



SENT VIA E-MAIL to Mayor Murillo and City Councilmembers; cc: Jessica Metzger

August 2, 2021

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM LWVSB FOR AUGUST 3, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING

Dear Mayor Murillo and City Council Members,

The League of Women Voters Santa Barbara is looking forward to working with the Council and others to seize this moment to 'build back better'. Our new Housing Committee has voted to prioritize the planning of much needed low- and moderate-income housing and to examine how to ensure that affordable housing will go to local residents and workers.

The League believes that now that updated RHNA numbers are final and you have an excellent advisory committee for downtown revitalization, it is important for you as elected leaders to agree on what realistic housing goals should be for our community as a whole. RHNA numbers provide a good target for the number of units but we need, as part of the Housing Element review over the next 18 months, realistic conversations about where to locate the 5000 affordable units that are NOT for above moderate income.

The Economic Feasibility Study to be discussed at Thursday's Planning Commission is designed to focus on construction costs, current rents, developer profits - and how different building sizes and incentives could increase production of more rental units for moderate to middle income households. That is an important part of the equation but does not address equity issues and how to keep younger workers and families from leaving the area. Even if the inclusionary requirement is increased to 15% moderate income, it will not make a dent in what is needed for our workforce.

Next week the Commission will determine whether to provide a 'Community Benefit' designation for 630 Chapala. It appears that staff and the majority of Commission members believe that any type of rental housing (with 10-15% inclusionary housing) is enough of a benefit to increase building heights and, in the future, perhaps justify a larger FAR. We strongly agree with the SB City Housing Authority that those incentives should be saved for buildings with a more significant number of deed-restricted affordable units.

We believe that Santa Barbara can be a leader in finding affordable housing models that serve all incomes with innovative funding avenues and we look forward to those explorations.

Finally, the League agrees with Council member Sneddon's desire to look at our higher density areas block by block to determine what assets need protections, which parcels might be desirable for affordable housing and which empty buildings might be available for residential repurpose. **So, we invite you and the community to join us in a 'Walk and Talk' group that will have casual neighborhood walks and conversations over the next 6 months.**

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

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

Vijaya Jammalamadaka
President, LWVSB