

Residential Planning & Design

25 Years of Shaping How Ventura County Lives

Over 25 years, what Ventura County builds and where it builds it has shifted from project-by-project approvals toward complete communities, state streamlining, and measurable regional housing obligations.



HEART OF HOME 
25 Years of Connection, Community, & Change

**This digital deck is an evolving record of Ventura County's housing history. It highlights selected projects, policies, partnerships, and milestones and may not include every contribution. Content can be corrected, expanded, and updated as new information becomes available.*

Three Major Transitions Define This Story



From Projects to Places

Building Complete
Communities



From Approvals to Implementation

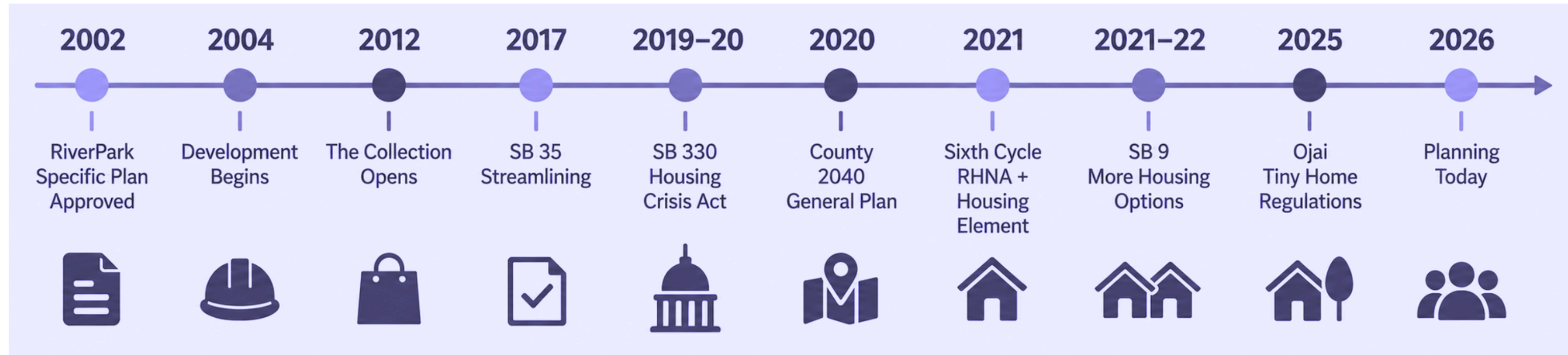
Transforming How
Housing Gets Approved



From Local Needs to Regional Responsibility

Planning for Housing as a
Regional Responsibility

25 Years Of Residential Planning + Design



The Question Changed

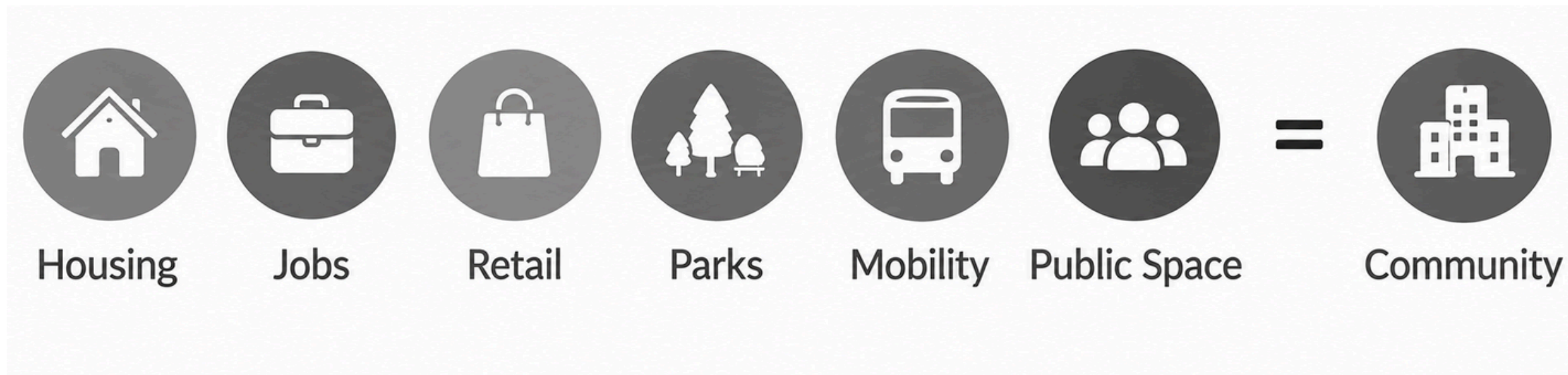
At the beginning of the 21st century, residential planning was increasingly influenced by New Urbanism, Smart Growth, mixed-use development, and walkable community design.



