



THE CITY OF MONTEREY

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CITY OF MONTEREY PLANNING DIVISION EARNS STATE AWARD **Planning Excellence Award of Merit for the 2031 General Plan Update**

Monterey, Calif. – The [Northern California Chapter of the American Planning Association](#) awarded the City of Monterey the *Planning Excellence Award of Merit* for the 2031 General Plan Update. This planning effort is a targeted update to the Housing, Land Use, Circulation, and Safety Elements of the General Plan. These General Plan Elements address the acute housing shortage and critical need for local workforce housing, particularly for those employed in the tourism, health, and service sectors who commute long distances to jobs in Monterey.

The project outlines a multi-faceted strategy to thoughtfully integrate new housing into the fabric of the community and provide a wide range of new housing options for those who live and work in Monterey, while building resilience to natural and human-made hazards. A robust program of digital and in-person outreach activities helped to build consensus and support in the community, paving the way for adoption within 21 months. The award recognizes the City as a leader in the State of California and acknowledges the great work done by our City Council, Planning Commission and of course our Planning Division.

Community Development Director Kim Cole said, “The award represents excellence in finding housing solutions for our community. Housing affordability and capacity has been a longstanding crisis situation in California, and our creative work to find solutions for these critical social needs helps us see that solutions are in sight.”

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Originality and Innovation of the Monterey 2031 General Plan Update

Recognizing that Monterey faces an acute housing shortage and a critical need for local workforce housing, the project incorporates innovative strategies to catalyze infill development and integrate new housing in locations best able to accommodate it. Within the centrally located Downtown, Lighthouse Avenue, and North Fremont Street Specific Plan areas, the Housing Element identifies new regulatory mechanisms and incentives to support the financial feasibility of multifamily projects and address development constraints, including shared parking agreements that permit projects with an affordable component to reduce the number of on-site spaces when in proximity to a City-owned lot or garage, and a local density bonus program designed to incentivize small lot consolidation and family-sized units that are in short supply locally. An Educational Workforce Housing Overlay was developed in close consultation with the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD), permitting multifamily housing by right on urban infill sites owned by MPUSD throughout Monterey, as the high cost of housing is a significant barrier to the recruitment and retention of teachers and staff. Building on prior planning efforts to establish a network of mixed-use neighborhoods within the city, a framework to guide redevelopment and conservation on the site of the former Fort Ord Military Base and create a distinctive, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood on the site while ensuring sustainable development and adequate resource protection was incorporated into Land Use and Housing Elements. These strategies applied planning theory and concepts to address urgent, real-world problems in the community.

Background on the Housing Element

On July 16, 2024, the City Council adopted the Monterey 2031 - General Plan Update, including the City's Sixth Cycle Housing Element. The housing element was subsequently certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development on October 4, 2024. The housing element identified locations for future housing development for all income levels. The plan addresses the housing development goals (3,654 units) established for the city by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). This housing development number is commonly referred to as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). In addition to identifying specific sites for future housing, the housing element contains goals, updated information, and strategic directions (policies and implementing actions) that the City is

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committed to undertaking to fulfill the City's RHNA obligation. This includes evaluating potential constraints to housing development and developing programs to help remove or reduce barriers to the development of housing for all income levels. The specific implementing actions are contained in Chapter 4 of the Housing Element, Housing Action Plan.



From left to right: Community Development Director Kim Cole, Principal Planner Christy Sabdo (holding the award), and Planning Manager Levi Hill

Follow this project at <https://haveyoursaymonterey.org/monterey2031-implementation>.

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