



September 10, 2024

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Receive and File a Presentation on the Survey Results Conducted as Part of Phases 2 and 3 of the Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan Project; and Acknowledge the Leadership Provided by the County's Farmworker Resources Program from the Human Services Agency while Surveying Ventura County Farmworkers.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- 1. RECEIVE AND FILE** a presentation on the survey results conducted as part of Phases 2 and 3 of the Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan (Exhibits 1 and 2).
- 2. ACKNOWLEDGE** the leadership provided by the County's Farmworker Resources Program from the Human Services Agency while surveying Ventura County farmworkers.

FISCAL IMPACTS/MANDATES:

Mandated:	No
Source of Funding:	General Fund, State LEAP Grant, funding provided by all ten Ventura County cities and the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC)
Funding Match Required:	None
Impact on Other Departments:	None

There are no additional County costs associated with this Board action at this time. Additionally, there are sufficient appropriations in the FY 2024-25 Planning Division Budget to initiate future phases with this project.

Current FY 2024-25 Budget Projection for RMA Planning - Division 2910				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Actual	Estimated Savings/Deficit
Appropriations	\$ 10,249,870	\$ 11,415,833	\$ 11,415,833	\$ -
Revenue	\$ 4,466,653	\$ 4,466,653	\$ 4,466,653	\$ -
Net Cost	\$ 5,783,217	\$ 6,949,180	\$ 6,949,180	\$ -

Strategic Plan:

This project supports the County Strategic Plan Priority – *Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability* because the completed Study and Action Plan will facilitate the development of much needed farmworker housing and will ensure it is available to a vast array of farmworkers countywide along with the required social services for the community, while preserving our agricultural land and natural environment. The program also supports Strategic Plan Priority – *Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality* by increasing the workforce housing that will sustain the County's agricultural industries and local economy.

DISCUSSION:

On October 12, 2021, your Board adopted the County of Ventura 2021-2029 Housing Element, which was later certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) on December 22, 2021¹. During the Housing Element update process, a need for an updated countywide study to provide an overview of the housing needs of farmworkers based on current Ventura agricultural trends and demographics was identified. The Housing Element includes the following Program HE-E:

"The County, working with advocacy groups, agricultural organizations and Ventura County cities, will: (1) take on a coordinating role to seek funding for, and to implement, a countywide survey of farmworkers, employers, and housing providers to further define housing conditions, needs and barriers to farmworker housing; and, (2) utilize the survey results to develop targeted programs and strategies to address the identified housing needs of farmworkers and to support agricultural businesses with a stable and healthy workforce.

In implementing this program, the County shall strive to affirmatively further fair housing by providing housing opportunities (farmworker units or complexes) under the County's RHNA obligation and for both County and cities to provide services for the farmworker population throughout the County."

¹ County of Ventura 2021-2029 Housing Element, available at <https://vcrma.org/housing-element-update>

Overall, the Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan will be instrumental in assisting cities and the County to identify the housing needs of farmworkers in their respective jurisdictions and better align local ordinances with the intent of Government Code section 65583(a), which identifies farmworkers as having special housing needs that warrant additional consideration.

Project Background and Status:

The County's Planning Division, in partnership with the local nonprofit *House Farm Workers!*, commenced work on the project in Fall 2021, outlining the following five phases for this multi-year project and launched a project website²:

- Phase 1: Advisory Council Formation
- Phase 2: Farmworker Housing Survey Design
- Phase 3: Survey Implementation and Results Summary Report
- Phase 4: Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan
- Phase 5: Community engagement in implementing the Action Plan

The Planning Division previously provided an overview of this project to your Board on January 9, 2024³. Detailed information regarding this project is also available on the Planning Division website at <https://vcrma.org/en/vc-farmworker-housing-study> in English and Spanish.

For Phase 1 (from November 2021 to October 2022), County Planning Staff and *House Farm Workers!* collaborated in convening a 40-member Advisory Council. This Advisory Council included key stakeholders and agency staff representing local cities, transportation, agriculture, nonprofit organizations, healthcare groups, small and large agricultural employers, housing advocacy groups, affordable housing developers, and farmworkers; and circulated a request for proposals for a survey consultant to conduct the survey of farmworkers, stakeholders, and employers in Ventura County (Phases 2 and 3) in February 2022. A joint consultant team was selected to complete these two phases, which included BAE Urban Economics, the County's Farmworker Resource Program from the Human Services Agency, together with Gabrielle Vignone from *House Farm Workers!* as Project Manager.