Residential planning became less about placing projects and more about shaping places.

RiverPark: Planning Housing As Part Of A Community

Oxnard's RiverPark Specific Plan is an important local example of the shift toward integrated, mixed-use community planning. The community was conceived to connect residential neighborhoods with retail, employment opportunities, parks, public spaces, and transportation connections.



2012 — The Collection at RiverPark opens, adding a major commercial and public-gathering component to the broader RiverPark community.



From “What Use Is Allowed?” To “What Kind of Place Are We Creating?”

Planning Question	Traditional Land-Use Zoning	Form-Based Planning
 Primary focus	What use is allowed?	What kind of place are we creating?
 Land use	Separate or regulate uses	Support mixed uses + emphasize form
 Building placement	Standard parcel controls	Major design consideration
 Height + scale	Numerical standards	Related to the street + public realm
 Setbacks	Property-line regulation	Shape streets and public spaces
 Street frontage	Often secondary	Central to neighborhood character
 Pedestrian experience	Addressed separately	Core planning consideration
 Public space	Often separate	Part of the placemaking framework

Local Example:

Downtown Oxnard is identified in the source as the first large-scale form-based zoning code enacted in Ventura County.

More Ways To Create Housing



New Communities

Master-planned neighborhoods.



Infill Development

Housing in existing areas.



Mixed-Use

Housing + retail, jobs + services.



ADUs

Smaller homes on existing lots.



Lot Splits + Two Units

SB 9 pathways for qualifying lots.



Affordable Housing

Programs + funding for affordability.



Alternative Housing

Tiny homes, modular and innovative types.



Local Example

Ojai

Early innovator in movable tiny homes.

From Local Review To Greater State Streamlining + Accountability

2017

SB 35

Streamlining



Created a streamlined approval process for qualifying housing developments in jurisdictions that had not made sufficient progress toward housing production goals.

→ **Qualifying Project**

→ Streamlined Review

→ Ministerial Approval

2019 - 2020

SB 330

Capacity + Accountability



Placed limits on certain local restrictions, protected housing capacity, and created stronger procedural requirements.

→ **Protect Capacity**

→ Increase Certainty

→ Strengthen Accountability

2021 - 2022

SB 9

More Housing Options



Created new pathways for two-unit development, lot splits, or both on qualifying properties.

Two-Unit Development

+ Lot Splits

→ More Housing Options

From Regional Need To Local Housing Planning



24,452

Sixth Cycle housing need
– (County total)

1,262

Allocated to unincorporated
Ventura County



What A Housing Element Does

From Policy Document to Implementation Plan

2021

Ventura County (unincorporated) adopted its 2021–2029 Housing Element on October 12, and HCD certified it on December 22.



