What is a Housing Element and what does it contain?
Since 1969, California has required all local governments (cities and counties) to plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community through the development of a Housing Element. The Housing Element is a component of the General Plan and provides a strategy for promoting safe, decent and affordable housing. The General Plan is a city’s blueprint for how it will grow and develop.

Per state law, the specific purposes of the Housing Element are to assess both current and future housing needs and constraints, and establish housing goals, policies and programs that provide a strategy for meeting the city’s housing needs.

The current City of Bellflower Housing Element, adopted in 2013, identifies strategies and programs that focus on these five goals to satisfy housing needs:

- Maintain and enhance the quality of existing housing and residential neighborhoods;
- Provide a variety of housing types to accommodate special needs groups and all economic segments of the City;
- Minimize the impact of governmental constraints on housing production and affordability;
- Promote equal housing opportunities for all residents;
- Identify adequate sites to achieve a variety of housing.

When and why does the Housing Element need to be updated?
State law requires regular updates to the Housing Element to ensure relevancy and accuracy. These updates are required every eight years. The time from one update to the next is called a housing cycle. The upcoming sixth Housing Element cycle will cover the next eight-year planning period (2021-2029).

To comply with state law, the Bellflower City Council needs to adopt an updated element by October 2021. Following adoption, and as a final step, the updated element will require state review and certification.

What is the Housing Element Update Process?
The city will need to first update its previous Housing Element, then submit a draft to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for review/approval. Depending on the state’s response, the city will either need to revise or proceed to adopt the updated Housing Element. Finally, the city will need to submit its adopted Housing Element back to HCD.

What is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and what is the City of Bellflower’s RHNA?
A huge component of the Housing Element update is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation. The RHNA is a representation of future housing need for all income levels in a region. Bellflower’s RHNA for meeting regional housing needs is defined by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). More details about RHNA are available on SCAG’s website at https://scag.ca.gov/rhna.

Providing housing to meet the needs of all income levels is critical to the social and economic health of a city. Bellflower is required to plan for its income-based housing allocation to address its share of southern California region’s housing needs. Income groups include: “very low income” (<50% of the Los Angeles County annual median income (AMI)), “low income” (50-80% AMI), “moderate income” (80-120% AMI), and “above moderate income” (>120% AMI). The current AMI for Los Angeles County is $77,300 for a family of four.

The table below shows Bellflower’s allocation of housing units by income group for the upcoming sixth housing cycle. About 40% of the allocation must accommodate the housing needs of very low- and low-income families. In total, 3,735 housing units are needed to accommodate 2021 – 2029 growth for all income groups as estimated through the RHNA process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Levels</th>
<th>Housing Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low Income (&lt;50% AMI)</td>
<td>1,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income (50-80%AMI)</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Income (80-120%)</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Moderate Income (&gt;120%)</td>
<td>1,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,735</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The RHNA is required by California state law for every jurisdiction in the state and it is the responsibility of the City of Bellflower to track progress towards the building of these units during the 2021-2029 planning period (see the City’s 2019 Housing Element Annual Progress Report).

**Do cities build the housing units required by RHNA?**

Building housing is the function of private developers. However, cities do adopt plans, regulations and programs that provide opportunities for how and where housing development can occur. Cities must ultimately ensure that sufficient land is zoned for housing to meet its share of regional housing needs.

**What is Affordable Housing?**

A sizeable portion of a city’s housing need allocation will likely require housing for very-low and low-income households. Cities can plan and help remove barriers towards the development of affordable housing to meet its very-low and low-income housing requirements. Affordable housing refers to housing where residents pay no more than 30% of their incomes on rent or housing expenses. Affordable rental housing typically targets households earning less than 80% of the County’s Area Median Income (AMI). A County’s AMI varies by year and reflects the median income for households throughout the jurisdiction. In 2020, Los Angeles County’s AMI was $77,300 for a family of four. This means that a family of four with a household income of less than $38,650 would be considered very low-income and $56,550 would be considered low-income.

**Why Update a Housing Element?**

Without a certified Housing Element, the city would be ineligible to receive state grants or funding. The city would also be at risk for lawsuits for not working towards meeting their housing needs. Such lawsuits can be costly to the city; therefore, providing further economic and fiscal effects. If the city does not meet its adoption deadline, it would need to prepare a new Housing Element in just four years and potentially face steep fines until a housing plan is adopted. Having an approved plan avoids these legal and costly challenges, helps preserve local control over land use decisions, and allows the city to apply for grants and funding to improve local infrastructure and housing.

**How will housing locations be selected?**

The updated housing plan will need to provide exact locations where future housing can be built and identify the potential number of homes that can be built at those locations. City regulations ensure housing is not located where sensitive habitats or other constraints occur. City policies, such as those in the General Plan, help to identify suitable housing sites. For example, one General Plan policy encourages mixed use developments, or homes affordable to very low, low, and moderate-income families, to locate near transit and transportation corridors. Sites will also be evaluated for financial feasibility and competitiveness based on existing funding sources offered for affordable housing (i.e. 9% low-income housing tax credits).

**What about other important topics, like housing the homeless or the high cost of housing? Are those addressed in the Housing Element too?**

Certainly. A Housing Element identifies issues, tendencies, and solutions for many topics, including homelessness and development constraints. The city's current Housing Element is a great resource to see demographic, housing, and other local trends that impact issues such as homelessness and high housing costs.

**Where can I find more information?**

For more information about the Bellflower Housing Element and what the city is doing to address the housing needs of its residents, please visit the City of Bellflower website: [www.bellflower.org](http://www.bellflower.org).