



Date: June 24, 2025

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Yumie Dahn, Principal Planner

Title: **Consultant Contract for the 7th Cycle Housing Element for the 2027-2035 Planning Period**

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action: That the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract with Ascent Environmental for professional services to complete the 7th Cycle Housing Element for the 2027-2035 planning period, which includes a cost not to exceed \$255,720 and a 9.5 percent contingency, not to exceed \$25,280.

Discussion: The Housing Element is one of seven required elements of a General Plan and the only element that is required to be certified by the State of California. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) reviews and certifies housing elements. A Housing Element is required to have the following components:

- Review of previous element
- Housing needs assessment based on the HCD's analysis of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). The RHNA is a state-mandated process where the State quantifies the need for housing for each local jurisdiction; the Town is then tasked with ensuring that there is enough land zoned for the required residential density.
- Inventory and analysis of adequate sites to meet RHNA requirements
- Analysis of potential governmental and non-governmental constraints
- Housing policies and programs
- Quantified objectives

The Town of Truckee's 6th Cycle Housing Element, adopted in 2019, applies to the 2019-2027 planning period. In order to ensure compliance with State law, the Town is required to adopt and certify an updated Housing Element by August 15, 2027 for the 2027-2035 planning period (7th cycle). State law requires that HCD review and certify the Housing Element, which requires a 90-day HCD review period and potential revisions and subsequent 60-day reviews. The length of HCD's review period requires that the Town begin work early on the update to ensure that the Housing Element is adopted by the August 15, 2027 deadline. Failure to adopt a certified Housing Element by this date would put the Town at risk of being ineligible for grants and being stripped of local review authority over housing projects. While the RHNA determination will likely not be released by HCD for at least a year, there is work that can be done to prepare the Housing Element, including the review of the previous element, reviewing existing government constraints, identifying potential housing policies and programs, and community outreach.

Staff recommends selection of Ascent Environmental (Ascent) to provide consulting services to help with drafting and adoption of the Housing Element. Ascent Environmental is a full-service planning, urban design, and environmental consultancy headquartered in Sacramento. The Ascent team has prepared close to 70 housing elements during the past three housing element cycles for cities and counties across the state. Ascent and the assigned Project Director, Chelsey Norton Payne, assisted the Town with the drafting and adoption of the 2019-2027 Housing Element, including facilitating the review and

communication with HCD to obtain on-time certification from the State. Ascent, under the direction of Chelsey Norton Payne, was the primary consultant in the 2040 General Plan and Downtown Truckee Plan, which were adopted in May 2023. Ascent's direct work on these policy documents ensures that they are very familiar with the Town of Truckee, the community, and existing policies. Further, Ascent has direct access to the technical analysis and base GIS maps created for the General Plan and Downtown Truckee Plan. The recent experience in the development of these documents makes Ascent uniquely prepared to begin work quickly and efficiently, with little time needed to get familiar with the Town. Use of the existing information will allow the Town and the consultant to begin work quickly and reduce time and cost for a more streamlined process.

The Town completed a Request for Proposal for the 2040 General Plan update mentioned above and reviewed proposals from three firms, including Ascent. At the August 14, 2018 Council meeting, the Council approved the contract with Ascent due to their wide range of expertise, their innovative approach to public engagement and their comprehensive project management. Given the level of professional expertise and specific knowledge of the Truckee area detailed above, as well as the selection of Ascent from a previous RFP process, staff recommends awarding the 7th Cycle Housing Element work to Ascent.

Proposed Scope of Work

The proposed 7th Cycle Housing Element scope of work reflects staff's expectation that, in addition to working closely with the consultant on the drafting of the document, staff will take the lead on tasks such as community outreach, public hearings, and policy creation. Ascent's primary role will be to lead the technical tasks of reviewing the existing Housing Element for compliance with State law, preparing the housing needs assessment, identifying areas where changes to affirmatively further fair housing should be incorporated, and communicating with HCD on review and certification of the document.

Task 1: Project Management

- Document Review and Data Collection
- Project Kickoff Meeting/Working Session
- Project Management and Coordination

Task 2: Housing Element Components

- 2.1 Evaluation of Current Housing Element
- 2.2 Housing Needs Assessment
- 2.3 Fair Housing Assessment
- 2.4 Sites Inventory Analysis and Other Housing Resources 2
- 2.5 Housing Constraints Analysis
- 2.6 Housing Goals, Policies, and Implementation Program
- 2.7 Summary of Outreach Activities

Task 3: Draft Housing Element Preparation

- 3.1 Administrative Draft Housing Element
- 3.2 Public Review Draft Housing Element

Task 4: Community Engagement

- 4.1 Community Engagement Support

Task 5: HCD Review of Housing Element

- 5.1 HCD Submittal and Revisions
- 5.2 Revisions to Address Preliminary HCD Comments
- 5.3 Revisions to Address HCD Comment Letter

Task 6: Environmental Compliance

- 6.1 Notice of Exemption

Task 7: Final Documents and Adoption

- 7.1 Public Hearing Draft Housing Element
- 7.2 Adoption Hearings
- 7.3 Final Housing Element and Submittal to HCD
- 7.4 HCD Electronic Housing Element Sites Inventory Form

The consultant has also included three optional tasks as part of their scope of work. Optional consultant tasks include the following:

- Revised Public Review Draft Housing Element
- Enhanced Community Engagement Support
- Third Round of HCD Review.

The optional tasks equal up to \$40,000. This amount is not included in the recommended amount. At this time, staff does not believe that the optional tasks are unnecessary. If these tasks are needed in the future, staff will return to the Town Council for consideration of additional funds.

Attachment 1 provides the full scope of work, including descriptions and costs associated with each task. The timeline for the final adoption of the Housing Element is driven by State law. Based on early recommendations from the consultant on their experience with HCD review times, staff's goal is to submit to HCD for their preliminary review one year prior to the required adoption date (August 15, 2027) to ensure there is adequate time for review and certification.

If the Council approves this contract, staff will work with the Town Attorney and Ascent to finalize the professional services agreement. Then, staff and Ascent will begin reviewing the existing Housing Element and set up a kick-off meeting with Town staff to initiate the Housing Element update and delineate staff and consultant responsibilities. Until HCD releases the RHNA requirements, the Housing Element tasks will be focused on data and sites analysis, reviewing policies and programs, community outreach, drafting new policies and programs, and identifying potential sites that could or should be rezoned.

Priority:

<input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Investment	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Core Service

Fiscal Impact: Housing Element CIP C2505 includes a \$281,000 budget in the 2025/2026 budget, which was adopted by the Council on June 10, 2025 under Resolution 2025-42. If Council approves the proposed Ascent scope of work, without selection of optional tasks, and with use of a 9.5 percent contingency, the total cost would be \$281,000. Additional staff time will be required to manage the consultant, public engagement, and presentations to the Planning Commission and Town Council.

Public Communication: Standard Town Council agenda posting.

Attachment:

Ascent Proposal for Town of Truckee Seventh Cycle Housing Element