

Indio likely to add 7,812 housing units by '29

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As part of a state-required analysis of housing needs in cities across California, the City of Indio must plan on adding 7,812 new housing units by 2029, though issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic could make that a difficult task.

Used since 1969, the Housing Element analysis serves to outline how a city can meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation, a state-mandated process that determines the number of housing units cities must plan for over a set period of time.

"The Housing Element contains goals, policies and actions to address the comprehensive housing needs of all current and anticipated residents across all income levels for the next eight years," said Erika Van Sickle of Dudek, the consulting firm hired by the city to help draft the Housing Element, in a presentation during Wednesday's city council meeting.

Van Sickle broke down Indio's housing allocation numbers, showing that of the 7,812 new units necessary, 2,963 must be lower-income units; 1,315 should be moderate-income units and 3,534 can be above moderate-income units. She added that the total figure did not include a "recommended buffer," of 15% to 30% additional lower- and moderate-income units needed to ensure that there is enough capacity throughout the Housing Ele-

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ment's eight-year cycle.

While Indio is not responsible for building the new units, cities must make sites available in a way that meets their housing allocation target.

But Councilmember Glenn Miller questioned the possibility to do so within the eight-year period allotted, and Kevin Snyder, director of community development for the City of Indio, agreed. "I don't think those numbers are achievable unless we suddenly see an immense increase in the housing production we're seeing in our community," Snyder said.

Despite hardships with development brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the city added 420 new single-family units in 2020 and 540 new single-fam-

ily units in 2021, according to Snyder. Though he called the numbers "impressive," he added that the city would have to return to the fast-building days of the early 2000s to make progress toward the 7,812 new units.

"If the market is not building, then we cannot necessarily force the market, (but) we can incentivize them. I question whether we will realize that 7,812, but I can assure the council and the staff that we will do everything in our power to try and make that happen, with your support and your assistance," Snyder said.

Van Sickle said that with Indio's existing zoning code, the city did not have the capacity to accommodate the lower and moderate-income housing allocation, although it is in the process of updating its zoning ordinance.

"So, once we factor in the qualifying sites from the rezone, you end up with a very generous buffer of 874 lower-in-



An aerial view of Indio, Calif.

THE CITY OF INDIO

come units and 293 moderate income-units," Van Sickle said, regarding sites available for additional units that would bring the lower-income unit total to 3,837 and moderate-income units to 1,608. Above moderate-income units would also increase to 9,859. In that sense, Van Sickle pointed out, the city would be ahead of the current Housing

Element cycle.

Snyder said a reduction in his department's staff had also affected the city's timeline in its zoning code update, though they're working to get up to speed. "I would say by mid-2022, at the latest, assuming the council is supportive of the changes, we would have the zoning in place that would implement the General Plan that would realize the densities needed to support the numbers that we seek to achieve," Snyder said.

Mayor Waymond Fermon made a concluding statement, saying that the Housing Element was a roadmap and that, while the number of new units seems hard to attain, the city would strive to be innovative with its housing as well as think of different solutions.

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