

# Housing Element

City of La Cañada Flintridge

Adopted: November 15, 1993



**CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE**

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November 15, 1993

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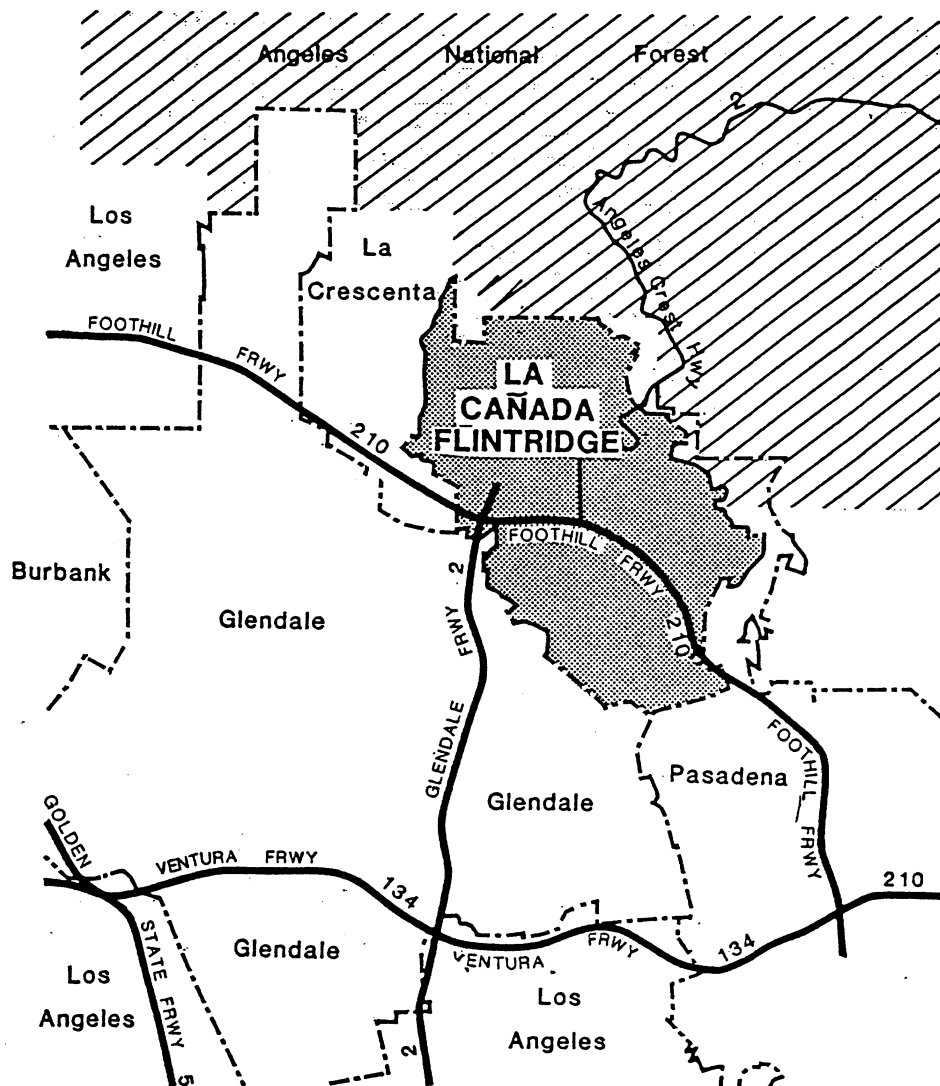
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## INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING ELEMENT

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The City of La Cañada Flintridge, incorporated in 1976, is located in Los Angeles County, approximately 13 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles. The City encompasses approximately 8.6 square miles and is surrounded by the City of Pasadena to the east, the City of Glendale to the south, the Angeles National Forest to the north, and the unincorporated county areas of La Crescenta and Montrose to the west.

**FIGURE H-1  
REGIONAL LOCATION**



Prior to incorporation in 1976, the La Cañada Flintridge area was already fully developed and well-established as the two county areas of La Cañada on the north and Flintridge on the south. In the 1920s, developers began to subdivide the land and attract buyers. The largest subdivisions included Alta Canyon, developed by Edwin T. Earl (inventor of the refrigerated fruit railroad car), Descanso/Central La Cañada carved out of the Lanterman family holdings, and Flintridge, laid out by U.S. Senator Frank P. Flint.

