



NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP)

To: All Interested Parties

From: Susan Koleda
City of La Cañada Flintridge
One Civic Center Drive
La Cañada Flintridge, CA 91011
skoleda@lcf.ca.gov

Subject: NOP of an Initial Study and Negative/Mitigated Negative Declaration

The City of La Cañada Flintridge will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Initial Study and Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency / organization as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project description and related figures are attached. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Susan Koleda at the address or email shown above. Please also include a name, address, email address and/or phone number for a contact person in your agency/organization.

Project Title:	City of City of La Cañada Flintridge General Plan Housing Element (6th Cycle Update) and Safety Element Updates
Project Applicant:	City of La Cañada Flintridge

February 1, 2021

Date

Signature

Community Development Director

Title

1-818-790-8881

Telephone

DRAFT CEQA PROJECT DESCRIPTION

LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE HOUSING ELEMENT & SAFETY ELEMENT UPDATE PROJECT

Background and Introduction

The City of La Cañada Flintridge is currently updating its Housing Element of the General Plan. New State legislation requires that the City update the Safety Element at the same time as the Housing Element. The updated Safety Element will be adopted concurrently with the Housing Element. The Housing Element must remain consistent with the other elements of the General Plan. This may require amendments to certain elements, most often the Land Use Element.

Local governments across California are required by State Housing law to adequately plan to meet their share of the State's overall housing need. The State of California, Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is responsible for administering Housing Element Law and for identifying the State's overall housing need. To adequately plan for their share of the State's housing need, local governments adopt Housing Elements as part of their General Plans. Housing Elements are intended to create opportunities for housing development.

The Housing Element sets goals, objectives, policies, and programs that are implemented after the plan is adopted. When a new housing program, project, or idea is considered, the Housing Element provides guidance for decision-makers to evaluate the proposal. The City of La Cañada Flintridge is updating its 6th Cycle Housing Element, which will cover the eight-year planning period from October 2021 – October 2029.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA contains a statutory exemption associated with the Regional Housing Needs Allowance (RHNA):

CEQA Guidelines §15283: Housing Needs Allocation. CEQA does not apply to regional housing needs determinations made by the Department of Housing and Community Development, a council of governments, or a city or county pursuant to Section 65584 of the Government Code.

However, this CEQA statutory exemption does not apply to the preparation of an updated General Plan Housing Element to reflect an updated RHNA. Therefore, CEQA compliance is required for the City's Housing Element Update as well as the General Plan Safety Element Update that will be prepared concurrently.

The City will prepare an Initial Study (IS) and Negative or Mitigated Negative Declaration to ensure CEQA compliance for the Proposed Project. The Project to be evaluated in the Initial Study includes four components: 1) adoption of the 6th Cycle 2021-2029 Housing Element; 2) adoption of revisions to the General Plan (GP) Land Use Element text and General Plan Map; 3) adoption of revisions to the Zoning Ordinance text and Zoning Map; and 4) Adoption of a Safety Element update.

The Project Description for CEQA compliance purposes focuses on the adoption of the Housing and Safety Element updates, and related actions, and is not intended to provide construction-level CEQA compliance for any future subsequent related implementation actions.

Proposed Project Description

Since 1969, California has required that all local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. The Housing Element is a State-mandated policy document within the General Plan that guides the implementation of various programs to meet future housing needs for residents of all income levels. The housing needs are determined through the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).

Every eight years, “housing need”—both the total number of units and the distribution of those units by affordability levels—is determined by the State of California Housing and Community Development (HCD) for the entire State. HCD then distributes this housing needs assessment to each regional planning body in California; this housing needs assessment is the amount of housing that must be planned for by each region. La Cañada Flintridge is located in the six-county¹ region administered by SCAG, which is the regional planning body for La Cañada Flintridge. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) takes the number of housing units it receives from the State housing needs assessment and allocates it to all jurisdictions in its planning area, including La Cañada Flintridge. This allocation is the RHNA.

The Housing Element identifies available land that is suitable for housing development, as well goals, policies, and programs to accommodate the City’s housing need, provide opportunities for new housing, and preserve the existing housing stock.

Frequent updates are required because housing is critical to ensure economic prosperity and quality of life throughout the State. The update also helps to ensure that jurisdictions are responding to their residents’ changing needs. The revised Housing Element must be adopted by the La Cañada Flintridge City Council and submitted to HCD no later than October 15, 2021.

Housing Elements must be certified (approved) by HCD as complying with State law. Jurisdictions that are not in compliance with Housing Element law could lose eligibility for significant sources of funding currently provided by the State and SCAG. Noncomplying jurisdictions also run the risk of being sued by the State Attorney General.

