

NOTICE OF PREPARATION
Program Environmental Impact Report
Monterey General Plan Update

Date August 2, 2023

To Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Monterey 2031 General Plan Update and Scheduling of a Scoping Meeting on August 7, 2023

The City of Monterey will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Monterey 2031 General Plan Update (the Project). The Project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below.

Public agencies and members of the general public are invited to provide comments in writing as to the scope and content of the EIR. Specifically, the City needs to know the views of Responsible and Trustee Agencies as to the potentially significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Responsible Agencies will need to use the EIR prepared by the City when considering permits or other approvals for the Project.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, responses must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the NOP review period, which runs as follows: August 2, 2023 through September 4, 2023. Please send written responses to Christy Sabdo, Associate Planner, City of Monterey at the address shown below. Public agencies providing comments are requested to include a contact person for the agency.

PROJECT TITLE: City of Monterey 2031 General Plan Update

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT:

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PROJECT SPONSOR:

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570 Pacific Street
Monterey, CA 93940

PROJECT LOCATION AND CONTEXT:

Located in northern Monterey County, about 19 miles west of Salinas, 29 miles north of Big Sur, and 120 miles south of San Francisco, as shown in Figure 1, the City of Monterey is a coastal community of about 27,000 residents with a rich historic background and a distinctive small-town feel. The city occupies 8.7 square miles of land between the southern shore of Monterey Bay and the forested ridgeline of the foothills, bordered by the City of Pacific Grove to the northwest and the City of Seaside to the northeast. Known for its stunning natural scenery and world-renowned attractions like the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Cannery Row, and Fisherman's Wharf, tourism is a pillar of the local economy. Monterey is also home to four educational institutions—U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey Peninsula College, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, and the U.S. Army Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center-- the region's largest hospital (Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula), and Monterey Peninsula's largest shopping center (Del Monte Center). Monterey's enviable quality of life continues to make the community an attractive place to live.

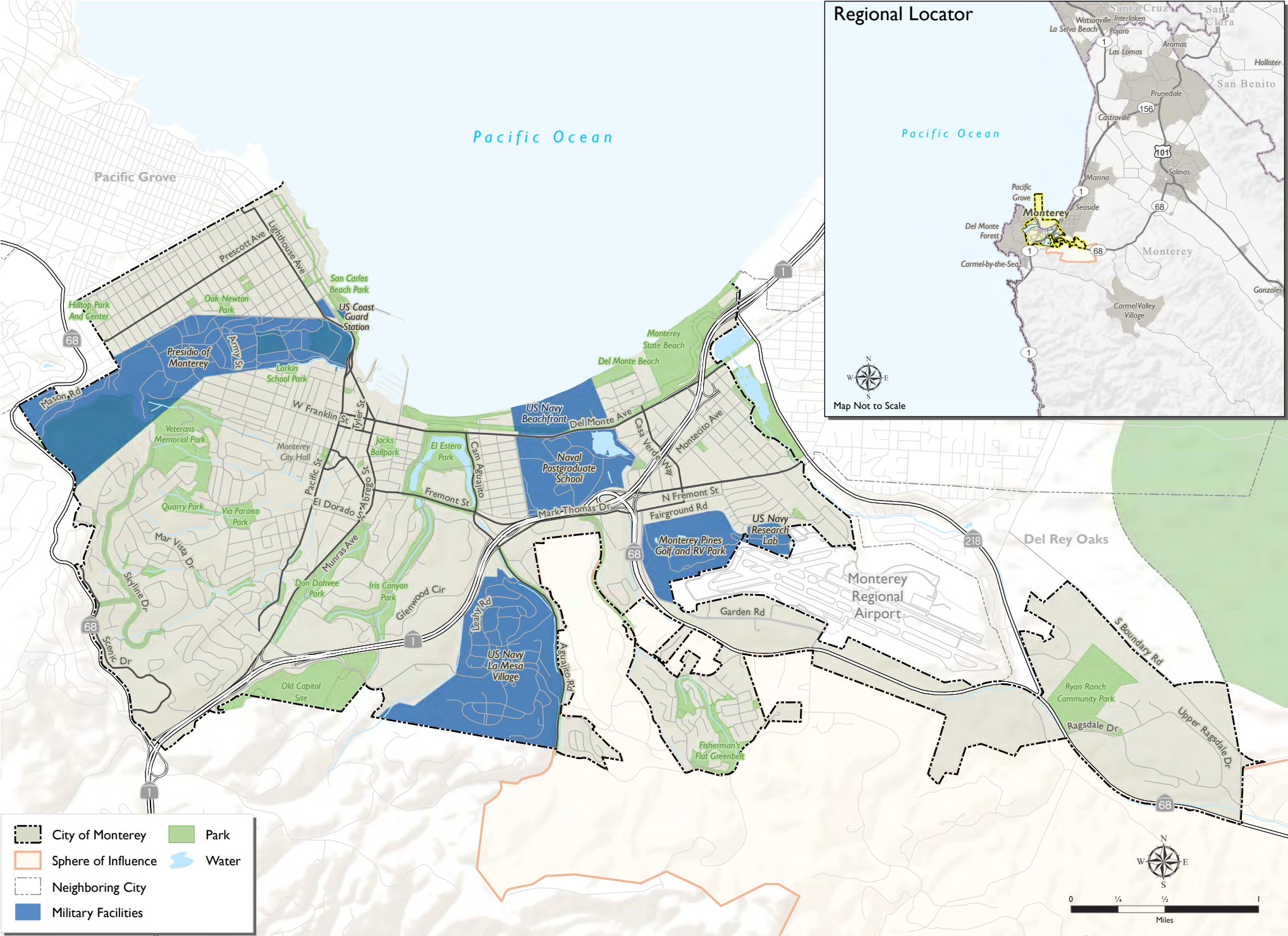
Regional access is provided by California State Route 1 (SR1), a north-south highway that runs through the center of Monterey, as well as California State Route 68 (SR 68), an east-west highway that serves as a major route between Salinas and Monterey Peninsula. Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) provides connections at the Monterey Transit Plaza to the Salinas Transit Center and other neighboring communities, including Pacific Grove, Carmel Valley, Seaside, and Marina. Adjacent to the City to the east is the Monterey Regional Airport, a commercial service airport offering direct service to several destinations and connecting service to numerous cities worldwide.

