

# Analyzing California's Housing Needs: How One Southern California 'Boom Town' is Addressing the Housing Epidemic

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*The housing crisis has become a worsening issue for the nation, leaving millions of families fending for themselves. What's more, California has some of the worst conditions in the country, a problem that overlaps between housing availability and zoning reforms. Modifications to zoning laws are a necessary step for California communities to mitigate the current situation for millions of lives. If not addressed, this issue will exacerbate the current state of homelessness, drive those of lower economic thresholds further into spiraling crises, increase polarization, and drive current prices soaring. Drawing upon my experiences interning with the Community Development Department within the City of Menifee, otherwise known as a "Boom Town" in Southern California, this paper will examine the implementation of housing development and how looking to a city like Menifee can provide great insight into other new smaller but growing cities. Furthermore, this paper will showcase how incentives and other strategies may prove advantageous in reaching state goals, while also conceding to variables that may affect the likelihood of reform and other dangers brought on by the onslaught of quick development.*

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## Introduction

Housing is a basic human right and is one of the main areas of contention between governments, institutions, and communities. Considering the conceptuality of economics prompts one to apply that same concept here. This application forces us to ask the question: does everyone have the basic human right to housing? The law of supply and demand is one of the main principal guides to understanding this area of dispute. This economic concept rations the law of supply and demand as the relationship between available goods, and the exceeding number of people willing to purchase those goods, resulting in a scarcity. When the supply of a demanded good is limited (home supply in this instance) prices will increase, resulting in competition for limited resources ensuing skyrocketing prices. The result in this case is the problem most residents face in the state of California concerning housing. The scarcity of housing options has resulted in increased housing prices, competing rental costs, and increased polarization, with limited solutions to offer those who are unable to compete for a home. In fact, to afford a typical home in southern California, the average household income would need to exceed six-figures and earn roughly over \$106,000 a year (Hernandez, 2024). In almost all regions of California, homelessness is increasing, unaffordability is growing, and residents are left with a lack of support from local governments. One notion agreed upon is the necessity to address this problem, a problem that few governments are willing to accommodate.

Shortages on the housing supply becomes an ongoing response from the municipalities lacking to address, accommodate, and appropriate new rezoning practices to mitigate this crisis, increase the supply, and alleviate rising costs. During the summer and fall of 2023 I spent my time interning with the City of Menifee's Community Development team, most closely alongside Long-Range Planning. During my time with the city, I worked with various planners who serve the population of more than 109,400 people. This number is significant now, considering when the city was newly adopted in 2008, the population size was less than 78,000. In sixteen years,

Menifee has grown a population roughly 31,400 and has been considered one of American's top "boomtowns," signaling characteristics of "robust development [and] economic growth," according to SmartAsset. More important to consider is what this local community is doing to address the current housing crises and provide a basic right, taking into consideration the stark rise in population, increasing cost of living, and housing prices. To address this problem, this paper seeks to examine the implementation of housing development to meet state needs in Southern California, specifically looking at the case of Menifee. More specifically, this paper will seek to understand the strategies Menifee has undertaken that can provide important insight into new, smaller but growing cities in an effort to reach state goals. Additionally, this paper will seek to exhibit dangers that may arise with the onslaught of quick development.

This paper will be outlined in 4 main sections: (1) Organization and Internship Experience; (2) Literature Review; (3) Analysis; and (4) Conclusion. To begin, in section one, I will describe the organization itself, my role as an intern, and the various tasks I was assigned within the Long-Range Planning team. Section two will present the literature review and identify the main issues of debate amongst past and current scholars. Section three will present my analysis comparing components found within the literature to housing development within the case of Menifee. Last, section four will wrap with my conclusion and how the City of Menifee has implemented housing development in efforts to address the housing crisis, some successful strategies, and a few hazards a city must heed that may arise with quick fast changing development.

### *Organization and Internship Experience*

The Community Development Department within the City of Menifee serves as a vital role in the implementation process in incorporating and establishing goals aimed at addressing community development needs. This department works with various businesses, contractors, and residents on numerous development projects within city borders upheld by enforcing code

and in cooperation with the numerous existing departments within the city. Additionally, the department serves as just one division within the larger hierarchical structure that falls across county, region, and state levels. More narrowly, under the Long-Range Planning Team, within the Community Development Department, the objective is to develop and address plans through decision-making and operational cycles to set goals and outline strategies over an extending period of time to ultimately assist in integrating elements to a city's general plan. To add, my role as an intern was to support the long-range planning team in inputting data and information, assisting the public with development information, becoming familiar with the General Plan, and diving deep into the City's Housing Element. This internship experience was enjoyable as I was provided a range of information pertaining to the topic of urban planning, a subfield within public administration that rests within the larger scope of political science.

