

Council sends resolution and letter to state to dispute low-income housing requirements

The Costa Mesa City Council at a special meeting on Thursday Jan. 9 approved sending a resolution and letter to the California Department of Housing and Community Development that takes exception with the methodology proposed by the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Council to allocate housing requirements to cities for the next eight-year planning period.

The State has allocated 1.34 million new housing units to the Southern California Region with SCAG tasked with developing a methodology to fairly and appropriately distribute the housing allocation to all Southern California jurisdictions.

SCAG adopted a methodology that was not-vetted and there was no opportunity for public review or comments. The impacts from the changed methodology were unknown when it was adopted and the lengthy transparent public process was disregarded by a last minute substitute motion that was not supported by SCAG staff. Based on this last-minute change to an unvetted methodology, Costa Mesa's allocation increased from 4,323 to 11,734 units.

In its resolution, the City is requesting that the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, which is tasked with approving the RHNA methodology, deny the unvetted methodology and, instead, direct SCAG to use the vetted, staff-recommended methodology.

"We strongly support developing a thoughtful plan to address the regional housing shortfall, especially affordable housing

for individuals and families,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “However, the process was flawed and arbitrary. We support the transparent, publicly-vetted process and the proposal that was developed through it. We look forward to working with the state to correct this situation.”

The resolution adopted Thursday makes it clear that the City supports housing development for all economic sectors and fully embraces meeting the community’s fair share of the region’s housing needs.

The modified Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation methodology approved by the SCAG Regional Council potentially compromises the City’s access to critical funding needed to address housing production for all income levels.

The City of Costa Mesa has been a strong advocate for the development of housing, including affordable housing. Costa Mesa has expended significant local resources over the past decade toward addressing housing related issues and has produced over 1,600 new housing units during the current RHNA cycle, far above its assigned allocation. The City also owns and operates multiple low-income housing projects.

In 2019, the Council amended its Goals and Objectives to include the Goal to: “Address Housing Shortages and Homelessness. We will continue our efforts to improve housing and to end homelessness in Costa Mesa using a comprehensive way, addressing the full continuum of housing needs from crisis-shelter to supportive housing to affordable to market rate for all.”

Costa Mesa has not only produced 1,600 new housing units, but has also permanently housed 42 homeless individuals by providing comprehensive wrap around services at its Bridge Shelter at Lighthouse Church.

Only a handful of cities had increases of over 7,000 units above the previously vetted methodology (Costa Mesa,

Huntington Beach, Garden Grove, Westminster, and the City of Los Angeles).