Environmental Setting

The setting of the planning area is largely urbanized; however, natural resources are an integral part of the city's setting, economy, and physical development. Monterey features an array of natural habitats and protected areas that are home to abundant wildlife, from marine wildlife and ecosystems, to the coastal beaches, rocky bluffs, and sand dunes, to upland oak and pine forests and chaparral habitats. Notable flora and fauna that occur in the area include the Monterey pine, Monterey cypress, Hutchinson's larkspur, Tidestrom's lupine, Gairdner's yampah, the San Joaquin kit fox, the Salinas kangaroo rat, and the silver-sided legless lizard as well as numerous other rare, threatened, and endangered species.

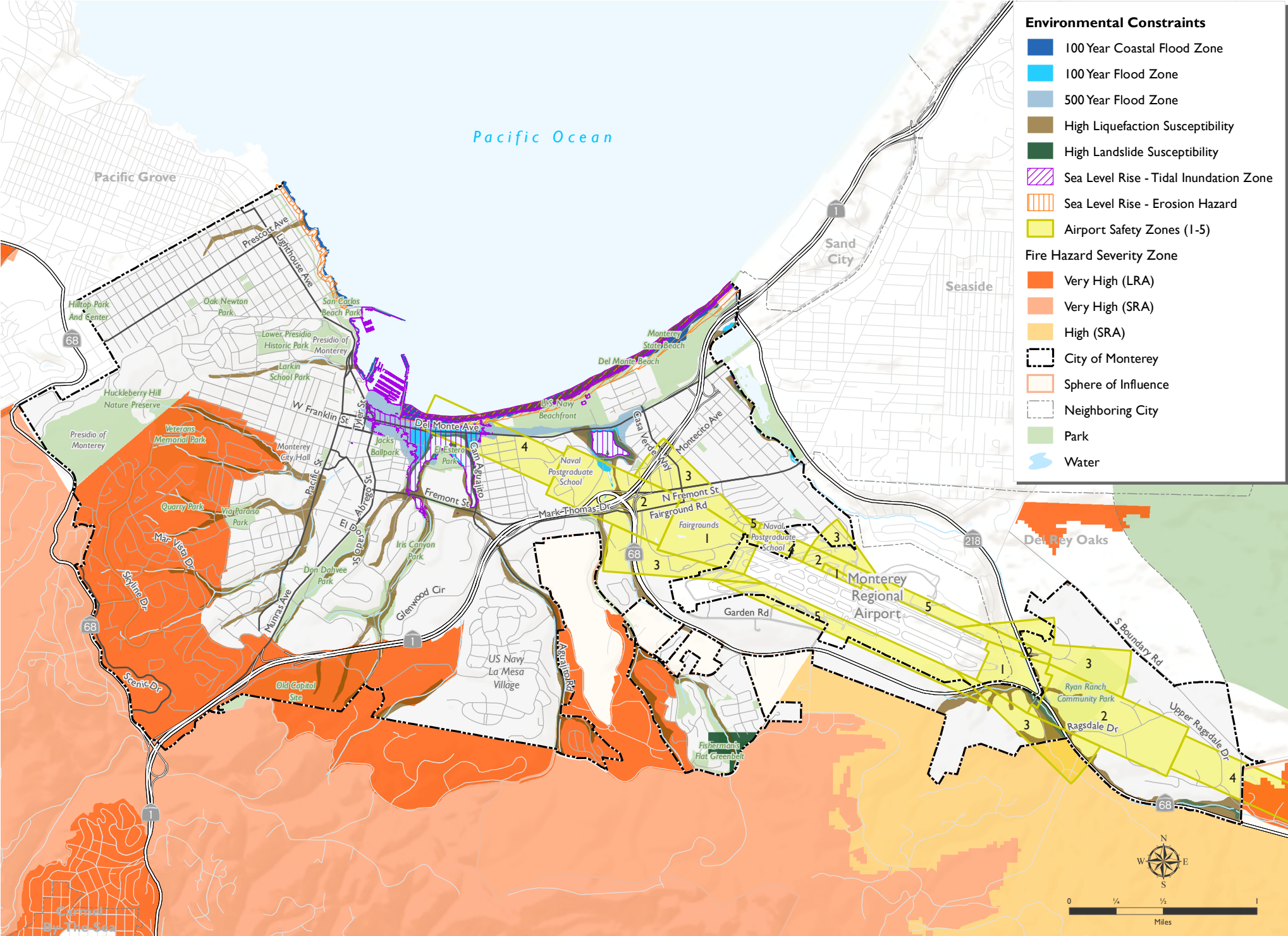
While the natural setting of Monterey helps define the character of the community, it also holds potential for natural hazards that pose risk to human life and property. As shown in Figure 2, upland areas in the south and southwest of the city are classified as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), based on the presence of vegetation that is highly flammable and extremely dry during the summer months. There are areas of high liquefaction risk along the course of creeks that drain from the hills to the Bay, and there is an area of high landslide susceptibility in the hills near Fisherman's Flats Greenbelt. Low lying areas downtown and along Del Monte Avenue are subject to flooding and coastal inundation. Coastal erosion is common along much of the Monterey coastline, which could increase with sea level rise.

Figure I: Planning Area



Data Source: City of Monterey, 2022; Monterey County GIS, 2022; Dyett & Bhatia, 2022.

Figure 2: Environmental Hazards



Data Source: Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA, Recommended by CALFIRE, 2007; Fire Hazard Severity Zones in SRA, Adopted by CAL FIRE, 2007; National Flood Hazard Layer, FEMA 2017; Liquefaction Data, County of Monterey, 2014; Landslide Layer, County of Monterey, 2018; Monterey Regional Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, 2019; City of Monterey, 2022; Monterey County GIS, 2022; Dyett & Bhatia, 2022.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Proposed Project involves updates to the Housing, Land Use, and Safety Elements of the City of Monterey General Plan to address emerging issues and new State laws. Key project components are summarized below.

