

December 1, 2020

Mayor Pulido and City Council  
City of Santa Ana  
20 Civic Center Plaza  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

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**RE: 19G: Santa Ana General Plan Housing Element Update**

Dear City Councilmembers:

The Kennedy Commission (the Commission), a broad-based coalition of residents and community organizations, advocates for the production of homes affordable for families earning less than \$27,000 annually in Orange County. Formed in 2001, the Commission has successfully partnered and worked with Orange County jurisdictions to create effective housing and land-use policies that have led to the new construction of homes affordable to lower-income working families.

As you are aware, Housing Elements for the 6th cycle planning period (2021-29) are due to the California Department of Housing and Community Development by October 2021. The Commission understands the importance of each city's Housing Element in guiding housing programs, policies, zoning, and funding, as well as in reducing current obstacles to affordable housing development. We also understand the importance of Housing Elements in addressing racial equity in housing, particularly with the new statutory requirements mandating the inclusion of programs that affirmatively further fair housing in 6th cycle Housing Elements.<sup>1</sup> Our work focuses on ensuring that each jurisdiction increases affordable housing opportunities by implementing proven strategies, policies, and incentives that encourage affordable housing development.

Further, the Commission seeks to ensure that jurisdictions engage the public in revising their Housing Elements. Public engagement is a necessary component of the Housing Element process as California Housing Element law states: "The local government shall make a diligent effort to achieve public participation of all economic segments of the community in the development of the housing element..." Broad participation and true engagement of the public increases the likelihood that the community members involved in the discussion and planning processes will support new housing strategies and housing developments. Public engagement should include participation from residents of diverse communities, housing consumers, service providers, and advocates.

As the City embarks upon the 2021-29 Housing Element update, the Commission requests that the City include us in the upcoming Housing Element review and evaluation of the current 5th cycle planning period goals, policies, and accomplishments. The Commission further requests that the City conduct a robust public participation process for the 6th cycle Housing Element update and that it incorporate the Commission, affordable housing advocates, and residents of low-income communities in this process. We believe that you will achieve a stronger Housing Element update through diverse community participation, outreach, and community planning process.

To ensure adequate public participation the Commission recommends the following:

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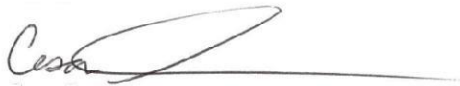
<sup>1</sup> California Government Code § 8899.50 (Assembly Bill 686).



- 1. The City should engage community participation and feedback at all stages of the Housing Element review and update. Participation should not be limited to public hearings.**
- 2. The City should allow for various methods of engagement to encourage public participation. For instance, for members of the public who may not have access to the internet or a computer, or who are unable to use video applications, consistently provide an adequate telephone option – available in multiple languages – and generally ensure that members of the community who lack adequate technology can participate in meetings about the Housing Element review.**
- 3. The City’s public participation and outreach opportunities should be meaningful and create various platforms (for example, virtual, written, workshops, webinars, community meetings, and public hearings) for the engagement of community members who reside in lower-income communities, affordable housing partners, Legal Aid organizations, and advocates.**
- 4. The City should create a diverse Housing Element Working Group to evaluate the current Housing Element policies and accomplishments. This Working Group could help create policies and recommendations for the new Housing Element update to ensure that you meet the housing needs of those who are most vulnerable in the City.**
- 5. The City should include The Commission in any anticipated Housing Element Working Group and provide the opportunity for the Commission to provide its analysis on 5th cycle RHNA progress and be a part of developing policy recommendations on the 6th cycle update.**
- 6. The City should engage community organizations representing and advocating for families and individuals residing in lower-income communities to ensure that members of these communities can directly participate and that the City considers their perspective as part of the evaluation and creation of policies that create affordable housing.**

We would appreciate the City giving us notice of any public meetings regarding the Housing Element. We look forward to working with the City of Santa Ana to encourage effective housing policies that will help create balanced housing development and create much-needed affordable housing in our local communities. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (949) 250-0909 or [cesarc@kennedycommission.org](mailto:cesarc@kennedycommission.org).

Sincerely,



Cesar Covarrubias  
Executive Director