Some of the tasks that I was assigned involved becoming familiar with the general plan, more specifically the development code. During my time with the department, special attention was focused on Article 3: Zoning, with time spent on 'Allowable Uses', those of which are permitted within the city's borders. Further assigned tasks also included plan check reviews, submittals, and approvals for minor residential improvements such as pool plans, patio covers, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). To add, I was also involved in site visits on both high-to-moderate income housing development, and low-income housing. The educational opportunities provided by planners arose on topics such as specific plans, and highlighted how permitted allowable uses can become restricting at times in regard to proposed development projects.

Through special attention focused on areas involving long-range planning, zoning, and housing development I was able to identify the topic of affordable housing as the concentration of this paper. Much of my time was placed on development, but more emphasis or discussion highlighting low-income housing development, was needed, as it is an increasingly salient issue

faced within the larger scope of the state. Some data reports that the Community Development Department uses to indicate it is meeting state goals are demonstrated through the Housing Element, the Annual Report, and the General Plan Annual Progress Report, to name a very few. Most importantly, to measure the success of state housing development, the state requires a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) report from each city and county for housing development within each city's borders to accurately track progress. This paper recognizes the city's close utilization of this report. It is important to note the Community Development Department, offers support offered to low-income families living below the poverty line, such as financial assistance and home repair support, which are services backed by HUD, or the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, so it is with this intent that this paper demonstrates clear recognition of the efforts the City of Menifee undertakes to ensure the support of its constituents and families facing financial hardships.

### Literature Review

Institutions of hierarchical levels, such as the state, region, and local governments are institutions set in place to help create and establish order. Additionally, organizations are divisions tasked with carrying out further ways to achieve this order of institutional aims. Yet, what happens when these institutions are tasked with a job by the state's highest level of authority, and they do not comply? Moreover, if a governmental institution does indeed comply, what are the seemingly causal variables and trends that adjust for this adherence? To purport more clearly, by analyzing state housing targets and reached goals, it seems rational to say that there must be a trending reason that leads those cities to successful rates rather than those who do not. It is then important to pinpoint which successful strategies are more beneficial in complying with state needs and what hazards are to be considered moving forward. While no one institution has a solution to addressing the housing problem, the research does suggest that there are elements

to reaching success and barriers as well.

*A Gap in the General Consensus: A Grapple between the Macro and Micro Levels*

To begin, to reference a much larger scope, the current hierarchical structure across our nation's political system demonstrates one example of the current quandary on our much smaller scope. Tensions exist between intergovernmental relations involving public servants who face dilemmas on how to navigate through the implementation process of policy and reform that leads to housing development. The current literature highlights that gap between the state and local levels regarding the consensus, or lack of consensus, on three main areas: (1) who ought to be protected, (2) what is the difference in urgency between higher and lower levels of government, and (3) why is California in a housing crisis?

To begin, Fischel (2004) addresses the first question, asserting that, historically, homeowners have generally been most protected and the dominators of the suburban zoning realm. This, according to Fischel, is because homeowners, as opposed to renters, have more at stake. It is as if homeowners and zoning laws contain a special bond between each other as they seem to complement one another. The author states, "dominance of homeowners and their... main asset explains why ...zoning ordinance[s] put single-family, owner-occupie[rs] ... to be protected" (p.317), elaborating on the affinity that government has for property holders. Pritchett & Qiao (2017) explains this process as the "property-centered approach" (p.1), where existing property is maximized at the highest level of interest to protect, but then neglects consumer interest, leading to rising unaffordable housing costs. Additionally, in the eyes of the homeowner, since they are deemed to have more at stake than the renter, they often tend to be more invested within their communities seen through increased participation. One example is through the opposition of legislation that would increase property taxes, a stake that comes high to the homeowner. Fischel contends that by looking through the eyes of a homeowner, one can understand how government behavior, on

the local levels, ought to protect homeowners. Furthermore, by considering the process of 'urbanization', defined as an influx of newcomers changing the characteristics of a ruralized area to an urbanized one, one can understand how expanding transportation and overcrowding cities may threaten devaluation. This leads one to ponder whose turn it is next to be considered, the homeowners or the renters? By default, this naturally leaves renters faced with the brunt of repercussions spuing from leftover zoning regulations, which at the same time, do not favor them and actually, in fact, works against them.

In the hierarchical realm of the world of politics state authority surpasses local authority. However, when it comes to zoning laws, the power lies within local government hands. Since this is the case, it becomes significantly difficult for varying levels of government to agree upon tackling housing insecurities: the problem many public servants face across all boards. Here, Monkkonen et.al. (2023) tackles the second gap in the literature debate, that is, the debate on higher and lower levels of government and their urgency to address the housing crisis. Monkkonen recognizes that there exists "diverging priorities of the state and its localities... toward housing production and fair housing goals" (p.122). Since states cannot mandate lower governments to produce more housing, holding them accountable is almost impossible. This is due to the challenge there exists in accurately measuring housing production, progress, and development towards state goals despite having organizations such as RHNA, which the authors consider contains weaknesses of its own. The author additionally considers that amongst the larger scope of state representatives, it is also important not to forget that these individuals are too residents of local cities. Their professional ability to write legislation turns to intriguingly poorly written and very vague bills, giving power back to their local home cities in an "off-the-record" attempt to avoid meeting these state goals. The author found that exclusionary cities with NIMBY, or Not In My Back Yard, characteristics were predictors that those governments would not meet their target goals (p. 138). NIMBY's

are notoriously known for being resistant to increased development especially including the onslaught of changing demographics, traffic, and pollution that comes with amplified development. Pritchett & Qiao (2017) contend that cities predominantly filled with NIMBY homeowners, in essence, became exclusionary cities (p.1). There is an obvious demand in every city for incorporation of affordable housing, yet few cities are willing to accommodate through rezoning or integration and development.