Identifies suitable sites



Establishes densities and capacity



Identifies zoning changes



Includes affordable-housing programs



Includes preservation strategies



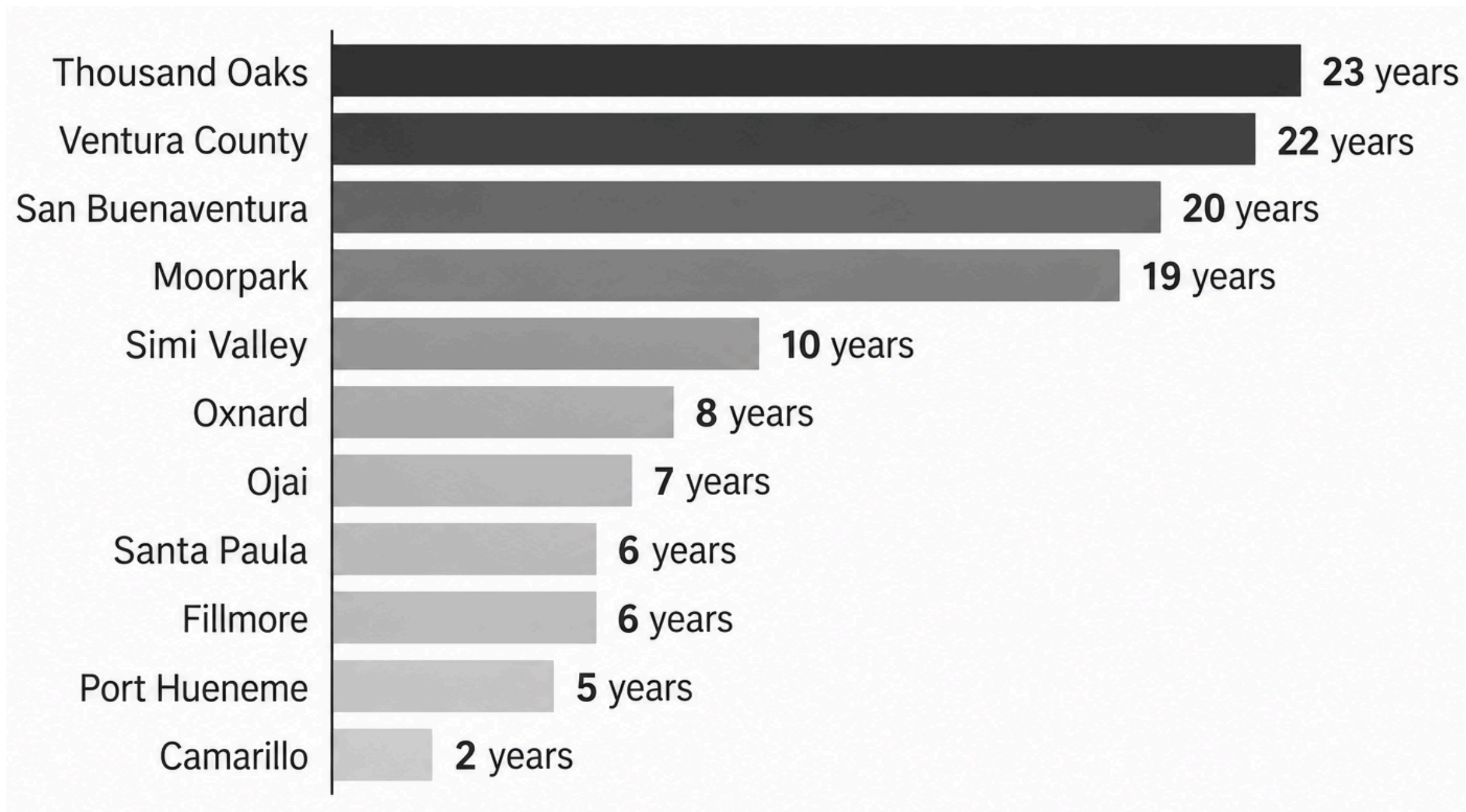
Identifies barriers to development



Establishes implementation programs

Planning Happens Community By Community

A history of local partnership



People And Partners Shaped The Conversation



Sandy Smith

Sespe Consulting

Active on HOME
board and
committees,
2009–2020.



