



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 10, 2025

ITEM NUMBER: NB-1

SUBJECT: HOUSING ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION (NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE WE ALL BELONG) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

**FROM: ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
DEPARTMENT/PLANNING DIVISION**

**PRESENTATION BY: ANNA MCGILL, PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY
MANAGER, CATHY TANG-SAEZ, DUDEK**

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RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission receive the presentation, provide feedback, and file this report.

BACKGROUND:

The City's adopted Housing Element is a State-mandated strategic blueprint for addressing Costa Mesa's existing and projected housing needs through 2029. The Housing Element describes housing characteristics, establishes housing programs, and identifies Housing Element Opportunity Sites to meet a housing target called the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). Costa Mesa's current Regional RHNA allocation is 11,760 units. The City must complete zoning and land use regulations described in the Housing Element, allowing 17,042 units, due to needing a buffer beyond the RHNA, to adequately plan for the RHNA capacity and achieve Housing Element certification by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

In November 2022, Costa Mesa voters approved Measure K, an ordinance to allow updates to land use plans that support housing in commercial and industrial corridors without a citywide vote. Costa Mesa Municipal Code 13-200.106(g), the ordinance implementing Measure K, requires city-sponsored land use plans on sites within the Measure K boundary, such as the Housing Element Opportunity Sites, to "include a public

community visioning process (e.g., workshops, design charrettes, community surveys) prior to adoption or amendment by the City Council at any required public hearing.”

In response to State-mandated housing regulations and in accordance with the City Council’s goal to “diversify, stabilize and increase housing to reflect community needs,” the City endeavors to implement the Housing Element. At its February 18, 2025, meeting, the City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Dudek for the Housing Element rezoning program, including a public community visioning process and Environmental Impact Report. Since officially kicking off the project in March 2025, the Consultant Team and City staff have been working diligently on several components, including public visioning and outreach.

On November 4, 2025, the City’s consultant, Dudek, and City staff provided the City Council with an update regarding progress in public engagement for the implementation of the adopted Housing Element. The staff report and meeting materials can be found via the link below. The presentation is provided as Attachment 1 to this report

- November 4, 2025, City Council Housing Element Public Engagement Update staff report:
<https://costamesa.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=PA&ID=1344835&GUID=252C41AB-59A0-4FE9-A8AA-C7218C393102>

ANALYSIS:

Since many components of Housing Element implementation may be subject to Planning Commission consideration, review and/or approval, staff is providing this update so the Planning Commission would benefit from the same public engagement status update provided to the City Council. The presentation

Public engagement is an important component of the Housing Element implementation effort. The scope of work includes three “rounds” of public outreach for Neighborhoods Where We All Belong. Each round is be designed to provide a variety of time, date, location, and activity options to create diverse opportunities for participation. A summary report specific to the first round of community visioning and outreach will be posted to the project website in November. In the first round of outreach, the public visioning and engagement options included, but were not limited to the following:

- Project website <https://www.costamesaneighborhoods.com>;
- Community Open House;
- Workshops in three areas of the community (Harbor and Newport Boulevards, Westside, and North Costa Mesa/SoBECA)
- Walking tour of the Westside;

- Pop-ups (casual outreach activities designed to meet the public where they are) at five coffee shops, one brewery, three community celebrations, and three local organization events;
- Online survey; and
- Focused discussion groups.

Early analysis of the input provided during the first round of outreach identified some common themes of what Costa Mesans want in the future of housing and neighborhoods:

- Affordable housing options and a variety of development types;
- Multi-modal transportation options with improved walkability and safer streets;
- Open spaces and landscaped pathways within residential developments connecting to other uses;
- Public and private spaces for community gathering and culture;
- Eclectic character so Costa Mesa continues to feel unique from other cities; and
- Transparency in the outreach process to ensure the public has more technical information.

The data collected at the Open House, workshops, pop-ups, focused discussions, and surveys are being distilled into more detailed key findings.

NEXT STEPS:

A summary document of the outreach information and findings will be posted to the project website and emailed to the interested parties list by the end of November. The input collected through the public visioning and outreach process will influence upcoming land use regulations and design standards, and other Zoning Code amendments. A study session is anticipated to be held in December 2025 to discuss the approach to the code amendments.

The next major work efforts for Neighborhoods Where We All Belong in 2025 include, but are not limited to:

- Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, preparing an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report;
- Drafting Zoning Code amendments to comply with state law; and
- Drafting residential and mixed-use development zoning and objective design standards.

The planning for Round 2 of public outreach has also begun. The activities are anticipated to begin in late January or early February in 2026. Based on feedback received at workshops and pop-ups, in addition to in-person workshops, pop-ups, and

focused discussions, Round 2 will include an online survey that is available for several weeks and an online workshop.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

This informational presentation to the Planning Commission with no associated decisions is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because the action is not a “project” pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5). The action involves an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in the direct or indirect physical change in the environment because this is a status update regarding public engagement and outreach efforts for a project that will be analyzed pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines.

ALTERNATIVES

This agenda report is limited to providing an informational presentation to the Planning Commission with no associated decisions; therefore, alternative actions are not applicable.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There is no public notice requirement for the City Council Neighborhoods Where We All Belong public engagement update. However, the City provided the following informal courtesy notices:

- The date and time of the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong public engagement update to the Planning Commission was posted on the project website on Thursday, November 6, 2025.
- Information on the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong public engagement update to the Planning Commission was posted on the project website on Thursday, November 6, 2025.

CONCLUSION

The City successfully engaged a broad audience in the first round of Neighborhoods Where We All Belong outreach through a variety of activities. Public engagement leads to better-informed decisions and empowers residents and other stakeholders to help shape their community. By meaningfully incorporating public input, the City will create regulations that reflect local needs, comply with state law, and lead to more positive outcomes. The City is preparing to utilize feedback from the community to inform the next steps of the project. In early 2026, the public will be invited to reconnect with this effort, review draft regulations, and continue this important work toward a future with more housing options for all Costa Mesans.