The 5th Cycle Housing Element update covered the period from 2013 through 2021 and provides a foundation for the 6th Cycle (current) update. Please refer to the City’s 5th Cycle Housing Element for more information on existing goals, policies, and programs available at the link below:

https://cityoflcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/General_Plan_Housing-Element.pdf

¹ Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, and Imperial

To comply with State law, each jurisdiction's Housing Element must be updated to ensure its policies and programs can accommodate its share of the number of housing units identified by the State. For the upcoming 6th Cycle Housing Element update, the City's share of the RHNA is 610 units, divided among a range of income or affordability levels (based on Area Median Income, or AMI), as shown in the following table.

6th Cycle RHNA for La Cañada Flintridge

Income Category/Affordability Level*	Number of Units	Percent of Total Units
Very Low Income (0-50% of AMI)	251	41%
Low Income (50-80% of AMI)	135	22%
Moderate Income (80-120% of AMI)	139	23%
Above Moderate Income (More than 120% of AMI)	85	14%
TOTAL UNITS	610	100%

*Income/affordability categories are grouped into the four categories shown in the table above; average median income (AMI) is the average household income for each Metropolitan Statistical Area. The AMI for Los Angeles County is currently \$77,300.

Key Components of the Housing Element Update

Key components of the Housing Element are anticipated to include the following:

- A demographic profile and analysis of population growth and trends in the community;
- Identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community;
- Identification of adequate sites that are zoned and available within the 8-year housing cycle to meet the city's fair share of regional housing needs at all income levels, as prescribed by the RHNA;
- An evaluation of local constraints or barriers to housing development as well as opportunities to develop housing; and
- Housing goals, policies, quantified objectives and scheduled programs to preserve, improve and develop housing within the City.

Through the Housing Element update process, the City is required to demonstrate that it has the regulatory and land use policies to accommodate its assigned RHNA. Local governments are not required to build the housing. Rather, the actual development of housing is anticipated to be constructed by developers. However, the Housing Element is required to demonstrate potential sites where housing can be accommodated to meet all the income levels of a jurisdiction's RHNA.

Identification of potential sites and related site housing capacity does not guarantee that construction will occur on that site. If there are insufficient sites and capacity to meet the RHNA allocation, the Housing Element is required to identify a rezoning program to accommodate the required capacity. If the City does not identify capacity for its RHNA allocation, the City could be deemed out of compliance and risk losing important sources of funding currently provided by the State as well as facing legal challenges.

Due to the built-out nature of La Cañada Flintridge, there is the potential that existing land use designations in the General Plan Land Use Element may need to be revised to accommodate the City's 6th Cycle RHNA. The Housing Element update may also potentially identify necessary amendments to the Zoning Code, implementation programs such as revisions to the Zoning Code and/or the Downtown Village Specific Plan (DVSP), to accommodate the City's RHNA. Other revisions may be necessary to bring the Zoning Code into compliance with other State-mandated housing laws, such as the accessory dwelling unit ordinance, emergency shelter and transition service center ordinances, density bonus ordinance, and other ordinances as appropriate.

For more information about RHNA, please visit the SCAG website: <https://scag.ca.gov/rhna>.

Key Components of the Safety Element Update

The Safety Element addresses seismic and other geologic hazards, flooding and other hydrologic hazards, fires and fire-related hazards, hazardous material and sites, crime, and emergency preparedness. Hazardous incidents most likely to occur in La Cañada Flintridge include earthquakes, landslides, wildfire, hazardous material spills on the Interstate (I) 210 Freeway, and storm-related incidents such as debris and mud flows.

The City will update its existing General Plan Safety Element (January 2013) in conformance with the requirements and guidelines issued by the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines (2017), OPR's Fire Hazard Planning guidance, and the City's very high fire hazard severity zone map. Other pertinent documents will be reviewed and evaluated as appropriate.

The Safety Element will incorporate by reference the City's recently adopted Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) (2019). A new State requirement is in place to include climate change adaptation and resilience, including a vulnerability assessment and measures to address vulnerabilities, when updating the Safety Element. This will be conducted and included as part of the updated Safety Element. OPR's Completeness Checklist will be used to ensure all required issues are addressed.

The City will coordinate with the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) during the development of the Safety Element update to determine necessary updates to address fire safety issues in the City. The City will also consult with the State Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Geological Survey of the Department of Conservation during preparation of the update to the Safety Element.