Last, Reid et. al. (2017) addresses the gap concerning the reason for California's housing crisis and argues its cause is in fact due to limited options and unmet RHNA goals by most cities across the state. These unaddressed issues will in turn cause greater implications for economies, inequities, and worsening climate changes.

In summary, there does not seem to be a consensus as to what the reason is for CA's housing crisis and who to prioritize in the midst. Some suggest homeowners are protected (Pritchett & Qiao, 2017) and ought to be (Fischel, 2004), others suggest the state must do the mandating to hold NIMBY cities accountable (Monkkonen et. al., 2023) and another mention limited housing options as the source (Reid et. al., 2017). Either way the scholarly work so far has not come to an agreement, and many seem to be lost as to how to remedy the current state with conflicts growing across state, region, county, and city boards. Though Reid et. al. and Monkkonen et. al. both look to Massachusetts as a prime example to which to follow, they differ in their viewpoints of RHNA and how effective or ineffective the organization is at creating goals.

#### *Variables that May Affect Adjustments to General Plans and Housing Elements*

According to the literature there are a range of variables that may impact a city's willingness to adjust their general plans and housing elements in the aim of addressing housing needs. Research suggests that past scholars seem to agree some cities do tread carefully when considering whether to accommodate their general plans for more housing. Some will allow for more, or less ADU's (Marantz et. al., 2023) and different

housing model options (Gardner & Nasserjah, 2020), others will pay special attention to permit processes (Reid et. al., 2017), and some may even show NIMBY-like qualities that forecast whether they'll create smooth transitions for housing or not (Monkkonen et. al., 2023). Furthermore, Marantz et. al. notes that while ADU's help to address the housing crisis, there is a significant presence of trending characteristics coupled with ADU's. The characteristics indicate most ADUs are found in places that are nearest to jobs, rents in low median ranges, counties on the coast, and average size parcels. Interestingly, the author finds the more Hispanic or Latino population there are, the more ADU's are found as well signifying these demographic groups are more likely to coexist in multigeneration housing. Agreeably, Gardner & Nasseriah find that there are social benefits to multigenerational housing and thus call for more housing development that offers expansive housing options. These authors declare that more people could be accommodated within multigenerational housing and "could increase the efficiency of urban housing... address the issue of under-occupied housing [and] offer social benefits and housing cost-sharing" (p.257). This suggests that more diverse cities with higher populations are more likely to tackle the housing crisis.

At the same time, and as mentioned previously, Monkkonen et. al. (2023) revealed that NIMBY characteristics correlate as a "predict[ive] role in the determination of housing targets" (p.138). Traits in this study weighed in age, race, income, population size, and homeownership. The findings showed that the elderly and white homeowners were significant factors of communities that displayed these consistencies which resulted in lower housing targets. This has great implications for the purpose of this research as these variables have demonstrated a trend in consistencies across demographics, including age, race, income, and population size.

On the one hand, Reid et. al. (2017) maintains a very neutral dialogue, one not considering demographics at all but instead the process itself. Reid et. al. considers the delay in the permit process as a factor often overlooked when

incorporating housing. The author argues unmet RHNA goals across the state are not met because of the lengthy amount of time the entitlement process takes. Looking at Massachusetts Chapter 40B as a primary example, the author admits that what has worked for Massachusetts does not explicitly mean is a solution for California. However, it does serve as a remedy to our current situation to speed up the process and prompt new and quick turnover for development as a kickstart to hurried demands. The benefits of a similar 40B in California would offer reduced costs for affordable housing, incentives, fast tracking, streamlined approvals, lowered capital risks, and public subsidies (p. 273). In California's current state, the permit and entitlement process is very lengthy and it can prove challenging for a state who's considered one of the worst in terms of housing supply.

To sum up, the authors appear to be in conversation with one another. Monkkonen et. al. (2023) looks to "Massachusetts' anti-snob zoning ordinance" while Reid et. al. (2017) similarly looks to Massachusetts for their Chapter 40B ordinance. Both appear to look to this state as a prime example for inclusionary housing and multi-family development project legislation in addressing the housing supply. These authors agree that there are certainly variables that must be considered when it comes to understanding why a city may have trouble adjusting to the needs of the state. Although some variables are more exclusionary in essence, it is important to understand why this is the case.

