

State signs off on Oakland's plan to add 26,000 new homes

The city is no longer at risk of missing out on crucial funding or losing control over local development rules



OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA – MARCH 09: Broadway and the Uptown district are seen from this drone view in Oakland, Calif., on Wednesday, March 9, 2022. (Jane Tyska/Bay Area News Group)

State regulators have signed off on Oakland's plan to add at least 26,000 new homes over the next decade — meaning the Bay Area's third-largest city is no longer at risk of missing out on crucial funding or losing control over local development rules.

Under state law, cities must come up with plans — dubbed "[housing elements](#)" — explaining how and where they aim to accommodate significantly more housing for residents of all income levels between 2023 and 2031.

Bay Area cities and counties were supposed to send adopted housing plans to the state by Jan. 31, but most [blew the deadline](#). And so far, just five local governments have received final approval from state officials. That list now includes Oakland, San Francisco, Emeryville, San Leandro and the city of Alameda.

In a [Feb. 17 letter](#), state housing officials informed the city that its plan, which could boost Oakland's total housing stock by roughly 16%, meets all state requirements.

"The plan has significant and meaningful actions to accommodate housing needs through important zoning, incentives, and many other actions while protecting residents, preserving and improving affordable housing stock and promoting more inclusive and equitable communities," the California Department of Housing and Community Development said on Twitter.

In its plan, the city has designated over 600 sites for new housing. Most are concentrated in downtown and West Oakland, though planners have identified parcels in suburban and urban areas throughout the city. Major thoroughfares, including Foothill and MacArthur boulevards, also could see much more housing to focus growth near transit.

During past eight-year housing cycles, most local governments, including Oakland, haven't come close to hitting their low- and middle-income

For Oakland, securing approval means it shouldn't have to worry about losing state affordable housing and infrastructure funding. The city is also safe from another consequence of falling behind in the housing plan process — the so-called "[builder's remedy](#)." The provision in state housing law that could allow developers to override local zoning laws and push through projects of virtually any size almost anywhere they please, as long as a portion of the building includes affordable units.

Several Bay Area property owners and developers are now [pursuing builder's remedy projects](#), including in Los Altos and Mountain View. The law isn't legally tested, however, and the proposals could end up in court.