

Sheila de la Guerra

Public Comment



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From: Sullivan Israel <sullivanisrael1@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 7, 2025 4:40 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public Comment for BOS
Attachments: County BOS 4-7-25.pdf

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Hello. Attached please find the public comment sent in on behalf of Strong Towns Santa Barbara.
Thank you,
--Sullivan Israel



SANTA BARBARA

April 22, 2024

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk of the Board (sbcob@countyofsb.org)
123 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

To: Chair Capps and members of the Board of Supervisors, County of Santa Barbara

Re: **Item #3 County's Workforce Housing Study and Potential Use of County Owned Land**

My name is Sullivan Israel and I am writing to you today on behalf of Strong Towns Santa Barbara, a local chapter of the national education and advocacy-focused organization Strong Towns. Strong Towns was founded with the aim of working closely with local officials to promote and enact policy which embodies the urban planning principles necessary for resilient and financially sustainable city/town design. Since we began in 2023, we've brought together over 400 locals to help make Santa Barbara more more resilient, fiscally sound, and people-oriented — one step at a time.

Strong Towns Santa Barbara is pleased to have an opportunity to provide our perspective on the topics of Workforce Housing and use of County owned land. Many Strong Towns Principles and interests including importance of land as a resource, walkable streets, neighborhoods that can grow incrementally to serve future generations and financial solvency guide our positions. We also believe in working collaboratively to build a prosperous place.

What is the status of getting the housing we need for County residents and workers?

- We have sites for **enough units** in the unincorporated County to satisfy the State mandates and County planners took extra steps to see where housing could actually get built during this cycle.
- There are many more units for above-moderate incomes allowed for the current housing element than we need, therefore **we agree with the proposal to lower the income range of "workforce" for rentals to 30%-120% AMI**

(Area Median Income).

- So far **we are not seeing a variety of unit types in the pipeline that match all of our community's needs**. The County should consider ways to encourage the production of homes that accommodate residents who need something other than 1 or 2 bedroom rentals such as:
 - Families who need 3 to 4 bedrooms and parking
 - Local seniors who need single level for-purchase options (which could free up their existing homes)
 - Unhoused residents who need permanent low cost solutions when moving from encampments and illegally parked vehicles
 - Low to moderate income workers who do not typically get government subsidies

Which County actions are needed in 2025?

- We agree with staff that completion of the **Inclusionary Ordinance for rentals**, a **Short Term Rentals Ordinance** and completion of the **Prohousing Designation** which will give us access to State grants are important.
- **We will need to identify a permanent funding source** in order to get the planned affordable units that qualify for subsidies actually built. The County should consider setting up a **Local Housing Trust Fund** similar to what the City of SB has that will allow the possibility of State matching funds.
- The report should include a **projection to the impact of workforce housing production** for each proposed implementation action to easily understand the likely benefits of each action and to allow for direct comparison of each action.

How can we encourage local workers to become committed Future Neighbors?

Future neighbors who reside here full time and for the long term could help improve the County's resiliency and economy. But many local workers see little chance of future financial security or a livable neighborhood to accommodate a family so many are thinking of leaving. To combat that view -

- Our local governments need to acknowledge the importance of having livable neighborhoods close to jobs and schools with a mix of incomes and an equitable distribution of assets like parks, transit, cycling and walking paths, schools, meeting places and services.

Best use of County Owned Land - Affordable Housing Development and Innovation Support

- We agree with the **tier 1 to 3 recommendations for County parcels** that should be developed during this housing cycle beginning with the **Probation building** (123 East Carrillo Street). We hope the target group preference for County parcels can include **local low to moderate income residents who have jobs close by**, not just County employees.
- We like the **Adaptive Reuse possibilities for the Downtown Campus** (123 E Anapamu, 1226 Anacapa and 105 E Anapamu). Since housing at that location and for Paseo Nuevo may not be produced during this housing cycle (ending in 2031) both the County and City must leverage publicly owned land as soon as possible to give our low to moderate income workers a reason to stay.
- One way to give our renters hope is to set up **Community Land Trusts (CLTs)** as recommended by the Harris consultants. A CLT process ensures that there is adequate land set aside for affordable housing that will be needed over the next 20 years and beyond.
- County owned land, especially larger parcels like the **Calle Real Campus**, present opportunities to plan and produce **Model Communities** that could accommodate some of the missing unit types listed above suitable for multi-generational families, single parents and older residents who would like to downsize in a condo for purchase. Future neighbors (from Strong Towns, SB Tenants Unions, CAUSE, employees who work close to the selected parcels) and planning and housing professionals could work together to design pro-people and pro-environment neighborhoods with multi-modal circulation and an equitable distribution of assets like parks and meeting places.
- Strong Towns would love to see **Housing Innovation Zones that could offer more flexibility** than we are getting from State law/developer driven projects that are based primarily on what will pencil out. **The zones could be mixed use and incentivize businesses to bring jobs and products here.** We need to find **cost effective and resilient construction methods** (like modular and manufactured components). The cost of housing, especially public housing for families that requires elevators is not sustainable.

Smaller sites of 1 acre or less could be set aside for future housing proposals pitched by cross sector teams of nonprofits, architects, businesses, carpenters, landscapers, active transportation experts, organic farmers, creatives, environmentalists and social service providers, etc. All of the above should include the production of housing on site.

We look forward to working with County jurisdictions and other groups such as Habitat, AIA, CSJ (Committee for Social Justice), SBCAN, League of Women Voters SB and Coastal Housing Coalition who are interested in educating the public and looking at innovative ideas and events to promote great future neighborhoods.

We will close with another Strong Towns Principle:

“Strong cities, towns and neighborhoods cannot happen without strong citizens (people who care)”

Thank you for your time!

Sullivan Israel, *Local Conversation Leader*

Tristen Miller, *Member*

Kira Pusch, *Member*

Luca D'Agruma, *Member*

Joanna Kaufman, *Member*

Marie Hébert, *Member*

Carolina Frey, *Member*

Douglas Ridley, *Member*

George Nicks, *Member*

Alex Gravenor, *Member*

Candice Leung, *Member*

Gordon Blasco, *Member*

Cameron Morris, *Member*

Yen Seay, *Member*

Dan Ary, *Member*

Gordon Blasco, *Member*

Peter Smith, *Member*

Finnegan Israel, *Member*

John Dagger, *Member*

Tomaso Totosi, *Member*

Nick Storr, *Member*

Malcolm Brabec, *Member*

Ben Parnas, *Member*

John Semancik, *Member*

Melissa Cunningham, *Member*

Emma Meyer, *Member*

Barry Remis *MOVE Santa Barbara County*

Rebecca Vincent, *Member*

Aidan Barcia-Bacon, *Member*

Ian Gamblin, *Member*

Emily Foley, *Member*

Grace Vazquez, *Member*

Colleen Reynolds, *Member*

Blythe Wilson, *Member*

Sheridan Green, *Member*

Kiaya Batkin, *Member*

Zoe Klement, *Member*

Aaron Posternack, *Member*

Emma Roeller, *Member*

Bojana Hill, *Member*

Gabe Starkey, *Member*

Brian Legal, *Member*

Kat Ackerman, *Member*

Ethan Keller, *Member*

Anika Clements, *Member*

Sophia Keane, *Member*

Guthrie Leonard, *Member*

Lily Heidger, *Member*

Ian Baucke, *Member*

Hannah Cohen, *Member*

Kal Kadlec, *Member*

Anita Stahl, *Member*

Michael Adlai Arnold, *Member*

Art Ludwig, *Oasis Design*

Linda Honikman, *Member*

And the other 400+ members of STSB