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July 7, 2021

Ms. Kristina Owens  
Associate Planner  
City of Escondido  
201 North Broadway  
Escondido, CA 92025  
Submitted via email: [kowens@escondido.org](mailto:kowens@escondido.org)

**Re: Draft 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element**

Dear Ms. Owens:

On behalf of the San Diego Housing Federation, we are writing to provide comments and feedback on the draft 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element for the City of Escondido.

The draft Housing Element contains several actionable items that will help Escondido make progress toward meeting its housing goals. We applaud these components of the draft Housing Element and would like to make some additional recommendations to strengthen the plan's impact on achieving housing goals.

**Implementing State Legislation**

The San Diego Housing Federation was a proud co-sponsor of AB 1486, a bill that strengthened and clarified the state's Surplus Land Act. City implementation of this bill will help the city make progress toward the need for 3,113 low- and very-low income units for the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for the 2021-2029 cycle (p. 84). Identifying unused City-owned sites for housing can help to ensure the City is compliant with the State Surplus Land Act and helps support the development of affordable housing. We encourage Program 1.4 regarding City-owned land (p. 114) to include a provision to update city policies to comply with the Surplus Land Act.

We are pleased to see Program 1.6 to amend the City's zoning ordinance to comply with state law (p. 115). We recommend that the City move quickly to implement AB 1763, a bill we supported which provides a density bonus for developments that are 100 percent affordable, to serve as a tool for building affordable housing. The City should also work to implement AB 2345, a bill we supported that builds on the success of the City of San Diego's Affordable Homes Bonus Program (AHBP) by taking the program statewide. A report by Circulate San Diego, "[Equity and Climate for Homes](#)," found that 63 percent of AHBP projects were located in high and highest resource census tracts, demonstrating the program's role in affirmatively furthering fair housing.

### **Local funding for affordable housing**

The draft Housing Element recognizes the need for funding to build housing that is affordable to low-income individuals and families and that federal and state funding is a critical piece to the resources puzzle. We strongly support Program 2.7 to pursue funding sources for the construction, acquisition and rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing (p. 119). We recommend that the Housing Element specifically include a goal to prioritize funds made available through the Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA), also known as the Building Homes and Jobs Act ([SB 2, 2017](#)), for the development of deed-restricted affordable housing. Maximizing the use of these funds to build housing for extremely low-, very low-, and moderate income households will help the City meet its RHNA obligations. As local gap financing is critical, we also strongly support the City including recycled RDA funds as a local financing source.

### **Affirmatively furthering fair housing and equity**

As noted in the housing element, there are two areas of poverty and racial concentration in Escondido (p. 99). As we know, housing development policies – how much and where new housing can be built – play a role in patterns of segregation within a community.

While Housing Policy 1.1 to expand the stock of all housing (p. 116) is laudable, the constraints created by the City's Proposition S, which requires voter approval of specified future changes to the Escondido General Plan, can hinder the goals of those policies and can play a role in creating exclusion. We recommend that Program 1.7, Monitoring of Growth Management Measure (p. 115) be updated to fully examine the impact of Proposition S on housing production and fair housing goals.

We further recommend that the City work with HCD on AFFH recommendations as they relate specifically to Housing Elements and incorporate those recommendations in the plan.

### **Housing and Climate Change**

Our September 2016 report, "[Location Matters: Affordable Housing and VMT Reduction in San Diego County](#)," found that lower-income households are more likely to live in transit-rich areas, own fewer cars, are likely to live in larger building and smaller units, all factors that make affordable housing near transit a key greenhouse gas reduction strategy. The City's Climate Action Plan calls for pursuing state grants such as the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Grant to support affordable housing near transit (Climate Action Plan, March 2021, p. 3-14). However, the mentions of addressing climate change in the Housing Element are in relation to climate resilient homes and make no mention of dense, deed-restricted affordable housing as a greenhouse gas reduction tool nor pursuing AHSC funds. We urge the City to examine the role of affordable housing in helping the City to meet both its RHNA obligations and its Climate Action Plan goals.

We thank you for consideration of our feedback and comments. We appreciate the time and effort that staff have dedicated to the draft Housing Element document and look forward to supporting Escondido in adopting a robust plan that will help to meet the City's housing goals.

Sincerely,



Laura Nunn  
Chief of Policy & Education