



December 13, 2022

Board of Supervisors
County of San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Board of Supervisors Meeting Wednesday, December 14, 2022, Item 30: LET'S TALK HOUSING WORKSHOP

Chair Fletcher, Vice Chair Vargas, and Supervisors,

We are unequivocally in both an affordable housing crisis and climate emergency. We are seeing the worst impacts of the climate crisis intensifying each year - wildfires, drought, extreme heat, and more. We must do everything in our power now to mitigate and combat both crises. This begins with knowing that we simply can't solve the climate crisis without simultaneously solving the affordable housing crisis.

What is being proposed for board action on the "Let's Talk Housing Workshop" agenda item will have far-reaching and long-term impacts. However, the Initial Housing Blueprint has been developed with very little public outreach and meaningful feedback from the communities that these priorities will have a direct impact on. All County goals and actions must center and be developed in consultation with the community. Anything else is contrary to the transparency and responsibility of the government. Therefore, **we strongly recommend that the BOS do not vote on this item at the Wednesday, 12/14 meeting until there is equitable community discussion, understanding, and input and sustainability is prioritized in the housing goals.**

This coalition continues to advocate for the County to couple sustainable land use and housing policies. With the limited amount of time we had to review the staff report, below are our immediate concerns and recommendations. We may have further comments at a later date when we've had ample time to thoroughly review and analyze this information.

Limited Focus on Sustainability:

After reviewing the staff Board Report developed by the Housing & Community Development Services (HCDS), we are concerned that there is very little focus on sustainability. The overarching goal in Attachment A is to simply "Increase Housing Inventory" with no sustainability or environmental priorities in the short term. The short term priorities do not align with the policies that the County Land Use & Environment Group (LUEG) have been developing, such as the Transportation Study Guide (TSG) and Sustainable Land Use Framework (SLUF). The Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Regional Decarbonization Framework (RDF) are only mentioned in the overarching goals, which will be prioritized after 5 years as resources become available.

The County needs to prioritize sustainability in both the short term and long term. The County must show a serious commitment to climate, sustainability and environmental justice by coupling sustainability, housing, and land use now. It will be nearly impossible to meet our climate action plans goals if we try and incorporate sustainability efforts years after we've developed housing, especially in the unincorporated area.

Fire safety

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of wildfires, and increased human activity in high fire hazard areas increases occurrence of accidental ignitions. We urge the County to stop irresponsibly putting housing where we know it will burn. Reducing fire risk also helps reduce climate-damaging greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Stop Sprawl Development

To reduce VMT and slash GHG emissions from the transportation sector, which is the greatest source of emissions in our region, the County must disinvest in dangerous, inequitable, unsustainable, and expensive backcountry sprawl development. Sprawl development forces working class families to make mega-commutes, all while increasing air pollution from cars, which has and will continue to negatively impact our communities.

Instead, the County's housing priorities must align with other regional plans such as SANDAG's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), ensuring that housing is developed in SANDAG mobility hubs. As well as the RDF which confirms that the most effective and inexpensive natural climate solution needed to achieve a zero carbon future is to avoid developing natural and working lands that sequester and store carbon. The County can and should work with the incorporated cities, for example providing for transfer of development allowances from unincorporated to incorporated communities.

Affordable Housing Crisis

Families living in sprawling areas can spend more than 50% of their income on housing and transportation alone. To ensure that families can afford to live in VMT efficient areas, the County must prioritize the development of affordable housing in alignment with state low and very low income categories. To achieve this the County should adopt an Inclusionary Housing Program that commits to a 15% affordability requirement at 60% AMI. Inclusionary housing requirements are key tools to help prevent displacement, affirmatively further fair housing, and help meet RHNA requirements.

All Electric Homes

Even as our jurisdictions work to achieve 100% clean electricity, methane gas remains a top source of emissions. To fully transition away from fossil fuels, we must reduce and ultimately eliminate methane gas consumption. Appliances and infrastructure can last several decades, so it is critical that we start transitioning to all-electric homes and buildings now.

We urge the County to require all newly constructed or renovated homes to be all electric. In addition to reducing emissions, building electrification is the lowest cost construction method,

and will future-proof homes. It also provides numerous co-benefits including lower energy bills, healthier indoor and outdoor air quality, safer energy infrastructure, and the creation of good-paying green jobs.

Conclusion

The County must take a holistic approach to combating the climate and affordable housing crises. People live and work throughout the entire region, irrespective of jurisdictional boundaries. In order to meet our regional housing and climate needs the County must reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The County should prioritize coupling future land use patterns that discourage urban sprawl and incentivize housing near job centers and transit corridors. We urge the County to prioritize creating inclusive and connected communities, where people don't have to be reliant on their cars to efficiently and safely commute in the region. The County must seize this opportunity to ensure a livable, healthy, prosperous, safe, and an equitable region for current and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the development of these critically-important housing goals.

Sincerely,

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