#### *Successful Strategies and the Consideration of Hazards*

The literature at times has demonstrated a linear conversation over the years, expanding upon each other's frameworks and appearing to be in conversation with one other. Literature from Catalano et. al. (1975), Golding (2016), and Ware (2021) consider social science when discussing housing, while Garde (2016) considers more tangible strategies such as incentives. Additionally, along the way it appears the literature showcases a contrast that Golding appears to warn Garde involving the implications

that can emerge when governments take too long to act. The authors unveil proposals that have become extensions of each other's literature and consider a few successful strategies that cities may consider in mitigating the housing crisis.

To begin, Catalano et. al. in *Adding Social Science Knowledge to Environmental Decision Making* (1975) takes a creative approach, one that demonstrates success; rather than focusing on arguments and variables, this author thinks 'outside-of-the-box' to the housing crisis. Catalano et. al. believes that to address the issue of housing, one ought to instead consider utilizing social scientists as interpreters to understanding human problems and social behaviors. The authors explain there is an essential need for social scientists to change policy, address human problems, and interpret social terms and concepts including those of environmental concern. Catalano et. al. explains the problem is that many do not recognize social scientists as 'true' scientists but in actuality they are necessary to apply the lens of social behavior. Despite odds social scientists have managed to make their way by creating Environmental Impact Reports and proving their usefulness with their specialization in the realm of social behavior. Social scientists' input is effective in defining language and testing measures which is what the authors prove through the benefits of EIR's. The authors also find that these scientists' impact on projects affect people and their lived environments. More city planners with social science backgrounds are thus needed, as stated by the authors, as they could provide better context in planning and development as every aspect of development impacts living organisms and their environments.

Similarly, Golding (2016) expands on Catalano et. al.'s (1975) ideas and explores social scientists' contributions, recognizing that topics of hot debate in the social science field, like gentrification, is a phenomenon particularly familiar to those in the colleges of behavioral and social science. Gentrification involves the changing characteristics of poor urban communities by a new influx of relatively affluent residents who, along the way, improve housing, bring new businesses, and consequently

produce forced displacement and at times, spatial segregation. Forced displacement is the removal of a group from one area to another with no option other than to relocate to another place. Spatial segregation is the “separation of socially defined groups in space, such that members of one group are disproportionately concentrated in a particular set of geographic units compared with other groups in the population” (Stern, 2021; Massey et. Al., 2009). This system which interlocks gentrification, displacement, and spatial segregation occurs much like the Plessy v. Ferguson model, “separate but equal”, but only this time the concept is applied to “the construction of suburban communities” (Ware, 2021, p.92). By legitimizing customs, practices, and laws that favor one group over another, ornate structures of discrimination are formed backed by unrecognizable facades. These structures foster “subordination and exclusion” in its pure essence and nature. By successfully considering the impact and magnitude of concepts like these, social scientists may aid in better evaluations concerning and connected with home prices, population turnover, and the emergence of newly formed enclaves, a process that comes with city planning.

Besides the previously stated authors, Garde (2016) expands upon ways in which planners can be successful in considering incentives, alternatives, or a flourey between the two for innovative projects versus typical ones. The article finds that the best benefits that contribute to the production of affordable housing to developers, with no financial cost to a city, is the option to be flexible in design and to be provided fast-track processing. Additionally, when both options are combined, construction and development of affordable housing is a more likely to occur. The author suggests cities should develop regulations that allow for more design flexibility to address the affordable housing shortage. However, Golding (2016) urges to consider the implications that may arise when we lose sight of addressing social behavioral demands due to solely focusing on legislation and incentive packages. The consequences may in turn result in policy that comes too late for

families who will already face gentrification. Golding suggests that one such success may be useful: affordable housing programs.

To sum up, past scholars such as Catalano et. al. (1975), Golding (2016), and Ware (2021) have expanded upon each other’s frameworks. The utilization of social scientists to understand deep concepts that warn the outcomes of increased development are illustrated. These hazards, which cities must face, are not to be ignored since quick changes in housing development also bring an onslaught of hazards which cities must heed the warning of. If not tackled through preventative measures, such as incorporation of multigenerational housing, ADU’s, and unaffordable housing development, a trend in resistance will become more noticeable though severely hidden behind the façade of ornate discriminatory practices.

### Analysis

The literature has provided a substantial amount of information regarding the current debate on state housing, influential variables, successful strategies, and considerations of hazards. After weighing past scholarly work, it is thus appropriate to couple the insight gained from my time with Menifee’s Community Development team to shed light on their efforts to implement housing development, strategies they have undertaken, and dangers that may arise. In doing so, this paper will use information from various city documents and reports such as the City’s Housing Element, the Annual Budget, the Biennial Budget, references to City Ordinances, Specific Plans, and Senate Bills. Additionally, this paper will pull data from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Local Profile Report of Menifee, SCAG’s 5th, and 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Report, demographic data, and excerpts from my journal. By coupling the literature, city reports, and SCAG’s data, this paper will gain a deeper understanding for future smaller growing cities to a degree replicate taking into consideration some successful strategies one such city is following.

