

Sheila de la Guerra

Public Comment

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From: Kenny Smith <kennyminot@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 7, 2025 4:48 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Workforce Housing Study
Attachments: Housing Letter - Kenny Smith.pdf



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I attached my thoughts on the workforce housing study for tomorrow's Board of Supervisors meeting. Hopefully, I squeaked past the deadline, and I hope you will forgive any grammatical mistakes. :)

Thanks,
Kenny Smith
Continuing Lecturer
Writing Program
University of California, Santa Barbara

Kenny Smith
75 ½ Eucalyptus Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93108

County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors:

I wanted to make some observations about the county workforce study. While I'm gratified to see that Santa Barbara county is looking seriously into expanding housing development, I want to note that the workforce housing document doesn't address a couple of important issues. Above all, though, I want to affirm my support of *any* future housing development over other initiatives due the depth of the shortage.

To give you some context, I moved to Santa Barbara about a decade ago for a job as a lecturer at UCSB. The transition has sometimes been difficult for my four-person family, mostly due to the housing shortage. Right now, we're crammed into an extremely small space, which was fine when my boys were starting elementary school. But they are getting older and are looking for my space. Reading through the housing report, emphasis is often placed on smaller units. But if you want people to put down roots in Santa Barbara, you need to have options for what the report describes as the "missing middle. I've seen countless colleagues leave because they can't imagine how they would raise a family without a long commute. We need to start thinking about 3+ bedroom apartments and townhomes to accommodate such residents.

In your response to the housing report, you mentioned some hesitation about the proposal to develop housing in the parking areas of the Administrative and Engineering buildings, partially due to the proposal to put a solar farm in the same space. While you probably can combine both projects to a certain degree, you should prioritize the development of housing for the space. To start with, downtown is an ideal place for an apartment project, as it minimizes the need for additional parking places. Other places exist for solar projects throughout the city. For those of us residents struggling with the lack of housing in the area, I have found it continually frustrating the way other priorities take precedence over development.

The county also needs to create a revenue stream for the creation of affordable workforce housing. Many options exist for that kind of move—such as bonds and a sales tax—but the obvious choice is a vacancy and/or mansion tax. The wealthy are extraordinarily privileged to live in such a beautiful community, and they have a responsibility to invest more in making it a livable space for the rest of our residents.

The bottom line is that we need to build more in the Santa Barbara area. I support development in all the areas listed by the workforce housing study, and I'm hoping you consider going even beyond their suggestions.

Kenny Smith
Continuing Lecturer
Writing Program
University of California, Santa Barbara