**Di Cecco
Architecture Inc.**

14-year conference
sponsor that brought
planning and
architecture into the
housing conversation.

Planning and design change happens through public agencies, professional partners, civic leadership, and long-term regional collaboration.

How Residential Planning Changed

Then

Project-by-project development

Housing considered independently

Zoning focused on what use is allowed

Local discretionary approvals

Fewer housing pathways

Broad community objectives

General Plan long-range policy

Individual development sites

Now

Planning complete communities

Connected to jobs, retail, transportation, parks

Form, scale, frontage, streets + pedestrian experience

State streamlining + accountability

Broader toolbox (infill, mixed-use, ADUs, etc.)

RHNA + measurable obligations

Housing Elements as implementation documents

Regional housing need + local implementation

The Next 25 Years



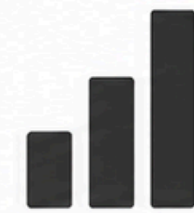
Jobs



Transportation



Parks +
Public Space



Economic
Development



Community
Design



People

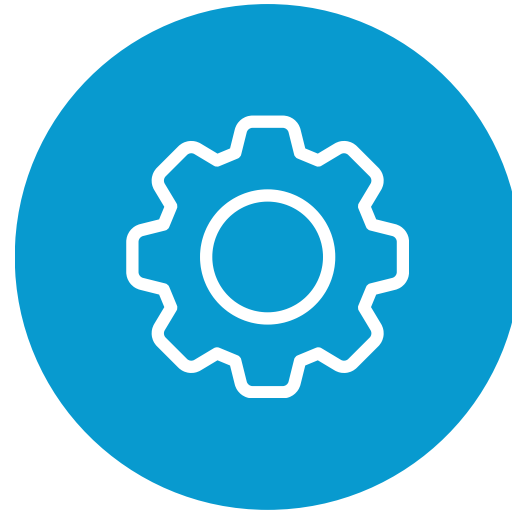
The next 25 years will require more than simply producing additional units.
It will require planning for how people actually live, move, work, gather, age and build community.

From the First 25 Years to the Next 25



From Projects to Places

Housing is now planned as part of complete communities.



From Approvals to Implementation

Housing policy increasingly focuses on whether projects can actually move through the system.



From Local Needs to Regional Responsibility

RHNA and Housing Elements make housing need measurable.



From Units to Communities.

Residential planning is about housing, design, infrastructure, public space, mobility, affordability, and people.

The lesson of the past 25 years is that successful residential planning is not simply about building more houses. It is about creating complete, connected, sustainable, and inclusive communities.

Appendix: Sources + Methodology

This chapter was developed from HOME-provided Residential Planning & Design materials, a planning/design storyboard, the uploaded visual timeline, public planning records, state housing-policy resources, and local government materials.

RiverPark

The uploaded visual timeline references RiverPark around 2001/2004. For final deck purposes, use verified public records showing Specific Plan approval in 2002 and development beginning in May 2004.

Ojai Tiny Homes

The source identifies Ojai as an early local innovator. Public-facing copy should say “moveable tiny homes” and avoid implying broad stand-alone tiny-home zoning unless further confirmed. Ojai’s current materials describe moveable tiny homes as dwellings on the same parcel as a primary residence.

SB 9

Use careful language: “qualifying properties” and “subject to requirements and exclusions.” Do not say “every single-family lot can have four units.”

Municipal partnership years

The year counts should be verified before they are presented visually as sponsorship duration, partnership duration, consulting history, or another measure.

Figures, dates, and planning descriptions are summarized for public education and historical context. Policies, project details, zoning standards, and housing regulations may change over time and should not be read as legal advice, entitlement guidance, project approval, or a complete planning record.

Help Us Continue The Story

Is an important project, policy, partnership, or milestone missing? Please submit additions, corrections, supporting information, sources, and dated photos to Karen Fraser at info@vchome.org for consideration in future updates.