*A Dash to the Finish Line: Low-income vs. Moderately-High Income Disparities*

Scholars seemingly face a divide on the solution of addressing the housing “crisis”. This point of contention is often argued across federal, state, and local levels with varying arguments stemming from who ought to be protected: homeowners, renters, the homeless, multi-families, or “NIMBY’s”. More along, are the “implications” to addressing this crisis. Increased development may have an adverse result on economies or local climates. To begin, according to HUD, the number one state with the highest homeless population is California (USAFacts, 2023). Considering the high rates of homelessness, it is therefore critical to interpret on the federal level, more rationally, that the importance of housing plays first and foremost. To address this however is a different story.

During my time with the Community Development Team, I was able to gain insight and knowledge regarding SCAG’s 6th Cycle Final RHNA Plan. This report directly connected to the duties of the Community Development Team and attempts to address the “grapple” between many cities and the state. According to Menifee City documents, the required housing development calls for 6,609 units for the period of 2021-2029 (SCAG, 2019, City of Menifee, Housing Element, 2021-2029). More specifically, the document breaks down the necessary target goals for each income category and is as follows:

Since I began my internship at the beginning stages of this plan I cannot assess if the long-term goals will be achieved. Undeniably this paper must then explore past allocations, results, and ordinances to determine whether there have been any trends to reaching target aims. What is more, conversations with fellow planners have provided greater understanding, explaining that when cities do not meet past state goals, the number of total units required for development goes to future allocation reports, thus meaning, they rollover.

This paper now turns to SCAG’s past 5th Cycle, Final RHNA Plan for the period of 2014-2021.

1,761 units – Very low-income
1,051 units – Low-income
1,106 units – Moderate-income
2,691 units – Above moderate-income
6,609 units – Total

Interestingly this previous cycle is not substantially different from current target goals. In comparison, the numbers for ‘low’ and ‘moderate’ income categories are relatively the same signaling not much difference in terms of rollover, while ‘very low-income’ categories and ‘above moderate-income’ categories demonstrate an increase to previous target goals. The graph demonstrating this change is as follows:

1,488 units – Very low-income	
1,007 units – Low-income	
1,140 units – Moderate-income	
2,610 units – Above moderate-income	
6,245 units – Total	

This presents a difference in ‘very low’ categories of more than 270 from the previous cycle report. Additionally, the change from overall total targets increases by over 360. The difference is seen in large part consisting substantially more in ‘very low-income’ categories and slightly more in ‘above moderate-income’ categories in comparison to other categories. This motions a growing demand to address housing for lower income thresholds which is a reflective in state urgency.

It is with intent that I assess and synthesize



the grapple that exists amongst the state and cities. Yet after careful exploration, the progress represented in city documents reflects that Menifee has proven effective at implementing state housing needs. According to the Annual Element Progress Report: Housing Element Implementation (2020) the City has paved several ways at addressing RHNA goals. A short list of few includes “(a) focus growth and development in specific plans and EDC [Economic Development Corridor] areas... (b) Revisit[ing] older specific plans...to determine if land uses are still appropriate [and]... identify[ing] [cases] where specific plan land uses are no longer consistent with the Vision 2035 General Plan, (c) Initiate a process to regularly review and adjust population assumptions in conjunction with SCAG, WRCOG, and County of Riverside” (p. 1, Implementation Actions,

Annual Progress Report, 2020). In application this is also consistent. A few include updating Ordinance’s and reforms to specified zoning areas to become reflective of designated ways for new housing. Those examples include (1) Amendment no. 5 to Specific Plan no. 209, Audie Murphey Ranch, (2) Ordinance no. 2020-300, Legado Specific Plan, (3) Ordinance No. 2011-89 Menifee Town Center, (4) Ordinance No. 2015-178 Cimarron Ridge CZ [Change of Zone] 2014-017. These are just a few from the list of Specific Plans that have been amended and make way for new zoning

areas and increase in residential density living.

Likewise, Menifee is leading the charts in economic ways across the nation in reaction to the demand for increased housing development in its booming city boundaries and is growing appealing eyes by the affluent. Yet, nonetheless, has been successful in reaching higher income category goals. Arguably, the City’s housing development has indeed contributed to the overall increase in development for the state by meeting ‘Moderate’ and ‘Above Moderate’ categories of income, yet there appears to be a divergence when meeting housing income categories for ‘Very Low’ and ‘Low’ goals, as demonstrated below in figure 1.

Menifee has thus demonstrated otherwise and has proven to stay on track to meet goals in comparison to other cities. Albeit conversations with city planners have admitted that low-income housing goals have not yet been met, conversely, ‘moderate’ and ‘above moderate’ categories are, as proven in the table below, well ahead of schedule.