During the regional building boom years of the late 1940's and early 1950's, limited growth in La Cañada Flintridge was the result of insufficient water supply and water rights which was translated into Los Angeles County's 1948 Zoning Code provisions. Although the Foothill Municipal Water District was annexed to the Los Angeles Metropolitan Water District (MWD) in 1953, major land development patterns were already established in the City by this time. Further growth in the region through the 1950's and 1960's was frequently driven by the accessibility of freeways, but for La Cañada Flintridge, the Glendale (2) Freeway and 210 Freeway were not completed through the City until the early 1970's.

Today La Cañada Flintridge's adopted policy is to retain the community's natural and semi-rural character. In addition, the presence of environmental and infrastructure constraints (i.e., hillside topography, wildfire hazards, lack of sanitary sewers) on much of the remaining vacant land in the City precludes extensive development. In 1980, the City's total population was 20,153; in 1990, the total was 19,378. Nearly 90 percent of the City's developed parcels consist of single-family residential uses, generally on large lots (one-quarter acre or more) with heavily landscaped streets. Regional and local commercial uses are limited to some portions of Foothill Boulevard and Verdugo Boulevard. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, located in the easternmost part of the community, is the City's largest employer. Growth continues to be limited to small residential subdivisions, residential infill, and recycling of commercial uses on Foothill Boulevard.

## **PURPOSE**

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The Housing Element is the City's response to housing issues which are of state-wide significance as well as of local importance. While safe, decent and affordable housing for all segments of the population is the fundamental housing issue, many variations on this theme can be found depending on the community or neighborhood. Providing adequate housing is further complicated by the many forces influencing the development, maintenance and

preservation of housing, with many of these influences beyond the City's control.

The Housing Element embodies the City's perspective on local and regional housing problems, including goals, policies and programs which address the City's fair share of regional housing need. As such, the Element is prepared in compliance with the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for the period July 1, 1988 through July 1, 1994, as issued by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and assesses the City's efforts and progress toward meeting those goals, as outlined in the 1986 Housing Element.

The Five-Year Goals identified in this 1993 Element are intended to create the opportunities for development within the City to meet its fair share of regional housing needs in the five years following the adoption of this element. When the City began this update, additional RHNA units were expected to be identified by SCAG for the City for the next five year period (1995-2000), and the work plan called for the update to address these units in the Element's program goals.

Due to State funding limitations, no revisions of the City's fair share numbers are available at the time of adoption, and therefore the goals address only those numbers which have previously been identified for the City. As discussed below, the City's infrastructure constraints, the built out character of the City, and the topography of the remaining vacant land provide substantial restrictions on the ability to develop new housing, regardless of price. However, the Goals and Policies set forth in this Housing Element are anticipated to be usable through the year 2000. When RHNA numbers become available, the City will undertake a detailed analysis of the Element and amend it as appropriate in response to the new RHNA numbers.

In preparing the Element, the City recognizes that it has been and desires to remain primarily a single family residential community of higher cost homes. This policy of local response to state requirements is supported by Government Code Section 65300.7:

*The legislature finds that the diversity of the state's communities and their residents requires planning agencies and legislative bodies to implement this article [requiring adoption of a General Plan] in ways that accommodate local conditions and circumstances while meeting its minimum requirements.*

Therefore, the goals, policies and programs contained in the Element are based on a balance between the housing needs of all economic segments of the community, providing for the City's regional fair share and maintaining the community's low density, single family character.

This Housing Element establishes housing policies and programs aimed at meeting the housing needs of the City's current and anticipated future resident population. Concerns identified in the Element include:

- 1) new housing opportunities;
- 2) preservation of existing housing;
- 3) environmental sensitivity, including neighborhood compatibility; and
- 4) equal housing opportunity.

By contrast, the Land Use Element is concerned with housing in a spacial context (density and distribution), and acts to support many of the housing goals contained herein.

Following a review of the demographic and physical attributes of the City's residential profile, the following facts are recognized as contributing significantly to the discussion of housing in the City:

- Population growth has not changed significantly over the past twenty years; in fact, the City has experienced a slight decrease in total population from 1970 to 1990.
- With total population remaining fairly constant, the proportion of seniors has increased dramatically. Persons over sixty-five years have grown from 6.5% to 13.5% of the total population from 1970 to 1990. Median age increased from 32.7 to 40.9 years in the same period.
- Average household income is very high (\$78,900) compared with Los Angeles County and the State of California.
- The vast majority of housing units are single family dwellings (94.2%) which are owner occupied (90.8%) and have a high median value (\$500,000).
- Special needs groups in the City which have a more difficult time obtaining suitable housing include the elderly and handicapped persons.

