



October 12, 2021

Regarding: October 12, 2021 City Council Meeting – Agenda Item #11 – Housing Element Review

Dear Mayor Kelley, Mayor Pro Tem Bucknum, and Councilmembers Goodell, Rath, and Sachs,

We write representing the Welcoming Neighbors Home (WNH) Initiative, a ministry of Tapestry Unitarian Universalist Congregation – which has members in South Orange County – including Mission Viejo. The WNH initiative works to end homelessness and promote the development of more affordable housing – especially for those with extremely low and very low incomes.

We wish to comment on the most recently revised Mission Viejo housing element draft.

On page 112 of the revised housing element draft, we note the statement “With regard to actual housing production, it must be recognized that RHNA allocations for the 2021-2029 planning cycle are far higher than is feasible to achieve based on the amount of public subsidies required to produce affordable housing.” While we understand the new RHNA goals are more ambitious, we believe they are nonetheless achievable.

1. We recommend the city add the Steinmart property to the site inventory to make it more likely that the 6th Cycle RHNA goals will be achieved. This property should be re-zoned for housing for extremely low and very low-income housing. This would make an ideal site for lower income housing. We understand the City Council is considering floating a bond to purchase this property. Why not include very low-income housing there?
2. While we were glad to see the proposed re-zoning to increase density levels, we are concerned that increasing density levels without also having an inclusionary housing requirement risks the city giving away valuable land density benefits without getting commensurate community benefits.
 - a. The city should adopt an inclusionary housing ordinance that will require that at least 15% of any new development of 6 or more units be for very low income people, i.e., those earning less than \$50,000 per year. When this is not possible, I urge the city to require an in-lieu fee of at least \$10,000 to \$15,000 per unit - to build a fund for building affordable housing elsewhere.
 - b. We also recommend that other housing policies be adopted to facilitate the production of affordable housing, such as by-right development for 100% affordable developments.

3. We note the projection of 35 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to meet the RHNA goals. We are glad to see the city plans to monitor the production of ADUs. However, unlike other cities' housing element programs, it does not include a plan to track ADU rents to measure if progress is being made on the production of affordable units. In addition, we would like to see more incentives put in place to encourage the development of ADUs – such as expedited review of ADU permits, pre-approved ADU design plans and reduction of permit fees for deed restricted affordable ADUs. Please consider adopting a program such as the one implemented in Santa Cruz County – the Accessory Dwelling Unit Forgivable Loan Program (see attached PDF).

The need for more affordable housing for those earning less than \$50,000 per year is acute in Mission Viejo. We urge the city to take proactive steps, such as those outlined above, to promote the production of more affordable housing in Mission Viejo. Now, with funding available from the State of California's HomeKey funds (https://homekey.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/NOFA_Homekey_0.pdf), and the federal government American Rescue Plan Act funds, it is important for the city to take advantage of these funding sources to make important strides in the provision of affordable housing.

Thank you for considering our comments and for your public service.

Sincerely,

Rona Henry, MBA, MPH
Chair, Welcoming Neighbors Home, Tapestry, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Rev. Kent Doss
Minister, Tapestry, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Cc: Rev. Kent Doss, Minister, Tapestry, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Dennis Wilberg, City Manager
Elaine Lister, Director of Community Development
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Paul McDougall, Marisa Prasse, Chelsea Lee, Collin Cross, Mashal Ayobi - California State Housing and Community Development Office