

## County housing requirement will benefit from Napa Pipe

State certification for Housing Element will be sought by 2015

September 17, 2013 • [PETER JENSEN](#)

As Napa County looks to update its housing plans for the next eight years, it's trying to avoid the legal troubles still plaguing its most recent plan, which was adopted in 2009.

With only 180 units to plan for in the next update — compared to 651 in the latest, which lasts until 2014 — the work should be easier, Planning Director Hillary Gitelman told the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

As the planned home of 700 to 945 housing units, the Napa Pipe site will also make for an accommodating location for the 180-unit allocation, which the county received from the Association of Bay Area Governments and runs from 2014 to 2022, Gitelman said.

“There’s no question that the Napa Pipe site will be our most important site when it comes to capacity,” Gitelman said.

But after the county’s experience with its last update to its housing plans, which spans 2007-2014, easy would be a welcome change for county government officials.

The plans are called a Housing Element and are part of the county’s General Plan. They spell out suitable locations in the unincorporated area that could be the site for the housing allocation, which includes moderate, above moderate, low and very low income units.

The Board of Supervisors adopted the Housing Element update in 2009, with 569 units spread out across the unincorporated area. Roughly 300 units were put at Napa Pipe, while the city of Napa agreed to take 82 units.

The remaining units were put at Moskowite Corners and Spanish Flat near Lake Berryessa and the Angwin community in the hills east of St. Helena. The state Department of Housing and Community Development refused to certify that plan, calling the Angwin and other east county locations too far away from urban centers to be affordable for low-income households.

An affordable housing advocacy group, Latinos Unidos Del Valle de Napa y Solano, challenged the Housing Element by suing the county shortly afterward. The county won the case in Napa County Superior Court, and before the California 1st District Court of Appeals.

Latinos Unidos is seeking California Supreme Court review of the appellate court decision.

But that also means HCD hasn't certified the current plan, although Gitelman told the Board of Supervisors that the county is close to attaining it.

"We're this close to having a letter from HCD saying we're conforming with the law," Gitelman told the board.

Gitelman said the county will begin updating its Housing Element regardless, with Deputy Planning Director John McDowell managing the project. The county will also hire Howard Siegel, the former director of community and intergovernmental affairs for the county, to assist in the project, Gitelman said.

Siegel retired in 2008 but has done consulting work with the county over the last several years, including work on the planned recycled water pipeline to the Coombsville area.

The county is contracting with a consultant, Bay Area Economics, to do public outreach, analysis and document preparation, Gitelman said. She didn't have the costs of the contracts for Siegel and Bay Area Economics available Tuesday, but they will be sent to the Board of Supervisors for approval next week.

Gitelman said the goal is to do the public outreach effort in October and November, and then have the Housing Element ready for HCD by mid-2014. The county has a statutory deadline for completing the update by January 2015.

The county has agreements with the cities of Napa and American Canyon, as well as the town of Yountville, to transfer units from its allocation if HCD doesn't agree with the choice of locations in the Housing Element.

Those agreements expire in January 2015, giving the county added incentive to get the update done well before then, she said.

"It's going to be important to invoke those agreements if we have trouble finding sites to accommodate housing," Gitelman said.