

Ramirez, Angelica

General Public Comment

From: Mary Ellen Brooks <mebrooks@sbceo.org>
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2022 11:34 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public Comment Letter from CPA
Attachments: CPA final draft housing ele SBC.docx



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Dear Staff: Attached please find a public comment letter we would like to share with the BOS. This is about a topic not on the agenda. I do not think I can attend the meeting tomorrow so I hope you can make sure all decision-makers and the CEO have a copy. I will try to attend via zoom for the general public comment period. Please send me a quick e-mail so I know you received this. We will be sending it to the PC, Planning Director, and Long Range Planning also. d

Thank you. Marell Brooks, President, Citizens Planning Association



Citizens Planning Association

916 Anacapa Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

May 13, 2022

Dear Chair Hartmann and CEO Miyasato:

The Board of Directors of Citizens Planning Association wish to express urgency and concerns about the absence of transparency and community engagement in the 2023 Housing Element Update project. We have raised our concerns on several occasions with Director Plowman. We have stressed that genuine community engagement and outreach in this RHNA cycle is particularly crucial, especially given the disproportionate housing unit numbers allocated by SBCAG to the South Coast. SBCAG allocated a staggering 73% of the County's RHNA numbers to the South Coast unincorporated area. The implications and social and environmental impacts of such disproportionate allocation were never studied.

It has been our hope, since first learning of this allocation almost a year ago, that a robust outreach and engagement process would lead to an informed understanding of such an imbalance. Sadly, that has not taken place, and instead, we fear that the vast majority of South County residents will learn of the County's plans with little or no opportunity to truly engage in the process.

In the past several weeks, we have watched as nearby jurisdictions, the City of Santa Barbara, City of Goleta, and other County cities, have conducted and advertised numerous workshops and held public hearings about their RHNA processes.

Yet, the County, as recently as today, May 12, 2022, has failed to hold any public meetings, virtual or otherwise, on the RHNA process and cycle and the implications for the unincorporated communities it will impact. The County's RHNA update website contains NO pertinent documents, such as the existing Housing Element or links to community plans, or documents that staff might have developed.

Instead, the County created and circulated a "survey" that purports to be a method of receiving "input". Besides being very poorly designed, the survey is biased and designed to limit the type of input or perspective that many residents might want to express about the RHNA process and implications. One question inquires about "health hazards"; another asks "if you plan to move" and offers a limited number of reasons focused solely on problems with current housing market.

There are NO questions that elicit informed responses about possible impacts of adding 4,000+ units to the South Coast, e.g., water supply, traffic, etc. There is no context provided to explain the origins of RHNA, how the numbers were decided, how many properties that were rezoned in the last Housing Element update have not yet been built, etc.

Most recently, on May 11, a video was released by P&D. It is a five minute “explanation” of the RHNA process. Many of the statements in the video are either biased or inaccurate. It basically faults the County for not previously providing housing “for everybody”. It does not mention factors, such as community plans, ESHA, coastal policies, and other issues that contribute to the numbers, and cost of South Coast housing, such as desirability of the coast. Most shockingly, the video asks viewers to email Planning staff to suggest sites for rezone, with the young planner stating “we need help to identify potential sites” [for rezone].

The survey and video do not constitute outreach or engagement and are not designed to elicit informed, robust consideration of how thousands of new units might be sited in a way that conforms to existing community plans and coastal policies. Instead, they are each skewed to support a narrative that County planners first expressed in a letter to SBCAG members in December 2020 urging support for the disproportionate allocations. CPA expressed concerns about that letter and your pending decision at SBCAG in our July 2021 letter to SBCAG Board members.

CPA urges you to hold a public hearing as soon as possible to direct staff to engage the public in a robust engagement process regarding the Housing Element Update. The public must be notified as soon as possible about County Planning staff’s intention for distribution of the housing units it supported for the South Coast.

Sincerely,

Marell Brooks, President, Citizens Planning Association

<https://www.countyofsb.org/160/Planning-Development>