To dive deeper into Monkkonen’s argument and application, the demographics for Menifee consist of a Median Age of 38; 65% White; 63.8% living in ‘Moderate or Above Moderate’ categories; an average household income of \$109,395, and 80% Household Homeownerships, according to the 2021-2029 Menifee Housing Element. These are consistent with characteristics of NIMBY-like qualities. Likewise, these numbers have steadily and consistently grown with a higher emphasis on growth in middle to upper-class housing

SCAG 5 <sup>th</sup> Cycle, RHNA Plan (2014-2021)	SCAG 6 <sup>th</sup> Cycle, RHNA Plan (2021-2029)	Difference
1,488 units – Very low-income	1,761 units – Very low-income	+ 273 units – VL-income
1,007 units – Low-income	1,051 units – Low-income	+ 44 units – Low-income
1,140 units – Moderate-income	1,106 units – Moderate-income	- 34 units – Mod. income
2,610 units – Above moderate-income	2,691 units – Above moderate-income	+ 81 units – A. Mod-income
<b>6,245 units – Total</b>	<b>6,609 units – Total</b>	<b>+ 364 Total Difference</b>

and higher housing costs, perhaps explaining Fischel's (2004) point that homeowners are in fact "to be protected". At the same time, regardless of predominantly NIMBY-like qualities, Menifee has demonstrated to approve certain types of housing, typically high density. More resistance is reflected upon low-income category numbers. According to the city website, housing development continues to grow with 599 units and 35 tracts in current construction, with 2 more currently undergoing plan review. An additional 16,000 units have also been approved and 1,137 homes actively being constructed at the time of this paper. Furthermore, the city reports that 2,566 units are also expected to be built within the next 2 years with a total reaching more than 41,000 new developments before the end of the year 2025. These numbers, however, do not explicitly specify the income categories for housing development requirements, lacking clarity in current development.

Considering the points of past scholarly work, it is arguable that by increasing the supply of housing, coupled with growing economies, and addressing the needs of the affluent, Menifee has done their fair share in addressing the housing needs of the state. The city has been successful in evolving and adapting to the changing, pressing, and urging demand for housing complimentary to the geographic area of the region. Change of

zoning areas, amendments to Specific Plans, and coordinating alongside with other government agencies has allowed the city to effectively implement, integrate, and accommodate new housing strategies to meet 'Moderate' to 'Above Moderate' state goals.

#### *Variables that May Affect Reaching State Goals*

Previously mentioned, Monkkonen et. Al. (2023) suggested that characteristics consistent with NIMBYism were predictive of a city's likelihood to not reach their target goals. Albeit these predictors were not determiners but rather forecasters that helped in determining whether there were smooth transitions for housing development, however, there are still other variables to weigh in as well. Those variables include the option for available Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) options, multigenerational housing, and smooth permit processes. Utilizing these three in combination with one another makes it easier to accelerate housing production and address the needs of various lifestyles.

#### *Multigenerational Housing*

Multigenerational houses are dwelling units that accommodate more than one or multiple generations within one house. Gardner & Nasserjah (2020) emphasize that these housing

**Figure 1. Menifee General Plan Annual Progress Report (2020)**

Table 4 Building Permits											
Income Category	RHNA	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total Units to Date	Total Remaining to RHNA
Very Low	1,488	1	4	3	3	0	0	0	-	11	1,477
Low	1,007	1	0	2	9	1	4	2	-	19	988
Moderate	1,140	158	193	184	168	181	379	7	-	1,270	0
Above Moderate	2,610	181	215	349	514	759	653	1,441	-	4,112	0
Total RHNA	6,245	341	412	538	694	941	1,036	1,450	-	5,412	2,465

The Annual Housing Element report reflects that the City has produced housing to meet its entire RHNA obligation for the moderate income and above-moderate income categories.

options are one way which cities, planners, and policymakers can opt to use to help alleviate the housing “epidemic”. Additionally, this housing option cultivates more “age-friendly communities”. The City’s original roots initially started as a community known as, “Sun City”, a predominantly senior citizen community that consisted of golf courses, senior housing, and fostered senior lifestyles. However, with the growing demands of housing, over the years the city has evolved from a senior community to a predominantly middle-aged community with younger families moving in at a quick rate. Through the option of multigenerational housing, Gardner & Nasseriah suggest various models can make way to chip away at the unaffordability of housing. The authors suggest the options of ADU’s, co-housing, and shared housing options, to name a few. Co-housing is explained as a form of housing that involves persons of the same age. One example includes student living. This paper will explore the option of ADU living.

