March 17, 2023

Mayor Dane White and City Council Members
City of Escondido
Via Email

RE: Request for Amendments to Escondido Housing Element

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council members:

The undersigned members and supporters of the Escondido Community Housing Coalition (ECHC) have been working for over three years in efforts to secure adequate, quality affordable housing in Escondido and environs. We have filed many comment letters and attended many meetings in our attempt to secure reasonable changes to the Escondido Housing Element which would result in more affordable housing in our city.

We are extremely disappointed in the draft final document as it fails to adequately address the priorities our members have articulated since 2020. We do not believe, as written, this Housing element is at all adequate to ensure the housing we need in Escondido.

The dire need for inclusionary housing rules and a prohibition of housing in known, unsafe locations are not committed to in the current draft Housing Element. Further, we reiterate our request that the city create a public advisory committee, such as the city of Oceanside has, to allow the public to engage meaningfully in the housing process.

We disagree with both your staff and state Housing and Community Development Department that these three priorities have been adequately addressed in the final document. Our rationale and data are detailed in our previous letters and a few of them are attached for reference. Unfortunately, we must oppose adoption of the Housing Element until these issues are rectified.

Most egregious is the lack of a commitment to affordable housing as part of the development process. Affordable housing requirements are among the most effective means of actually producing affordable housing in an equitable manner. We have offered ideas from regional experts about the best way to do this, such as a tiered approach. Voluntary measures have not worked in Escondido and we are fast losing opportunities to provide the housing we need for residents.

As the city has missed several very important opportunities to ensure that affordable housing was constructed as part of redevelopment of key areas in the city (most notably

Palomar Heights), we hope that the city does not continue to fail as East Valley Specific Plan and the mall are redeveloped.

Going forward, we make the following requests of Council.

1. Direct staff to ensure that interested organizations and resident members be included in an advisory role or on a Commission to provide input to the planners and decision-makers so the community perspective on effectively producing more affordable housing in our city is included.
2. Direct staff to ensure the analysis for a future inclusionary housing ordinance including different approaches be conducted within two years.
3. Direct the staff to ensure that locations of housing in areas known to be unsafe and unhealthful, such as adjacent to freeways and in very high fire hazard severity zones, be prohibited in the Environmental Justice element.

We would welcome a chance to meet with any of you regarding our requests if you are interested. Thank you for the consideration of our comments. We can be reached at escohousingcoalition@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Yusef Miller, North County Equity and Justice Coalition
Estela De Los Rios, CSA San Diego County
Madison Coleman, Climate Action Campaign
Ron Askeland, San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club
Laura Hunter, Sierra Club North County Group
Suzanne Hume, Clean Earth 4 Kids
Satia Austin, President, North San Diego County NAACP
Rick Bates, UNITEHERE Local 30
Reginald Branch, Escondido Resident
Christine Nava, Escondido Resident
Herb Zapata, Escondido Resident
Patricia Borchmann, Escondido Resident
Joanne Tenney, Escondido Resident
Nico Calavita, Professor Emeritus, San Diego State University

Cc.
Ms. Veronica Morones, Principal Planner
Ms. Sohab Mehmood, Department of Housing and Community Development

Attch,
Comment letters from Escondido Community Housing Coalition on the Escondido Housing Element