Public Outreach and Involvement

Public outreach for the CEQA document (beyond the required CEQA public notices) will be integrated with the public outreach efforts on the Housing Element and Safety Element updates. As required by State law, the Housing Element must be adopted by the La Cañada Flintridge City Council and submitted to the State no later than October 15, 2021.

The City is also concurrently conducting outreach to local Tribes as part of the CEQA process as part of AB 52 and SB 18 compliance.

The City plans to hold two public workshops to provide information on the Proposed Project (Housing Element and Safety Element Updates) and receive public comments. The public workshops will be hosted by the La Cañada Flintridge Planning Commission and will be held virtually. After the Draft Housing and Safety Element updates are prepared, two public hearings for adoption will be held. The first will be held by the Planning Commission and the second will be held by the City Council.

Additional Information

For more information about the CEQA process, Housing Element Update and/or Safety Element Update, please contact Susan Koleda, Community Development Director at skoleda@lcf.ca.gov or (1.818.790.8881).

Figure 1-1 Regional Location



Figure 1-1
Regional Location
City of La Cañada Flintridge

Figure 1-2 Project Vicinity

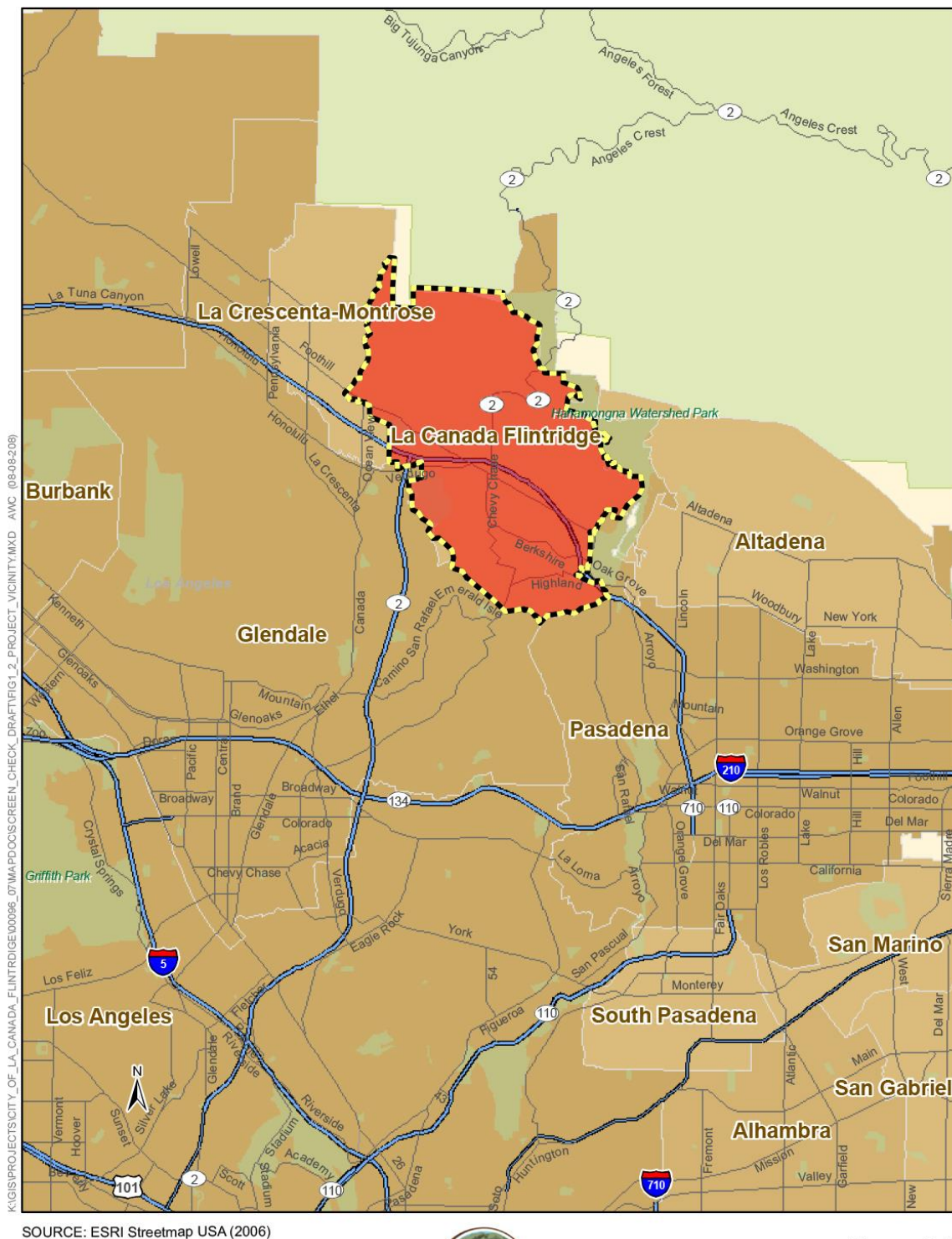


Figure 1-2
Project Vicinity
City of La Cañada Flintridge

Figure 1-3 Land Use Map

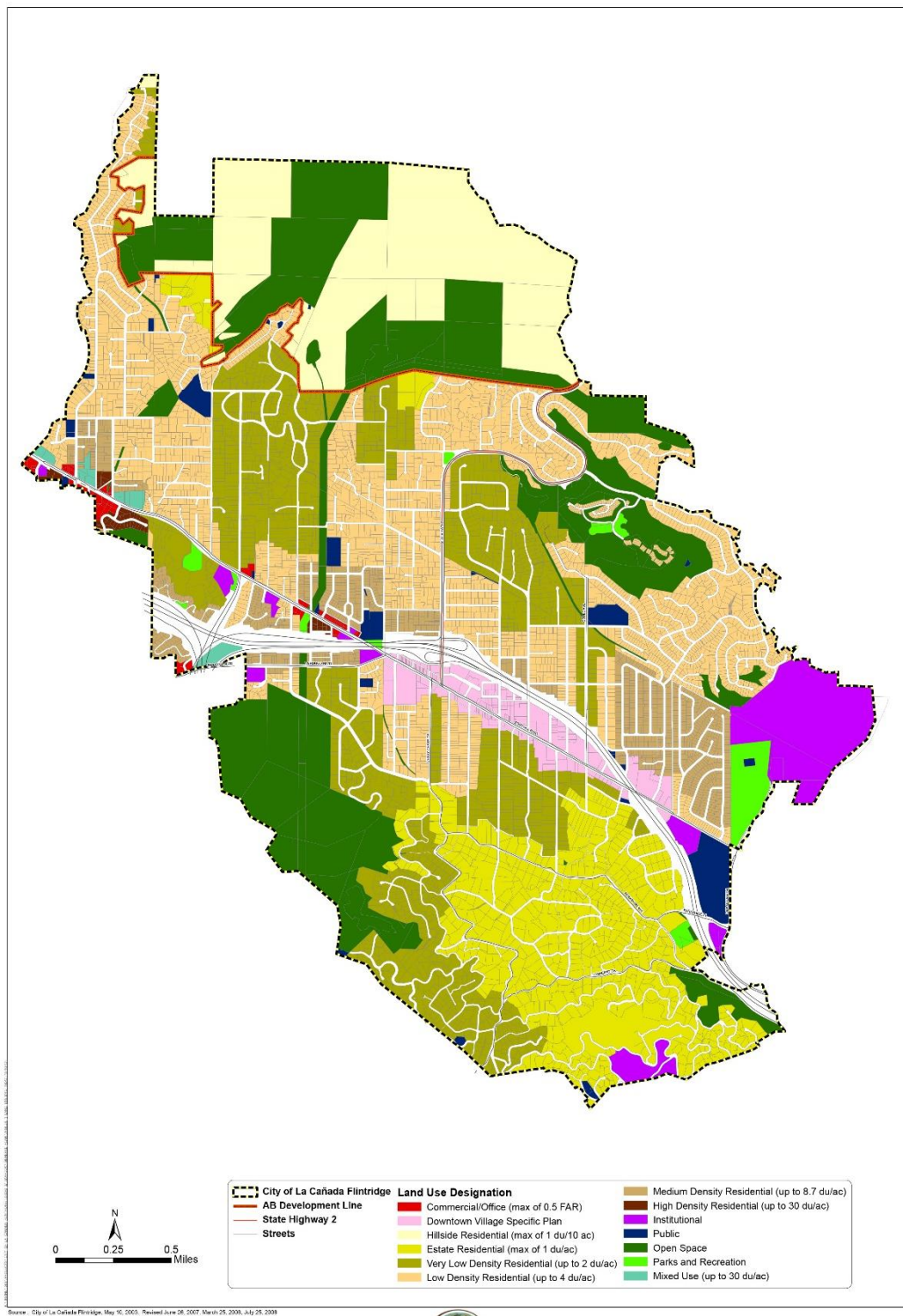


Figure LUE-1
Land Use Policy Map
City of La Cañada Flintridge