#### *Accessory Dwelling Units*

ADU’s are considered separate living areas that reside on the same land as either an attached or detached house. They are considered a great option for either extended family members or optional units for renters. Likewise, and equally important is the impact they are making on the housing crisis. Through my internship experience, I was exposed to a great deal of knowledge pertaining to the option that residents have for ADU construction and development. In compliance with AB 68 and AB 881, Menifee allows for ADU options to meet housing needs set forth by RHNA. The city’s Permit Ready ADU, or PRADU, program is a streamlined process that offers eight pre-designed options that are already pre-approved with luring incentives on preconstruction savings fees. Additionally, scholars such as Marantz et. Al., (2023) have recognized the significance that ADU’s place on addressing the housing crisis and reaching state goals. According to the Community Development Annual Report FY 2022-2023, in one year Menifee has approved (a) 19 detached accessory structures and (b) 17 ADU’s. Although these

numbers are not as striking at first glance, when considering the newness of the PRADU Program in relevance to development for one year, the numbers do weigh how much ADU’s in Menifee have contributed to the housing development.

Yet, Marantz et. Al. (2023) also explains that ADU’s are often coupled with characteristics that may affect adjustments to General Plans and Housing Elements. These characteristics surround rents with low-median ranges, near jobs, and consistent with higher rates of Hispanic/Latino populations. Similarly, the US Census finds that Menifee indeed has a high population of Hispanic/Latino’s with 40%, according to the latest 2022 findings. This is the second largest race within Menifee. Additionally, Marantz et. Al. notes low-median ranges are typically of places with higher ADU options, yet Menifee Housing Element 2021-2029 reported, the median rent was between \$1,474 and \$2,229. Likewise, the Biennial Budget for FY 2023/24 reports more than 4,100 employees who hold jobs in the city. Though these characteristics may predict adjustments they are not certain determinants that result in reaching target goals.

#### *Permit Processes*

Similarly, during my time with the Community Development Team of Menifee, much emphasis was placed on the streamlined process for housing development. I recognized this facet closely as I spent time working as the main point of contact for the team at city hall. Many calls, emails, and inquiries I received were regarding development and the permit process. As I found, the department makes great effort into creating a very smooth transition for developers. The city has done this to achieve transparency and compliance with SB 35 to further reach state goals.

Reid et. Al. (2017) explains that delays in permit processes impact a city’s likelihood of reaching state goals. The city however has created an initiative called, “Streamline Menifee”. The goal of this initiative is to create a hub for customers looking to gain information regarding entitlement, grading, and construction processes while simultaneously gaining access to the various departments in City Hall. Likewise,

customers can also use a Virtual Concierge Customer System to help them check wait times and set appointments from their phone, all to clear up uncertainty that arises from the permit process and improve efficiency.

Considering Monkkonen's (2023) predictors of NIMBYism, Marantz et. Al.'s (2023) emphasis on ADU incorporation, Reid et. Al.'s (2017) stress of permit processes', and Gardner & Nasserjah's (2020) push for varying housing options. Menifee has excelled at aggressively integrating efforts to improve housing goals on all elements. The city has ensured to offer a variety of avenues and options to remedy and accelerate housing development.

#### *Future Hazards and Successful Strategies*

This section mentions successful incentive strategies such as fast-track processing and flexibility in design for developers (Garde, 2016). However too much concentration on these can have hazardous effects, such as gentrification (Golding, 2016) which results in displacement (Ware, 2021) of original inhabitants, further explained, the "process by which higher-income households displace lower income residents of a community, changing the essential character and flavor of that community" (Golding, 2016, p. 128). This displacement too often leads to unintended spatial segregation, befitting for individuals who can access resources in other cities that taking the form of separate and therefore equal, ideologies of Plessy v. Ferguson cautionary tales (Stern, 2021). As a result, there is a pressing need to hire social scientists to fill in roles of city planners (Catalano et. al., 1975) in efforts of anticipating gentrifying effects. This section argues the city has not been as effective at mentioning any considerations or preventative measures that are coupled with the hazardous implications of gentrification, forced displacement, spatial segregation, and discriminatory practices.

During my first three weeks of internship with the Community Development team, topics regarding long-time citizens and an unwillingness to comply continuously arose signaling concepts of place attachment and place identity that could explain for these 'unwilling' and 'resistant' behaviors. More specifically, my first journal

entry accounts the Wickerd Family of Menifee, attributing "one resident in particular, whose family has lived within [the city] since the 1900's ... there is often much reluctance to cooperate with the city, and likewise, the city often finds themselves at odds with the resident as well" (Tontz, 2023). This dynamic between the residents and the city has shed light on residents' sentiments towards an evolving city with changing characteristics as the resident demonstrated an "unwillingness to adapt to new proposed development around his property" (Tontz, Journal 1, 2023). This disputation surrounding older long-time residents demonstrates the beginning stages of gentrification, as the characteristics of the city are beginning to evolve, quite expressly at a fast rate.

To dive deeper into the concept of gentrification and social science degrees, this analysis acknowledges that formal interviews are needed to properly assess the accuracy of Menifee planners with social science backgrounds. However, conversations so far dating back to journal entry 2, only finds one other planner with a bachelor's degree in political science, and a master's degree in public policy concentrating in urban and regional planning. Out of the twelve other planners with the city, the college degrees varied from Environmental Sciences, Public Administration, Architecture, Business Administration, and Kinesiology.