- The City is substantially built out with no large tracts of vacant land available for new residential development. Future residential development will consist of infill on single family lots and redevelopment of commercial properties.
- Residential infill and redevelopment of commercial properties are limited by topographic and infrastructure constraints which affect housing costs and densities.

The Housing Element establishes goals, policies and implementation programs to address these identified housing issues.

## **RELATED PLANS AND PROGRAMS**

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The Housing Element addresses key issues relating to the potential for housing development in the City. However, a number of local, sub-regional, regional and state-wide issues which are interrelated to housing are not addressed in the same detail as they typically would be addressed in certain physical planning documents, plans, and ordinances which the City or other agencies can adopt.

The land use categories which affect housing as described in this element indicate general categories of permissible uses and development intensities allowed within each category. Other documents, including the zoning ordinance, establish more specific regulations and policies influencing development.

In addition to many of these locally adopted plans, ordinances, and regulations that concentrate on issues confronting an individual jurisdiction, a number of regional plans affect the City. Regional planning agencies such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) recognize that planning issues extend beyond the boundaries of individual cities. Efforts to address regional planning issues such as affordable housing, transportation, and air pollution have resulted in the adoption of regional plans which affect La Cañada Flintridge. Relevant regional plans are discussed briefly in the following paragraphs to indicate the relationship of the plans to this General Plan.

**City Zoning Ordinance:** The zoning ordinance is the principal method by which jurisdictions regulate land uses, building and lot sizes, building heights, and development character. A zoning ordinance consists of two primary components: (1) a map that delineates the boundaries of districts in which like uses developed at like standards are permitted, and (2) text that explains the purpose of the zoning district, lists the permitted uses and those permitted under special conditions, and standards for development - such as minimum lot size, density, height, setbacks, lot coverage, and parking requirements. Each general plan land use category should be implemented by one or more corresponding zoning classifications. By law, the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the general plan, and therefore forms a basis for reviewing local housing capacity and constraints.

The City of La Cañada Flintridge adopted by reference the County of Los Angeles Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance No. 1494) on April 4, 1977, four months after the City's incorporation. Since that time, numerous City ordinances have revised, amended, or repealed portions of the County zoning ordinance to more closely reflect specific conditions and plans of the City.

**Foothill Boulevard Master Plan:** The Foothill Boulevard Master Plan, accepted by the City Council in November 1991, sets forth a vision for Foothill Boulevard which is rooted in preserving and enhancing a small-scale, pedestrian-oriented atmosphere. The City expects Foothill Boulevard to remain commercially oriented, serving primarily local needs, but also including some subregional merchants. To support the vision of a village character, the Master Plan studied the existing land use patterns on Foothill Boulevard and recommends general land use objectives, as well as focused land use objectives on a block-by-block basis.

The Master Plan encourages commercial/residential mixed uses and multi-family housing in many areas of Foothill Boulevard to address housing needs and provide compatible uses with adjacent single family neighborhoods. Policies supporting these components of the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan are

incorporated in this Housing Element and the concurrently revised Land Use Element.

**Redevelopment Plan:** The City's Redevelopment Agency was formed in 1985, but due to a variety of economic and social reasons no project area has been adopted. While the Agency could be empowered under state law to assemble lots, improve private properties, and finance development projects, the lack of an adopted project area precludes such activities. Recent changes in Redevelopment Agency financing reduce the funds available for such agencies and substantially decrease the potential effectiveness of this mechanism for implementing any public-sponsored redevelopment. Therefore, this plan relies exclusively on private redevelopment efforts which are facilitated by public agencies and policies.

**Regional Plans:** In the latter half of the 1980s, growing regional concern and legislation regarding traffic, air pollution, rising housing costs, and other issues affecting the Southern California community as a whole led SCAG to prepare comprehensive regional plans which address these concerns. Four plans which affect planning in La Cañada Flintridge include SCAG's *Regional Mobility Plan*; *Growth Management Plan*; the California Regional Water Quality Control Board's (RWQCB) *Water Quality Control Plan for Region (4), Los Angeles River Basin (4B)*; and the *Air Quality Management Plan*, prepared by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). These four plans are intended to work in concert to reduce traffic congestion and pollutant levels basin-wide. Planning strategies focus on reducing automobile and truck traffic on the regional transportation network, as well as at local levels, and reducing the potential for new groundwater contamination.

