

Position of the Ventura Social Services Task Force as to any
Residential Allocation Program for the City of Ventura

On April 13, 2015, the Ventura City Council directed staff to prepare a draft Residential Allocation Program (RAP) in order to:

1. Provide the City Council authority and discretion over the housing types, pace of growth, and quality of residential development;
2. Provide thoughtful allocation of limited City resources and services, such as water, land, sewer, and transportation, to ensure that high priority residential projects are developed in appropriate areas of the City; and
3. Ensure a range of housing types that accommodate all income levels, from executive estates to affordable housing units.

As a body whose mission is to end homelessness in the City of Ventura, the Ventura Social Services Task Force has taken the following position on the RAP:

Homelessness exists in our community primarily because many people who live here cannot afford the housing that exists. The City's own Housing Element points out the desperate need for housing that Ventura's extremely low-income (ELI) households (those with incomes 30% or less than the area median income) can afford.

During the period of 2005-2009, an average of 5,690 ELI households resided in Ventura, representing 14.9% of the total households. 72.1% of ELI households faced housing problems (defined as cost burden greater than 30% of income and/or overcrowding and/or without complete kitchen or plumbing facilities). Additionally 58.8% of ELI households paid more than 50 percent of their income toward housing costs, compared to 16.9% of all Ventura households. (*2014-2021 Housing Element Technical Report, page 2-8*)

The Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing for Ventura County issued in March of 2015 makes clear that the percent of households with housing burdens has increased since the City issued its Housing Element. By 2011 there were 5,923 ELI households, and 77.9% of them [≈ 4,606] faced housing problems; 62.4% [≈ 3,695] of them faced severe problems, paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing.

The Analysis of Impediments reports housing burdens nearly as severe for Ventura's 5,028 very low-income households (those with incomes 31-50% of area median income). It states that 76.6% of them [≈3,852] faced housing problems in 2011, and 43.5% [≈ 2,187] faced severe problems, paying more than 50% of their income for housing.

An additional 17.8% of households [7,160] had incomes 51-80% of the area median, and 23.2% of them [1,661] paid over 50% of their income for housing.

The Housing Element recognizes the relationship between homelessness and the housing problems faced by these 18,000 plus low-income households, saying:

Many of these are working families with wage earners in low-paying occupations, including retail workers, service workers and farm laborers. Because of their limited income, over half of the city's lower-income households overpay for housing. Therefore, a significant portion of these residents may not be able to afford their housing costs. (*Housing Element*, p. 15)

The housing burden has continued to increase because the cost of housing has risen far faster than wages. Speaking in March 2015, Dawn Dyer, president of the real estate analysis firm Dyer Sheehan Group Inc., stated:

“Over the past year, market rents have skyrocketed,” . . . “We have an extremely low vacancy rate. In the city of Ventura, it is 1.86 percent; average rents in the city of Ventura went up 7 percent (\$100/month), from 2014 to 2015. For one-bedroom apartments, prices jumped 9 percent in a year. On the macro level, a 5 percent [vacancy rate] represents equilibrium in the market — adequate choice for renters, yet strong economics for building owners. . . . With a market-wide vacancy rate of less than 2 percent, many buildings are 100 percent full, and people seeking housing find that there is nothing to rent. When the market is this tight, rents rise. It's basic supply/demand economics!” (Quoted in *Ventura County Reporter* “It's a Numbers Game”, by Michael Sullivan, 04/09/2015)

One of the primary providers of affordable housing is the City of San Buenaventura Housing Authority. However, there is such a demand for affordable housing that, “[w]ith a wait list of more than 9,000, the average wait for either a [Housing Authority] unit or voucher is five to seven years.” (“Some Ventura homeless families with young children to get priority for public housing,” *VC Star*, by Arlene Martinez, Feb. 5, 2015.)