Considering the lack of planners with social science backgrounds, a stress to prevent, or at best, understand social science concepts poses great threat which could result in gentrification when looking to the long run. Golding (2016) argued, "an increase in higher levels of wealth widens the inequality gap and gentrif[ies] rural counties." More along, the author noted this process threatens rural affordability and the stability of the community by arguing that quickened "population turnover" heightens the costs of housing far beyond what wages can afford in the local areas (Tontz, Journal 1, 2023). In taking into consideration the booming housing development, the quick change in characteristics to the city, and the integration of more affluent residents, it is necessary to argue Menifee may benefit from social science concepts in a way that prevents the

city from seemingly “discriminatory” practices.

### Conclusion

With a state as populated as California, coupled with intensifying homelessness rates, increased costs of living, rising home prices, and growing divisions, it is no wonder there are conflicts on how to remedy the status. Yet the consensus to remedy this problem is no doubt one all can agree on, when it comes to how, is a different story. Problems arise underlying who and how to absolve California of this problem, hierarchical debates, and critical goals set forth by the State which are then translated to regions, counties, and cities. These ranking agencies establish a sense of order and guide from which to build on for smaller agencies. The focus of this paper thus sought to examine the implementation of housing strategies by the City of Menifee’s Community Development team and how the processes can provide important insight into other smaller growing cities while considering variables strategies and the dangers that may.

During my time with the Community Development Team, I was able to see the operation of various governments and agencies working together to gain valuable outcomes. Menifee has worked cooperatively with agencies such as SCAG, RHNA, and HUD to develop new ways for implementing housing development. The city has taken great strides by complying with meeting goals. One successful implementation involves the integration of new zoning and zoning reforms. Menifee’s Zoning changes, reforms, and amendments to past and current zoning areas have made way for increased residential living, mixed-use zoning, and zone changes from rural residential to low-density residential. This number is easily reflected in the drastic change in population growth, rising economy, and accommodated roadways demanded by the city’s inevitable growth.

Moreover, divergencies that most often overwhelm jurisdictions include the direction of attention to low-income housing. It is at this point that this paper recognizes the gap in bringing to light the lack of information pertaining to the progress of integrating ‘Very Low’ and ‘Low’

income housing. Menifee has done an exceptional job at addressing the housing needs for ‘Moderate’ to ‘Above Moderate’ housing. It is arguable that by supplying an overreaching supply of housing, regardless of income, the pool for development grows, thus lowering the costs of housing in other neighboring cities. Admittedly though, this paper is limited to including the status and plans of addressing low-income housing. This paper acknowledges there is no information to unveil the current progress towards these income categories and acknowledges that any documents addressing these needs may not yet be accessible to the public or city websites. It is neither to this paper’s knowledge that any such document has yet been addressed in Planning Commission Meetings since my time interning.

More along, it is worthy to note, more examination and analysis is needed in a separate paper to highlight the efforts Menifee has taken to address and support lower income groups including transferring left-over Covid Relief funds to fund low-income housing repairs and supporting senior citizens facing economic hardships. Additionally, it is merited to recognize the emphasis on citizen participation that the city values especially being that Menifee stems from rural roots with long-time residents, which this paper does not dedicate time to.

Moreover, an additional point of contention is whether the city has successfully accounted for variables that affect adjustments to Housing Elements. Variables include topics of NIMBYism. While demographics consistent with NIMBY-like qualities entertain the current description of the city, this is by no means a certain determinant that the city, or any city, will reach state goals. In fact, the second highest majority population are in fact other races such as Hispanic/Latino. In addition, ADU options, typically are constant of high Hispanic/Latino population. This may likewise prove consistent with high demographic rates of Hispanic/Latinos but still show that Menifee demonstrates effectiveness in integrating ADU options. Likewise, streamlined permit processes are also emphasized within City Hall and on the City Web to highlight the efficiency and relief of ambiguity that typically arise with the entitlement,

post entitlement, grading, and development procedures. These three are elements that show the effectiveness of integrating variables that may increase state housing goals.

Lastly to recognize is the use of successful strategies that may have an adverse effect and actuality may hazards such as gentrification. It is important to be clear that due to the lack of formal interviews with constituents, city leaders, and stakeholders, it is uncertain how aligned residents feel their views on salient issues are. These issues include, but are not limited to, housing and unaffordability. This paper recommends better understanding of the community for improvement. Additionally, this paper calls for effective collaboration with said community to successfully implement and integrate salient issues into the General Plan.

In sum, this paper determines that Meniffee has been effective at implementing appropriate zoning areas to reach state needs while simultaneously coupling permit processes for fast development and ADU options. However, the paper urges the City to heed future hazards to avoid repercussions and furthermore gain a deeper understanding and community relationship on the feelings, values, attitudes and beliefs involved with the changing characteristics of a city.

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