



September 27, 2023

Mayor Karen Bass
Los Angeles City Council President
200 North Spring Street, Suite 470
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Mayor Bass:

This letter reflects our extreme disappointment with how our communities have ultimately been cynically sidelined in their sincere attempts to partner with the city on solving the housing issue, based on your recommendations to us to be part of the solution and your public accolades of the Sherman Oaks Housing Study that informed our studies.

Sadly, we have been left to conclude that the city has in fact been acting in bad faith for the entire year of supposed partnership with our coalition's community groups. You were quoted saying, "We must all have skin in the game... and given that how do you deal with it in your community."

How Los Angeles City Community Groups Have Partnered with the City

In good faith, we organized 30+ community groups from across the city following your guidance and collaborated with their residents to focus on thoughtful solutions at the neighborhood level. These groups ensured that their approaches satisfied all the key parameters that were laid out in detailed analyses and proposals:

- Housing Element map-level solutions developed by fully involved community members across the city
- Our proposed solutions added all required housing that:
 - Eliminated the need to densify and disrupt existing residential neighborhoods
 - Satisfied state-mandated RHNA requirements entirely in state-designated Highest Resource areas
 - Fully addressed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing goals and objectives

In the spirit of community cooperation and problem solving, we provided these fully documented solutions to Council members, senior Planning staff, and your own advisors.

What was the outcome of that "Partnership"?

After one year of all this community planning and involvement, this is sadly where we are today:

- The Planning staff has effectively terminated their discussions with our community groups.
- The Planning department has **falsely** asserted that the state requires densification of residential neighborhoods, i.e., single-family neighborhoods per code # 65583.2(h)



- We have been told by Planning and Council members to simply wait until the planning maps are published without any indication as to how our proposals will be included, if at all, while deadlines are fast approaching.
- Council member Nithya Raman has publicly declared council's hands are tied because State law requires the densification of our neighborhoods. There is no such State law.

The reality of the City's unsupported assertions and intentions

There is absolutely no data supporting the need to densify single-family neighborhoods. While RHNA is predicated on affordable housing, there is absolutely no linkage of densifying single-family neighborhoods to provide significant amounts of affordable housing. In fact, the small size of the parcels in single-family neighborhoods makes the achievement of ANY affordable housing through densification highly unlikely. Moreover, the infrastructure capacity of single-family neighborhoods is unsuitable for densification, especially compared to commercial corridors.

The simple city code fix

State law allows low income and very low-income housing to be built on commercial corridors if they allow 100% residential use and 50% of the floor area of mixed-use is residential. LA allows 100% residential on the corridor but a simple code change making sure that 50% of FAR in mixed-use residential is required. A requirement that is already met by most developers and complies with SB167, the Housing Affordability Act.

Will you make that code change? A simple code change that would allow needed affordable housing to be built in areas that can produce significant amounts of housing – our commercial corridors and protect single-family neighborhoods?

Destroying housing to build new housing makes no sense.

What the neighborhoods are being left to conclude

The city's actions and current position clearly indicate that the community has been misled for the entire duration of our engagement. The City's chosen path is actually an OBSTACLE to creating affordable housing. We now realize that the city had a non-fact-based discretionary policy to densify the city's residential neighborhoods. The City is now openly slow walking our researched suggestions with a simple strategy to run out the clock on the Housing Element and implement its arbitrary plan.

Meanwhile, the community has had enough of the special access that special-interest groups like Abundant Housing have had on this issue.



It is now clear that City policy is purely vindictive and based on some overarching political calculus that has absolutely no relationship to RHNA housing issues. The city has demonstrated no interest in adopting solutions that make everyone a winner. The city has spent zero effort in addressing the core-limiting factor for affordable housing which is the byzantine financing process that trips up almost all affordable housing projects.

Next Steps

We do not consider this a done deal. Our 30,000+ members are angry – as demonstrated by the Ethel Project debacle that was caused by poor review by the Planning Department that allowed a perfectly acceptable 100% affordable project to be built in a single-family neighborhood instead of a block away on a commercial corridor.

Although your Executive Directive 1 has been amended, several mid-rise projects in single-family neighborhoods that must be allowed shows the lack of careful and thoughtful legal review that the city continuously fails to do. Our communities are angry and galvanized and this Ethel project crystallizes in our minds the future impacts on our residential neighborhoods that the Housing Element will create. The City and You have violated our trust by not being transparent. The Planning Department conducts public outreach programs without ever showing the rezoning maps and explaining their impacts on communities. And you have never mentioned the proposed rezoning of our residential neighborhoods in press conferences or newsletters.

We hope that you will contact us and engage with our communities as the unified group we have become before it is too late, and the Housing Element is implemented.

Sincerely,

Maria Pavlou Kalban
Chair

Cindy Chvatal-Keane
Vice-Chair