La Cañada Flintridge has included in this General Plan relevant policies and programs which reflect and respond to SCAG's and SCAQMD's regional goals and the RWQCB's Los Angeles Basin Policy. In particular, policies in the Land Use and Housing Elements addresses regional jobs/housing balance objectives by expanding opportunities for local serving commercial uses, and

providing higher intensity residential uses within walking distance of services and public transit. Sewers are recommended to enhance the quality of life in both commercial and residential areas, but financing of such improvements is limited.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT OF ELEMENT

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The Housing Element consists of the housing goals and policies for the City of La Cañada Flintridge. Section I summarizes population growth, availability and affordability of housing, and assesses the needs of special needs groups in the City. Section II identifies existing constraints on housing imposed by market factors, environmental and infrastructure constraints, and government regulations and fees.

Section III outlines the housing opportunities in the City and links these opportunities to the policies of this element. The short term programs and long term policies for providing housing alternatives to meet the City's local fair share of regional housing needs are detailed in Section IV. Specific housing programs that will implement these goals and policies are identified in Section V, entitled Housing Programs. It summarizes the City's existing and projected housing needs in measurable terms, providing the basis for targeting policies and programs to address these needs.

The State Legislature recognizes the role of local general plans, and particularly the Housing Element, in implementing Statewide housing goals to provide decent and sound housing for all persons. Furthermore, the Legislature stresses continuing efforts toward providing affordable housing for all income groups. The major concerns of the Legislature with regard to the preparation of housing elements are:

- Recognition by local governments of their responsibility in contributing to the attainment of State housing goals;

- Preparation and implementation of city and county housing elements which coordinate with regional, State and Federal efforts in achieving State housing goals;
- Participation by the City in determining the efforts required to attain State housing goals; and
- Cooperation between local governments to address regional housing needs.

The State Department of Housing and Community Development sets forth specifics regarding the scope and content of housing elements prepared by cities and counties. Table H-1 summarizes State Housing Element requirements and identifies the applicable section of this Element where these requirements are addressed.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

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Public participation played an important role in the formulation of the City's housing goals and policies, and in the development of a Land Use Plan which determines the extent and density of future residential development in the community. Applications were solicited from the City at large and a nine-member citizen advisory committee representing a range of special needs and income groups was appointed by the City Council. This General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) reviewed all components of the Element over a three month period, during which time six meetings were held regarding the Housing Element. A public workshop was conducted in which all residents were invited to review the draft Element, and to provide comments or ask questions of the Committee and the City staff. The public workshop was noticed in the local designated paper of general circulation, and through the City newsletter which is distributed to all residential and business postal patrons in the City. Notices were mailed to 56 community organizations and 19 individuals, including the Crescenta-Cañada YMCA which is the designated administration center for the Crescenta-Cañada Ministerial Association's emergency food and aid program.

Copies of the public hearing draft Housing Element were distributed to interested agencies and individuals, and copies were available for review or purchase at City Hall. Two public hearings and three work sessions were conducted with the City Planning Commission, and the City Council conducted two public hearings to provide input into the final Element.

**TABLE H-2  
STATE HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

This table is intended as a summary of California Government Code Section 65583 related to Housing Element Requirements.

REQUIRED HOUSING ELEMENT COMPONENT	REFERENCE
<b>1. <u>Identification and Analysis of Existing and Projected Housing Needs.</u></b>	
<b>A. Population Trends and Projections</b>	<b>Population Growth</b> Pages 15 - 18
<b>B. Employment Trends</b>	<b>Population Growth</b> Pages 15 - 18
<b>C. Fair Share of Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)</b>	<b>Residential Development Potential</b> Pages 39 - 42
<b>D. Level of Payment vs. Ability to Pay</b>	<b>Affordability</b> Pages 19 - 20
<b>E. Overcrowding</b>	<b>Large Families - Pages 22 - 23</b>
<b>F. Condition of Housing Stock</b>	<b>Condition of Units - Page 19</b>
<b>2. A. <u>Statement of Goals and Policies</u></b>	
1. Development	<b>Housing Element Goals and Policies</b> Pages 44 - 49
2. Preservation	
3. Improvement	
<b>B. <u>Statement of Quantified Objectives</u></b>	
1. Development	<b>Housing Programs</b> Pages 50 - 59; Summarized in Table H-6, Pages 60 - 63
2. Preservation	
3. Improvement	
<b>C. <u>Statement of Financial Resources</u></b>	
1. Development	<b>Residential Development Potential</b> Pages 39 - 42
2. Preservation	
3. Improvement	