Draft Housing Element

Under State law, each city and county in California must plan to accommodate its share of the regional housing need - called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) - for the coming 8-year planning period, which runs from December 15, 2023, through December 15, 2031. The State determines the estimated need for new housing in each region of California, based on population projections and other factors including rates of vacancy, overcrowding, and cost-burden. The various regional planning agencies then allocate a target to each city or town within their jurisdiction, considering factors such as access to jobs, good schools, and healthy environmental conditions. RHNA is split into four categories representing different levels of affordability, based on area median income (AMI) in the county. The affordability categories are as follows:

- Very Low Income - Households making less than 50 percent of AMI
- Low Income - Households making 50-80 percent of AMI
- Moderate Income - Households making 80-120 percent of AMI
- Above Moderate Income - Households making more than 120 percent of AMI

Amid the ongoing housing crisis in California, Monterey is required to plan for at least 3,654 new housing units between 2023 and 2031, including 1,177 Very Low-Income units, 769 Low Income units, 462 Moderate income units, and 1,246 Above Moderate units. As required by State law, the Draft Housing Element will include an inventory of sites available for housing and a projection of the realistic capacity of the inventory for housing. The Draft Housing Element will also include a Housing Action Plan, organized around communitywide housing goals. Each goal will be supported by policies and implementing programs that describe actions the City will take to help meet its RHNA obligations.