There is a critical need for housing that extremely low-, very low-, and low-income households can afford, and the Housing Element acknowledges that the City can influence the creation of housing that matches the needs of the community. It states, “the City can take a proactive role in promoting the development of affordable housing necessary to support the local workforce.” (*Housing Element* p. 15) The Housing Element calls for “streamlined permit processing and reduced fees” for affordable housing, development incentives to reduce housing costs, and an efficient planning process to encourage housing production and affordability. (*Housing Element*, p. 8)

The City, through its Housing Element, even set affordable housing objectives for the period 2012-2020, saying:

The City will provide financial and regulatory incentives (such as land assembly and write-downs, regulatory concessions/incentives, and direct financial assistance) throughout the planning period to non-profits, private developers, and public agencies to increase the supply of housing affordable to Ventura's lower-income workforce. The City will target a portion of local financial resources towards projects that meet the needs of very low- and low-income renters, including large families and agricultural workers. (*Housing Element* p. 15)

Any RAP developed for the City of Ventura should ensure that these objectives are met and that the housing the city's residents so desperately need is built before scarce land resources are gone. As the

chart below demonstrates, home building from 2006 to the present has not corresponded to Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers. Though the RHNA specifies that 430 units of extremely affordable housing are needed, none have been built, and none are among the pending projects listed on the City’s website. In contrast, although RHNA numbers indicate just 41.5% of new housing units were needed in a price range accessible only to high income households (those with incomes greater than 120% of the Area Median Income), 83.66% of all units built from 2006-2013 were priced in that range. Of the current and pending projects listed on the City’s website, 90.87% are priced for these high-income households.

Clearly the City will need to be proactive if it is to meet its RHNA obligations. Therefore, any RAP for the City should specifically detail steps the City will take to ensure that the City will meet its RHNA, as required by state housing element law. Because construction since 2006 has not matched RHNA numbers, 52.99% of the housing units called for by RHNA numbers but not yet built will need to be affordable: 18.2% of them at the extremely low income level, 13.16% at the very low income level, and 21.63% at the low income level.

Homes Built or Pending in Ventura Do Not Match Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)								
Affordability	RHNA Allocation	Percent of City’s RHNA Allocation	Homes built between 2006-2013	Percent of homes built 2006-2013	Currently on pending projects list	Current pending projects as percentage	RHNA Units Remaining	Remaining units of RHNA as percentage of all
Extremely Low 0-30% Area Median Income	430	11.70%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	430	18.20%
Very Low 31-50% AMI	431	11.70%	120	9.30%	50	1.30%	261	13.16%
Low 51-80% AMI	591	16.60%	80	6.20%	0	0.00%	511	21.63%
Moderate 80-120% AMI	673	18.50%	11	0.85%	300	7.82%	362	28.02%
Above Moderate/Market Rate > 120% AMI	1529	41.50%	1080	83.66%	3485	90.87%	449	19.00%
Total	3654	100%	1291	100.00%	3835	100.00%	2,013	100.00%

Sources: column 2 - 2014-2021 Housing Element; column 4 - Jeff Lambert in report to City Council August 11, 2014; column 6 - cityofventura.net/cd/planning/pendingprojects

The Ventura City Council has endorsed the national best practice of Housing First, which is at the heart of “Recalibrating for Results: A Five Year Evaluation and Update of the 2007-2017 County of Ventura 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness” issued in 2013. The lack of extremely affordable housing has made it impossible for the various agencies working to end homelessness to effectively implement Housing First. However, if the 430 units of very low income housing in the RHNA are built, with 56% of them, or 240 units being permanent supportive housing, we will end homelessness in the City of Ventura. The 240 units of permanent supportive housing are needed because a shocking 56% of those who are homeless in Ventura are chronically homeless, meaning they have a disabling condition and have been continuously homeless for a year or more or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. This percentage of chronically homeless is far above the national average of 18%.

The disparity is directly attributable to the lack of affordable housing in the City, and any Residential Allocation Program should address that need in a manner that complies with state and federal fair housing law.

Ending homelessness and having very affordable housing are good for all of us. The Orange County Register pointed out in May of this year a number of issues that are equally applicable to the City of Ventura:

The affordable housing shortage . . . not only threatens our community's sense of fairness, it also threatens economic development here Businesses can't attract and retain workers when those workers can't afford to live in the communities where they work. . . . For every \$500 million spent on affordable housing, an estimated 29,000 jobs would also be created. ("Affordable housing key to county's economic success," May 29, 2015.)

For all of these reasons, it is the position of the Ventura Social Services Task Force that The City of Ventura's Housing Allocation Program should:

1. Exempt affordable housing from allocation restrictions;
2. Comply with the State's Housing Accountability Act (Government Code §65589.5);
3. Include a plan to entice and assist developers to build the number of housing units specified in the RHNA at extremely low, very low, and low income affordability rates; and
4. Include a plan for Permanent Supportive Housing for disabled (mentally, physically, or developmentally) chronically homeless citizens of the community who are on extremely low, fixed incomes.