



Office of the City Manager



June 28, 2023

Honorable Michael T. Smyth
Presiding Judge
San Diego County Superior Court
1100 Union Street
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: City of Chula Vista Response to San Diego County Grand Jury Report: “Housing in San Diego County”

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the following specific responses are submitted to you regarding the 2022-2023 Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations pertaining to *Housing in San Diego County*.

Finding 3:

The following cities did not meet their housing allocations for all income categories: Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Coronado, Del Mar, El Cajon, Encinitas, Escondido, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, National City, Oceanside, Poway, San Diego, San Marcos, Santee, Solana Beach and Vista.

Response:

The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) is a process by which the state requires local jurisdictions to plan for the construction of new homes and the affordability of those homes. It is important to note that the role of the local agency is limited to planning for residential development, not the actual construction of residential units. Delivery of residential units is, with few exceptions, the role of private developers.

The City of Chula Vista agrees with the finding, to the extent that it applies to the City of Chula Vista only and recognizes that the construction of residential units is not the sole responsibility of the City.

Finding 5:

Specific plans are useful tools in spurring development, including housing development, and have been used by El Cajon and Chula Vista among others.

Response:

The City of Chula Vista agrees with the finding, to the extent that the City has adopted Specific Plans in the past but cannot speak definitively to the effectiveness of Specific Plans in “spurring development”.

Specific Plans implement the vision of the City's General Plan and typically act as both a policy document and a regulatory document. Development and adoption of a Specific Plan by a City in advance of a development partner may spur development, in that there is greater certainty as to the allowed uses and applicable standards, and the fact that the costs of the Specific Plan drafting and approval stages are avoided by the ultimate developer of the site. This has been the City's experience with our Urban Core Specific Plan, which addresses the redevelopment of approximately 690 gross acres within the City's western core and provides for the construction of 7,100 additional multifamily residential units.

Recommendation 23-01

Consider, if they have not done so, using specific plans (as defined by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research) to facilitate the permitting and development of housing, particularly affordable housing, in their jurisdictions.

Response:

The City of Chula Vista partially supports this recommendation. The City of Chula Vista has adopted several Specific Plans, including the Bayfront Specific Plan, the Otay River Business Park Specific Plan, the Palomar Gateway District Specific Plan, and the Urban Core Specific Plan, as discussed in City's response to Finding 5.

While California as a whole is struggling to provide sufficient housing, it is important to recognize Chula Vista's historic and continuing role as a key provider of residential development in the San Diego region. The City's success in this arena has come at the cost of non-residential development, resulting in a significant jobs-housing imbalance. The City may consider adopting additional Specific Plans in the future; however, such plans would be more appropriately focused on non-residential development in an effort to bring greater balance to our community and address regional environmental and financial inequities.

Recommendation 23-02

Consider working with school districts and community college districts within their jurisdictions to identify developable land for housing owned by districts within their boundaries.

Response:

The City of Chula Vista supports this recommendation. We are currently working with a developer to deliver housing on a site formerly owned by a school district and are working with Southwestern College to better understand how student housing and other opportunities for affordable family housing could be delivered on their campus.

Recommendation 23-03

Consider working with local religious institutions within their jurisdictions to identify land developable for housing, particularly affordable housing.

Response:

The City of Chula Vista supports this recommendation. We are currently working with an affordable housing developer on the financing and construction of a

permanent supportive housing project on a site that was previously owned by a religious institution (this particular institution elected to work with an affordable housing developer to develop a portion of their site). We also regularly meet with religious institutions who are interested in undertaking such a project and will continue to do so in the future.

Recommendation 23-04 **Consider drafting revenue-generating legislation at the jurisdiction level, if feasible and legal e.g., the Seattle Jumpstart Tax. Monies generated by such a tax to fund or assist in funding the construction of housing, particularly affordable housing.**

Response: The City of Chula Vista does not support this recommendation. Pursuant to Article XIII C of the California Constitution, all local taxes must be approved by a vote of the electorate and cannot be imposed by local legislative action alone. Further, if such a tax were approved by the voters, it would put the City at a further competitive disadvantage in addressing the existing jobs-housing imbalance described in City's response to Recommendation 23-01.

Recommendation 23-05 **Consider providing legislative support to re-introduce in the State Legislature SB1105, or similar legislation, to create a San Diego County agency that could raise revenue for housing.**

Response: The City of Chula Vista does not support this recommendation. While the City recognizes the critical role of government in subsidizing the delivery of housing and supports the development of new funding tools and mechanisms for same, existing governmental systems are sufficient. A new agency would add unnecessary bureaucracy.

Recommendation 23-06 **Consider providing legislative support to SB4, which is currently before the legislature. This bill makes it easier to provide housing on land owned by religious institutions.**

Response: The City of Chula Vista does not support this recommendation. A guiding principle of the City's adopted Legislative Platform is the maintenance of local control, including a policy of opposing measures that seek to preempt local control without the concurrence of the City. SB4 is just such a measure. It is also worth noting that SB4 allows for by right development of housing on land owned by independent institutions of higher education (nonprofit, private colleges), in addition to land owned by religious institutions. The compatibility of residential uses must be analyzed on a site-by-site basis and attempts from the state to preempt local zoning cannot be supported by the City.

Recommendation 23-09

Continue to work with the Metropolitan Transit District to identify land suitable for development of housing, particularly affordable housing, at major transit stops including trolley and bus lines as appropriate.

Response:

The City of Chula Vista supports this recommendation. The City is currently partnering with the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (“MTS”) in the development of a 10-acre site (includes the E Street trolley station and an adjacent City owned property), into a mixed-use, transit-oriented project incorporating a mix of land uses, including affordable and market rate housing. A request for proposals was issued in 2019, a developer has been selected, and the parties have entered into an exclusive negotiating agreement. The Palomar Street trolley station has also been identified for future residential development by MTS, and the City looks forward to working with them on this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any additional information I can provide regarding this Grand Jury response.

Sincerely,



Maria V. Kachadoorian
City Manager