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de la Guerra, Sheila **Public Comment**

From: Vijaya <vjinsb@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 3:49 PM
To: sbcob; Williams, Das; Hart, Gregg; Hartmann, Joan; Nelson, Bob; Lavagnino, Steve
Cc: County Executive Office
Subject: Oct. 5 Agenda item D5: Workforce Housing Needs Study
Attachments: 2021-10-06 BOS letter on Workforce Housing Study.docx

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Please find attached comments from the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara on the **Study on Workforce Housing Needs in Santa Barbara County.**

Sincerely,
Vijaya Jammalamadaka (she, her)
President
805-462-7126
Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy
328 E. Carrillo Street, Suite A
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
www.lwvsantabarbara.org



October 4, 2021

TO: Das Williams, First District
Gregg Hart, Second District
Joan Hartmann, Third District
Bob Nelson, Fourth District and Chair
Steve Lavagnino, Fifth District

SUBJECT: Study on Workforce Housing Needs in Santa Barbara County

Chair Nelson and Supervisors:

The League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara (LWVSB) strongly supports the effort by the County to embark on an intensive affordable workforce housing study to research the housing gap, to identify model housing programs, funding opportunities, and financing strategies. With new funding sources and a greater community awareness of the affordable workforce housing crisis, we have a once in a generation opportunity to reverse the trend of skyrocketing housing costs due to a limited supply.

We suggest that for this study you expand your definition of workforce housing which is currently defined as a household making 120% to 200% of the Average Median Income (AMI). The staff report lists examples of the workers with jobs that are “critical to the basic infrastructure of a community – police officers, firefighters, school teachers, restaurant staff, retail clerks, healthcare workers, plumbers, electricians, etc.” who can’t afford to pay market rate rents, but who make less than the low end of the County’s current requirements for workforce housing subsidies. Even if you have two wage earners in a household there are many that would still be under the 120%. Younger police officers, teachers or fire fighters and the majority of County employees and healthcare workers would be considered ‘low income’ (50%-80% AMI) and many restaurant and retail workers would be considered ‘very low income’.

As the staff report states, “the South County region has a disproportionately high share of jobs in the County but has fewer housing opportunities, particularly for lower- and moderate-income residents”. Getting people of all incomes closer to their jobs is better for their mental health, better for our local economy, better for future generations because of greenhouse gas reductions and better for our community’s resilience in disasters.

October 6, 2021

We agree with the report that points out the unique barriers that Black and Hispanic/Latino households have had that prevented homeownership and how that has negatively impacted generations of families. The statistic of Black households being targeted for sub-prime loans has resulted in Black homeownership dropping from a high of 51% in 2004, to 10% today. This is heartbreaking. But we are encouraged to hear that there are improvements in the lending and mortgage industries that are meant to ensure racial equity. We hope that the study will examine those important equity objectives.

We agree with the stakeholders interviewed who recommended higher density and the utilization of public or institutionally owned land for rezoning for residential use. The LWVSB would also like to encourage the County to apply for funding available through the State and Federal Housing agencies.

The LWVSB is very encouraged by the items on the 'Opportunities to Explore' slide including the creative housing programs of limited-equity co-ops, employer housing, a county land trust and the utilization of County-owned property for housing development. We hope that if employers are given incentives to build that will include an affordability aspect as well. Thank you for initiating this very important work!

Please contact Linda Honikman, LWVSB Housing Committee Chair at Housing@LWVSantaBarbara.org if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vijaya Jammalamadaka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vijaya Jammalamadaka, President