

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA MONICA



P.O. Box 1265 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1265
Phone: 310.564.6946 www.lwvsantamonica.org

#MakingDemocracyWork

OFFICERS October 12, 2021

President
Natalya Zernitskaya

Re: City Council Meeting 10/12/2021- Agenda Item 8A

Vice President, Program
Barbara Inatsugu

Dear Mayor Himmelrich, Mayor Pro Tempore McCowan, and Councilmembers,

Secretary
Sharon Hart

The League believes that all people have a right to safe, decent, and adequate housing. The LWVSM supports a variety of housing types, which maintain the quality of neighborhoods and which promote economic and social diversity within the community.

Treasurer
Karen Carrey

DIRECTORS

Cathie Gentile

Jason Islas

Angela D. Scott

Ann Williams

Santa Monica has been a leader in renter protections and creation of deed-restricted affordable housing. For example, the Preserving Our Diversity (POD) program, the City's anti-tenant harassment laws, and the prohibition on source of income discrimination. Additionally, the City has utilized creative programs to address sources of inequity in our community, such as the new Right to Return Pilot. We understand that the housing crisis is not just a Santa Monica problem, and that municipalities like ours are also struggling with similar challenges and questions, but that just means that we must lead by example and do our fair share in enabling the creation of new homes in our community.

One of the goals of Santa Monica's housing element in the 6th Cycle RHNA process is to "facilitate equitable housing access to all neighborhoods by expanding access to housing opportunities and overcoming patterns of segregation." **The League supports zoning practices and procedures that will counteract racial and economic isolation.**

Unfortunately, the housing element as presented falls short in its efforts to address the city's historical systemic racism in housing. For example, the map of the Suitable Sites Inventory in Appendix F of the Housing Element superimposed on a redlined map of Santa Monica shows that most sites considered for new housing development within the inventory are in formerly red and yellow-lined areas, rather than wealthier and higher-resourced formerly blue-lined areas. Per the housing element, "The high housing cost of single family homes and the single family home restricted zoning on either end of the City functionally restricts racial diversity in these neighborhoods, as shown by the disproportionately White and Asian American populations of the neighborhoods."

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In addition to the City's efforts to streamline and incentivize deed-restricted affordable housing, Santa Monica should also update the housing element to include provisions for more "missing middle" housing. As a result of the recent passage of SB9, there may be some new smaller increases to the number of homes available in areas (formerly) subject to exclusionary zoning.

Whether through the Housing Element or a separate zoning update, **we encourage the City to utilize the provisions in SB10, another recently passed law that allows jurisdictions to pass an ordinance to zone any parcel for up to ten residential units if located in transit-rich and urban infill areas**, as this would be another tool to address missing middle housing. If used in conjunction with other Santa Monica programs to encourage affordable housing, these opportunities could genuinely help affirmatively further fair housing.

In our comments on Item 8A at the June 15, 2021 City Council Meeting on the topic of the housing element, we encouraged the Council to use this opportunity to shape our City into a more inclusive and equitable community by planning for sufficient new housing at all income levels.

We also noted that we must keep a focus on funding and further streamlining the creation of new deed-restricted affordable homes, and **the City should also enable and incentivize the building of a wider variety of homes that would serve to create more housing availability for current and future Santa Monica community members**, which would also improve social and economic mobility among members of communities that have been systematically denied access to well-resourced areas such as ours.

We appreciate all of the work that went into the 2021-2029 Housing Element and the efforts of the Planning staff, volunteer working groups, planning commission, and everyone else who has been tirelessly working on the housing element for Santa Monica. **The LWVSM urges the Council to make the appropriate updates to ensure that the housing element is fully compliant and adequately plans for our 6th Cycle RHNA target of 8,895 new homes.**

Sincerely,
Natalya Zernitskaya
President
League of Women Voters of Santa Monica