.

The intent of this letter is not to diminish the importance of addressing the State's housing shortage. However, given the delay in final RHNA allocations being determined, coupled with the unique circumstances we are all facing as a result of the pandemic, we feel it is fair to request the State consider granting an extension of the deadline to adopt a new Housing Element.

I welcome the opportunity to speak with you further regarding this matter. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly via email at ibuckleyweber@ci.agoura-hills.ca.us.

Sincerely,

Illece Buckley Weber
Mayor

Cc: City Council of Agoura Hills
Nathan Hamburger, City Manager
Ramiro Adeva, Community Development Director