On June 20, 2023, the Monterey City Council approved a preliminary inventory of sites for housing, developed with extensive community input and shown on Figure 3. Together with development proposals currently in the pipeline and expected to be approved and constructed within the planning period, the inventory has a total projected capacity for 5,802 new homes, which is sufficient to meet the City's assessed share of the regional housing need at all income levels with a buffer. The inventory assumes a combination of strategies to ensure the City meets its RHNA obligations, including:

- Infill development on vacant and underutilized properties downtown and along commercial corridors, including North Fremont Street, Garden Road, Lighthouse Avenue, Del Monte Avenue, Munras Avenue, and Abrego Street;
- Preparation of a specific plan to guide future residential and mixed-use development in the Fort Ord/Ryan Ranch area, identify infrastructure needs and financing mechanisms, and establish measures to ensure sustainable development and adequate resource protection;
- Facilitating construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and junior ADUs that provide affordable housing options on existing residential properties throughout the community; and
- Development or redevelopment of several larger sites to increase the range of housing options available in Monterey.

Sites available for Housing

- Above Moderate Income
- Very Low/Low/Moderate Income
- Mixed Income
- Opportunity Areas
- City of Monterey
- Sphere of Influence
- Parks and Recreation
- Water

The map displays various locations across Monterey, including Pacific Grove, Lighthouse, Downtown, Del Monte, North Fremont, Garden Road/Airport, Fort Ord/Ryan Ranch, and Carmel By-The-Sea. Key features include the Pacific Ocean, Monterey Harbor, and the Monterey Regional Airport. The map also shows major roads like Highway 68 and Highway 1, as well as local streets such as W Franklin St, Pacific Ave, and N Fremont St. A legend in the top right corner defines the symbols used for housing sites and other geographical features. A scale bar and compass rose are located in the bottom right corner.

Data Source: City of Monterey, 2022; Monterey County GIS, 2022; Dyett & Bhatia, 2022.

The projected capacity of the sites, summarized in Table 1 by area, is based on a survey of recently constructed projects in Monterey and surrounding communities, conducted to establish average as-built densities that represent the realistic capacity of sites included in the inventory.

Table 1 – Summary of RHNA Capacity Projections

<i>Income Category</i>	<i>Very Low, Low, and Moderate</i>		<i>Above Moderate</i>		<i>Subtotal</i>
	<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Non-vacant</i>	<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Non-vacant</i>	
Downtown	0	216		241	457
North Fremont	0	218	24	86	328
Garden Road	0	356	0	0	356
Lighthouse	0	31	11	254	296
Pacific/Munras/Cass	0	38	0	92	130
Del Monte	0	126	0	0	126
Fort Ord/Ryan Ranch		420		1,680	2,100
Vacant Low Density Residential			111		111
Vacant High Density Residential	33				33
ADUs		120			120
Educational Workforce Overlay		100			100
Pipeline projects	108		383		491
County Courthouse Site		130			130
50-acre MCSD Site	290		350		640
590 Perry Lane Site				50	50
Elk's Lodge Site		94			94
Del Monte Shopping Center				150	150
Heritage Harbor Office Complex		90			90
Subtotal	431	1,939	879	2,553	5,802
Total by RHNA Category		2,370		3,432	5,802
Inclusionary Requirement (20%) ¹				244	
Adjusted Total RHNA²		2,614		3,188	5,802
RHNA		2,408		1,246	3,654
Buffer		206		1,942	1,498
		8.56%		155.84%	

¹ Infill sites that do not meet the site suitability criteria established by the State are assumed to develop with market rate housing and that capacity has been assigned to above moderate income households. However, the City has adopted an Inclusionary Ordinance which requires that 20 percent of new units in projects of six or more units be affordable to moderate and low income households. Therefore, 20 percent of the total above moderate infill development capacity has been reallocated to moderate, low, and very low-income households.

