

#5



Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Group 1

From: Patricia Saley <patriciawsaley@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 3, 2026 11:35 AM
To: sbcob
Cc: Jesús Armas; Lucille Boss
Subject: BOS item re 117 E Carrillo St. - Agenda of May 5, 2026

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Supervisors,

I think we can agree that we all want more housing, especially for lower income groups that struggle to live in this community in which they work, live and recreate. If a really large project is built that doesn't evoke dignity and livability, I'm concerned that it will 'poison the well' for other similar projects that hopefully will follow.

I am writing regarding the proposal before you on Tuesday to add 104 units on Carrillo St in the El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District in the City of Santa Barbara. I have read the Board letter, & while I am somewhat comforted by the comment at the top of p. 4 ("At this stage, the Board is not committing to any development plans or construction."), I have some questions. I also read the Housing Authority letter that raises questions about the design in terms of density trumping livability.

I'm sure you're aware that the project site is in the heart of the City of Santa Barbara's Central Business District and the El Pueblo Viejo (EPV) Landmark District. The El Presidio State Historic Park is less than a block away. Slide #9 in the presentation has three steps, two of which involve negotiations prior to the third step which is construction in just over a year. Other than saying that the project is exempt from CEQA, there is nothing that I saw in the Board letter and attachments that indicates any public input on the design would be solicited, let alone advisory input from the Historic Landmark Commission that oversees development in El Pueblo Viejo.

If built as shown in the Board letter's attachments, a really large building in the heart of EPV will raise many eyebrows and questions. I respectfully ask that the public be given an opportunity to provide input on the design and that the City's Historic Landmark Commission's input be sought as well. It would seem prudent to talk to the Trust for Historic Preservation that oversees El Presidio as well. If these steps are already planned, then kudos to your staff for considering the larger community in their planning efforts.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Patricia Saley
1517 Olive St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Katherine Douglas

From: Whitney B. Rubison <whitneyrubison@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 7:12 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT LETTER - AGENDA ITEM #5: HEARING- CONSIDER
RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING A WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT 117
EAST CARRILLO STREET
Attachments: 2026.5 SB County BoS - 117 E. Carrillo.pdf

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Chair Nelson and Supervisors,

Please find attached my public comment regarding Agenda Item #5, the proposed workforce housing development at 117 East Carrillo Street.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

--

Whitney B. Rubison
859.537.5166
[LinkedIn](#)

May 4th, 2026

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item #5: Hearing – Consider Recommendations Regarding A Workforce Housing Development At 117 East Carrillo Street

Dear Chair Nelson and Supervisors,

Santa Barbara's workforce is already voting with its feet. Nurses, teachers, and public servants commute in daily from Ventura and Lompoc because there is nothing here they can afford to live in. The question before the Board is not whether to build housing at 117 East Carrillo Street. It is whether to build housing people will actually stay in.

35% of workers on the South Coast commute more than 50 miles to get to their jobs — twice the statewide average. [1] That is not a commute compatible with raising a family, coaching a little league team, or being home for dinner. It is a commute people endure until they find something better, and then they leave. The County's own State of the Workforce Report confirms that high housing costs are among the primary concerns employers cite when trying to recruit and retain workers here. [2]

So the question before the Board is not just how many units can be built on this site. It is what kind of housing will make workers want to plant roots here, become part of the neighborhood, and build a life in Santa Barbara rather than commute through it.

The proposed unit mix tells the story clearly: 65% one-bedrooms and zero three-bedroom units. A workforce family — two parents, a child — has no place in this building.

One-bedrooms averaging roughly 419 square feet are designed for single occupancy, not for the kind of household stability that drives long-term retention. Workers with families, or who hope to have them, will look at this building and keep looking. Housing that cannot accommodate a family will not create one, and it will not keep the workers Santa Barbara most needs to retain.

Other high-cost communities facing the same pressures have learned this the hard way. Telluride, Colorado, a small resort town not unlike Santa Barbara in character and desirability, made a deliberate choice to build carefully designed, deed-restricted neighborhoods woven into the fabric of the town rather than maximizing unit counts. About one-fifth of Telluride's population now lives in that housing. They stayed, and the

town credits the program with producing a measurably more stable community and stronger local economy. [3] In Jackson, Wyoming, workforce housing was designed with private balconies, shared courtyards, and genuine one- and two-bedroom floor plans, because the developers understood that the goal was community, not just adding maximum density. [4]

117 East Carrillo Street is a once-in-a-generation opportunity in the heart of downtown Santa Barbara. The County's own objectives call for housing that supports recruitment and retention and promotes long-term community benefit. A building with no three-bedroom units and one-bedrooms averaging 419 square feet is not designed for families. It does not meet that bar, however many units it contains.

I urge the Board to reconsider which applicant would hold this project to a higher standard — one that measures success not by unit count, but by whether the people who move in actually choose to stay, because their home invokes a sense of pride and a desire to invest in the long-term success of their community.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Rubison
Santa Barbara Resident

References

[1] Santa Barbara Independent / Santa Barbara Association of Realtors Housing Affordability Study (2022)

<https://www.independent.com/2024/04/12/south-coast-chamber-of-commerce-offers-hope-for-future-workforce-housing/>

[2] Santa Barbara County State of the Workforce Report (2024)

<https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/a7549da3-455e-4654-b038-872690a3d5bf>

[3] Aspen Journalism: 40 Years of Affordable Housing in Aspen/Telluride

<https://aspenjournalism.org/build-and-let-live-40-years-of-affordable-housing-in-aspen/>

[4] The Architect's Newspaper: Workforce Housing in Mountain West Vacation Towns (2026)

<https://www.archpaper.com/2026/02/workforce-housing-projects-affordable-mountain-west-vacation-towns/>