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Katherine Douglas

Public Comment

**From:** Rob Fredericks <RFredericks@hacsb.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 1, 2026 3:02 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Cc:** Lucille Boss; Dale Aazam; Joseph Dzvonik; Jesús Armas; Mona Miyasato  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT LETTER - AGENDA ITEM #5: HEARING- CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING A WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT 117 EAST CARRILLO STREET, APN 029-211-025, FIRST DISTRICT  
**Attachments:** HACSB Letter\_SB\_BOS\_Regarding 117 E. Carrillo Street Workforce Housing Development.pdf

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Dear Chair Nelson and Supervisors,

Attached, please find the Housing Authority's comment letter regarding your agenda item #5 for your meeting on Tuesday regarding the Workforce Housing Development proposals at 117 E. Carrillo Street.

Thank you,

Rob

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May 1, 2026

Sent via email to [sbcob@countyofsb.org](mailto:sbcob@countyofsb.org).

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
Chair Bob Nelson and Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara CA 93101

**RE: AGENDA ITEM #5: HEARING- CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING A WORKFORCE  
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT 117 EAST CARRILLO STREET, APN 029-211-025, FIRST DISTRICT**

Dear Chair Nelson and Supervisors,

I have carefully reviewed the Board materials regarding the proposed workforce housing development at 117 E. Carrillo Street. I want to be clear at the outset—this is not about disagreement with process or outcome for its own sake. This is about ensuring the County gets this project right, because this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity on a highly visible downtown site.

In my professional judgment, the top-ranked proposal is the wrong project for this location.

From a design and livability standpoint, the proposal prioritizes unit count over quality of life. The program pushes 104 units onto the site, with a heavy reliance on small-format units—studios as small as 315 square feet and one-bedrooms averaging roughly 419 square feet. Combined with a double-loaded corridor configuration, this results in a building that feels compressed and institutional rather than residential. Simply put, this is density at the expense of dignity. We should not be in the business of delivering housing that people merely occupy—we should be delivering housing people are proud to call home.

While I respect the involvement of Cearnal Collective, good architecture cannot fully overcome a fundamentally constrained building program. At this scale and configuration, the design is being asked to solve a problem that originates in the pro forma's pursuit of maximum density.

I was also surprised that the Board materials did not reflect our alternative 5-story, 90-unit concept in the summary document. That option was intentionally provided to demonstrate that additional density can be achieved without sacrificing livability, unit size, or neighborhood compatibility. That balance matters, especially in downtown Santa Barbara, where long-term community acceptance is critical to successful execution.

Equally concerning is that the proposal references the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara as a potential partner without any prior outreach or discussion. That is not how we operate. We are deliberate about our partnerships and do not lend our name or credibility to projects we have not vetted or helped shape. This raises concerns about alignment, transparency, and governance.

Beyond the design, I have serious concerns regarding the development team’s structure and execution risk. The proposed financing approach relies heavily on a 501(c)(3) structure that is not yet identified, combined with private capital assumptions that are not sufficiently grounded for a project of this scale and complexity in Santa Barbara. For a public-private partnership on County-owned land, that level of uncertainty should give the County pause.

Additionally, there are broader concerns related to the organization’s business model and ongoing legal and regulatory exposure. While I will not overstate these issues, they introduce real risk around capital formation, execution certainty, and long-term stability—risks that the County should not be absorbing on a project of this importance.

The County’s own staff report emphasizes the need for a partner with financial strength, technical expertise, and community sensitivity. In my view, this proposal falls short, particularly on the community sensitivity and livability components, which are essential in this market.

For these reasons, I do not believe it is appropriate for the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara to be associated with this proposal in any capacity at this stage. Our agency has built its reputation on delivering high-quality, context-sensitive housing that works for residents and for the broader community. That standard is non-negotiable.

This site deserves a project that balances density with livability, financial feasibility with execution certainty, and innovation with long-term durability. In short, you get what you pay for. Cutting cost at the expense of quality will not age well here, and the community will feel the consequences for decades.

We remain committed to being a constructive partner to the County, but only in a manner that aligns with our standards and track record.

Sincerely,

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE  
CITY OF SANTA BARBARA



ROB L. FREDERICKS  
Executive Director/CEO

Cc: Mona Miyasato, CEO - Santa Barbara County  
Jesús Armas, Director – Community Services Department  
Joe Dzvoniak, Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development  
Lucille Boss, Housing Programs Manager – Housing and Community Development