² Adjusted Total RHNA is the sum of Total by RHNA Category and the Inclusionary Requirement.

Draft Safety, Land Use, and Circulation Elements

As an urbanized community, nestled between the California coast and the Santa Lucia Mountains, integrating new housing into the fabric of Monterey will require a thoughtful approach to land use and community design. In parallel with the Housing Element Update, State law triggers requirements to incorporate new data on natural hazards and climate change into the Safety Element along with actions to strengthen community resilience and emergency evacuation capacity. At the same time, the Land Use Element will be updated to ensure consistency with the newly adopted Monterey Regional Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, and the Circulation Element will be updated to incorporate strategies for multi-modal mobility and roadway safety, comply with new State law, and introduce new guidelines and metrics for evaluating transportation impacts.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

The Program EIR will evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the Project. Consistent with the State CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G), the following environmental resource categories will be analyzed in relation to the Project:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agricultural and Forest Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Historic, Cultural, and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Geology, Soils and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use, Population, and Housing
- Noise and Vibration
- Public Facilities and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

All of the resource categories listed above will be considered in the EIR; however, given the local context of Monterey, the following issues will be central to the environmental analysis:

- Adequate water supply to serve the projected future population of Monterey upon implementation of the Project is a critical consideration, and a Water Supply Assessment will be requested from water purveyors Cal Am (i.e., all City properties except Fort Ord property) and the Marina Coast Water District (e.g., Fort Ord property in City of Monterey) to inform the analysis in the EIR. The potential environmental impacts that could result from the construction of water and sewer infrastructure needed to support the population at buildout will also be analyzed.
- Given the presence of historic resources throughout the city, the potential for new development to adversely affect historic resources will require careful consideration. Additionally, there are many properties in the city which are "age-eligible" for historic designation, meaning they are over 50 years old and require some level of evaluation to determine whether or not they are historically significant. Impacts to these potentially historic resources will also need to be analyzed.
- Monterey contains natural habitats and protected areas that are home to a wealth of flora and fauna. As such, the EIR will need to evaluate potential impacts to biological resources, particularly in the south and southeast of the city where significant new housing and mixed-use development is envisioned. Rigorous analysis will be required to identify potential

impacts and inform mitigation strategies that can reduce or avoid significant environmental impacts.

- Portions of the former Fort Ord Military Base were found to have Unexploded Ordnances (UXO), and while the site has been cleared of UXO to a level that permits light industrial uses, the EIR will need to identify areas that have not yet received approval for residential use and recommend mitigation as appropriate.
- With major transportation routes, including Highway 1 and Highway 68, running through Monterey, the potential for adverse air quality and noise effects on sensitive populations such as children and seniors will need to be evaluated closely.
- Potential impacts related to airport hazards and noise in the vicinity of the Monterey Regional Airport will need careful assessment.
- Areas along the coastline and near El Estero Park, Del Monte Lake, and Laguna Grande Park are subject to flooding, tidal inundation, and coastal erosion. Careful consideration of risk in view of these conditions will be required.
- With parts of Monterey located in Very High and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones delineated by CalFire, parts of the community are subject to wildfire risk and associated impacts will need to be analyzed and mitigated.

Resources categories for which it can be clearly demonstrated that no significant impacts would result from Project implementation may be "scoped out" of the EIR analysis, pursuant to CEQA Section 15082. Accordingly, given that there are no mineral extraction operations or mineral resources of economic value classified under the Surface Mining and Geology Act within the City, it is assumed that mineral resources will be discussed briefly in the EIR and "scoped out."

SCOPING MEETING:

A scoping meeting will be conducted on Monday August 7, 2023, to collect oral comments from agencies and members of the public regarding the scope and content of the EIR in accordance with CEQA Section 21083.9.

EIR Scoping Meeting on the Monterey General Plan Update

Monday August 7, 2023, from 6:00p.m. to 8:30p.m.

Monterey Conference Center
1 Portola Plaza, Monterey, CA 93940

For project information, please visit the Project website:
haveyoursaymonterey.org/monterey2031

Please contact Christy Sabdo at (831) 646-3758 or sabdo@monterey.org with any questions regarding this notice or the scoping meeting.



Levi Hill, Planning Manager



Date