



May 23, 2021

Regarding: May 25, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting - General Plan Amendment GPA 21-01 (2021-2029 Housing Element Update)

Dear Laguna Niguel Planning Commission Chair Hersh, Vice Chair Fisk, Commissioners Brown, Green, Whipple,

I write as Chair of the Welcoming Neighbors Home Initiative - a ministry of the Tapestry Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Our congregation has many members who live in Laguna Niguel. Our ministry works to end and prevent homelessness by advocating for more affordable housing in South OC – including in Laguna Niguel.

Three important requests up front.

- 1) **Please use a track changes method as your team goes through its DRAFT revisions**, so content changes can be apparent to the reader.
- 2) Can you **provide us with an electronic file of the site inventory**, i.e., a spreadsheet so we may conduct our own analysis?
- 3) **We are requesting confirmation from the City that it will allow a public review period of at least 30 days before any version of the revised Housing Element (HE) – either the Draft HE or FINAL HE – is transmitted to HCD.** The city should publicly announce the dates for the commencement and end of the review period.

We realize that you are still early in the process of completing the update to the Housing Element. The draft to be presented to the Planning Commission on May 25, 2021 appears to be an excellent start to the process.

Here are two of our priorities that we hope the city will strive for as it finalizes its 6th cycle housing element:

- We urge you to be creative and intentional in meeting the need for more affordable housing – especially for those with extremely- low- incomes (e.g. \$28,250 and below) and very- low- incomes (\$47,100 and below).
- We also request that the city abide by Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing principles in their planning and site selection. Affordable housing should be distributed evenly throughout the City so as to avoid economic segregation. Future affordable housing

should be placed in high opportunity areas with good jobs, good schools, services, and public transportation. The City has a responsibility to plan thoughtfully and intentionally in order to create equitable growth. We look forward to reviewing the next version of the housing element draft and hope to see more specific milestones and metrics with regard to the plan for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing.

Here are some ideas for your consideration:

- We were glad to see Program 1, Action 1.2, *City staff will provide administrative assistance to affordable housing developers in preparing grant applications.*
 - We ask that if feasible, you **consider creatively using public lands** – e.g. partnering with a non-profit affordable housing developer, such as Jamboree or National CORE, to build an affordable housing complex on city owned land.
- **Institute an Inclusionary Housing policy that requires** all housing development projects have 15% of units as affordable, dedicated for extremely -low (5%), very -low (5%), and low-income (5%) residents.
- **Consider adopting an [Adaptive Reuse Ordinance](#)** such as the one used by the city of Santa Ana¹ that streamlines the regulatory process for converting non-residential buildings into affordable housing. This ordinance applied in the building of the [Santa Ana Arts Collective](#).²
- **Other Fiscal Incentives:** Emphasize, promote, and encourage the use of incentives available to those developers who include affordable housing such as waivers or reductions in fees, low interest loans or subsidies, and financial or mortgage assistance for acquisition of property.
- **Ease Governmental constraints for developers who build Inclusionary housing.**
 - **Streamlined Procedural Incentives:** Emphasize processes/procedures like the consolidation of applications to one hearing, fast-tracking of design, and review and inspections with priority processing and scheduling for interim inspections.
 - **Reduction in Development Standards:** Offer a reduction in setback and square footage requirements and in the ratio of required vehicle parking.
- **Prioritize getting access to affordable housing funding**
 - Increased diligence to identify and access new funding sources, state and federal, to facilitate solutions. Due to the economic crisis, there is more need, and more funds are available now for support of affordable housing.

¹ [https://www.santa-](https://www.santa-ana.org/sites/default/files/pb/planning/Counter%20Forms/Adaptive%20Reuse%20Ord.%206.30.20.pdf)

[ana.org/sites/default/files/pb/planning/Counter%20Forms/Adaptive%20Reuse%20Ord.%206.30.20.pdf](https://www.santa-ana.org/sites/default/files/pb/planning/Counter%20Forms/Adaptive%20Reuse%20Ord.%206.30.20.pdf)

² <https://voiceofoc.org/2019/06/public-demand-for-affordable-artists-apartments-in-santa-ana-prompts-city-outreach-effort/>

- We recommend that the City work with the Orange County Board of Supervisors and neighboring cities to create a regional local housing bond program to help fund affordable housing and permanent supportive housing.
- Other California cities and counties have taken this approach or are in the process of creating such a program.^{3 4}

Given the importance of the 6th Cycle Housing Element, Welcoming Neighbors Home representatives would like the opportunity to dialogue with Laguna Niguel City staff and their Housing Element consultant on how to achieve a 6th Cycle Housing Element plan that includes improved policies and processes which will result in new affordable homes for people with extremely- low, very- low- and low-incomes.

In the meantime if you have any questions, please feel free to me at 609-216-1784 or at rona.s.henry@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Rona Henry

Rona Henry, Laguna Woods Resident
Chair, Welcoming Neighbors Home Initiative

Cc: Rev. Kent Doss, Minister, Tapestry, a Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Tamara Letourneau, Laguna Niguel City Manager
Justin Martin, Laguna Niguel Deputy City Manager
Jonathan Orduna, Laguna Niguel Community Development Director
Fred Minagar, Mayor, Laguna Niguel
Elaine Gennawey Mayor Pro Tem, Laguna Niguel
Sandy Rains, Council Member, Laguna Niguel
Kelly Jennings, Council Member, Laguna Niguel
Rischi Paul Sharma, Council Member
Cesar Covarrubias, Executive Director, Kennedy Commission
Paul McDougall, David Navarrette, Marisa Prasse, Chelsea Lee - California State Housing and Community Development Office

³ The San Diego City Council voted 6-3 to place on the November ballot a \$900 million housing bond that would raise taxes on city property owners to pay for roughly 7,500 subsidized apartments. ... The estimate had ranged from \$500,000 to \$785,000, but now it's \$700,000 to \$1.2 million per ballot measure. San Diego Union Tribune, July 14, 2020.

⁴ Los Angeles also has a bond program, known as HHH.