**TABLE H-2 (Continued)**  
**STATE HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

REQUIRED HOUSING ELEMENT COMPONENT	REFERENCE
<p><b>D. <u>Five Year Schedule of Housing Programs</u></b></p> <p>1. Development</p> <p>2. Preservation</p> <p>3. Improvement</p>	<p><b>Housing Programs</b>  Pages 50 - 59;  Summary in Table H-6, Pages 60 - 63</p>
<p><b>E. <u>Statement re. Ability to Meet Projected Housing Needs</u></b></p>	<p><b>Residential Development Potential</b>  Pages 39 - 42;  Summarized in Table H-6, Pages 60 - 63</p>
<p><b>3. <u>Identify Adequate Sites for Housing for all Economic Segments of the Community, including rental housing:</u></b></p> <p>1. Very Low Income</p> <p>2. Low Income</p> <p>3. Moderate Income</p> <p>4. Upper Income</p>	<p><b>Residential Development Potential</b>  Pages 39 - 42 and  Table H - 6, Page 63.</p>
<p><b>4. <u>Inventory of Land for Residential Development</u></b></p> <p>1. Vacant</p> <p>2. Redevelopment Sites</p> <p>Relationship of these sites to:</p> <p>a. Zoning</p> <p>b. Public Facilities and Services</p>	<p><b>Availability of Sites for Housing</b>  Pages 36 - 39</p> <p><b>Housing Element Goals and Policies</b>  Pages 44 - 49;  <b>Housing Programs</b>  Pages 50 - 59</p>

**TABLE H-2 (Continued)**  
**STATE HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

REQUIRED HOUSING ELEMENT COMPONENT	REFERENCE
<p><b>5. <u>Governmental Constraints on Maintenance, Improvement and Development of Housing</u></b></p> <p>1. Land Use Controls            2. Building Codes &amp; Enforcement            3. Site Improvements            4. Fees &amp; Exactions            5. Exactions            6. Processing/Permit Procedures</p>	<p><b>Governmental Constraints</b>            Pages 31 - 35</p>
<p><b>6. <u>Non-Governmental Constraints on Maintenance, Improvement and Development of Housing</u></b></p> <p>1. Availability of Financing            2. Price of Land            3. Cost of Construction</p>	<p><b>Market Constraints</b>            Pages 23 - 29  <b>Environmental and Infrastructure Constraints</b>            Pages 29 - 31</p>
<p><b>7. <u>Analysis of Special Needs</u></b></p> <p>1. Handicapped            2. Elderly            3. Large Families            4. Farmworkers            5. Female-headed Households            6. Persons and Families in Need of Emergency Shelter</p>	<p><b>Special Needs Groups</b>            Pages 20 - 22</p>
<p><b>8. <u>Opportunities for Energy Conservation in Housing</u></b></p>	<p><b>Energy Conservation</b>            Page 43</p>
<p><b>9. <u>Analysis of Existing Housing Developments</u></b></p>	<p><b>Assessment of 1986 Housing Element and 1988-94 RHNA</b>            Pages 39 - 42</p>

**TABLE H-2 (Continued)**  
**STATE HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

REQUIRED HOUSING ELEMENT COMPONENT	REFERENCE
<b>10. <u>Five-Year Program Schedule:</u></b>	<b>Housing Programs:</b>
<b><u>Program Requirements</u></b>	
1. Identify adequate sites for housing for all economic levels	Pages 51 - 59
2. Assist in the development of adequate housing for low and moderate income households	Pages 51 - 59
3. Address or remove governmental constraints	Pages 54 - 56
4. Conserve and improve the condition of affordable housing	Pages 56 - 57
5. Promote equal housing opportunities	Page 59
6. Preserve Assisted Housing Developments	Page 57