Phases 2 and 3 were completed from November 2022 to August 2024. In these phases, the Planning Division, along with *House Farm Workers!*, the selected consultant team, and with guidance from the Advisory Council, developed a survey methodology, a communications plan for surveying the County's farmworkers and agricultural employers, and designed the farmworker and employer surveys (including translations). While BAE conducted one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders and an online survey of the

² Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan, Project page, available at <https://vcrma.org/vc-farmworker-housing-study>

³ Board of Supervisors hearing packet from January 9, 2024, Item 29, available at this link: <https://ventura.primegov.com/portal/item?id=263319>

County's agricultural employers, staff from the Farmworker Resource Program administered a lengthy, six-month countywide survey of the farmworkers in the county.

These two phases were funded by the Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) grant funds awarded to the Planning Division, proportional contributions from all ten Ventura County cities, and the County's General Fund. Overall, Phase 3 included implementation of 40 employer surveys, 417 farmworker surveys, and 11 stakeholder interviews which gathered input on the County's housing and community needs.

In addition, a farmworker focus group outreach meeting was conducted in October 2023 with additional funding received from the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). This focus group meeting gathered responses on additional questions related to housing, transportation and social services from 34 farmworkers from diverse areas throughout the County. BAE prepared a summary report highlighting the major findings of the survey efforts as well as a presentation which will be distributed to all cities for presentation at their city councils, and which will be provided to VCTC, the Advisory Council and other stakeholders for collective use for community education and outreach efforts, commencing with your Board and continuing during the remainder of 2024 (See Exhibits 1 and 2). Additionally, the Executive Summary section of the summary report was translated into Spanish, along with the presentation, which will be available on the project website as well. These documents are included as Exhibits 3 and 4 respectively.

Role of Farmworker Resources Program in Phases 2 and 3:

The County's Farmworker Resources Program (FRP), a section of the County's Human Services Agency, was critical in the success of these two phases. While creating a consultant team for Phases 2 and 3, the Project Coordination Committee was aware that the farmworker survey effort was highly dependent on utilizing a survey partner who was able to establish trust and have strong connections with the County's farmworker community. Since their inception in Fall 2018, the FRP staff have been able to build trust with this vulnerable population, and through this long-standing relationship, promote and enhance the agricultural industry in Ventura County.

By joining the project team for these phases, FRP staff provided their keen expertise and insight, contributing to BAE's initial and final design of the farmworker survey questions. After the survey was initially developed, FRP staff pre-tested administering several versions of the survey questions in five languages that are spoken by the Ventura County farmworker community (i.e., Spanish, Mixteco, Purepecha, Zapoteco, and English). As a result of the pre-testing, FRP's suggested refinements not only assisted in rewording the questions, but also provided insight on improving the efficiency of the survey and making its administration easier.

FRP staff were also critical in providing outreach to farmworkers, by posting flyers on their Facebook page, and creating engaging, informational videos along with the Project Coordination Committee about the farmworker survey in all five languages. Finally, FRP

staff implemented the farmworker survey from April through September 2023, in a one-on-one interview format, and provided options for the participating farmworker to respond in any of the five languages. As a result, the target of 400 farmworker surveys set by the survey methodology was exceeded, and BAE was able to create a complete summary of the County's farmworkers.

In addition, FRP staff (along with staff from the Health Care Agency) attended the farmworker focus group meeting in October 2023, where they provided verbal assistance in the four indigenous languages, allowing the participating farmworkers to engage in a meaningful manner. The Planning Division is grateful for the involvement and dedication from the FRP staff for this project.

Next Steps – Phases 4 and 5:

The County's Planning Division and House Farm Workers! jointly applied for, and were awarded, \$499,991 in grant funding through Southern California Association of Government's Sustainable Communities Program – Civic Engagement, Equity, and Environmental Justice (SCP CEEJ) grant, funded through the California Regional Early Action Planning Grant Program of 2021 (REAP 2.0). The grant includes funding solely for a consultant team and tasks completed by the co-applicant (*House Farm Workers!*). Details regarding this grant were included in the January 9, 2024 Board of Supervisors packet related to the grant approval. The Governor's proposed budget cuts in January 2024 delayed the initiation of these phases; however, the budget has recently been re-instated.

Phases 4 and 5 are anticipated to be initiated by Fall 2024 and completed by early 2026. These phases include the development of a **Countywide Farmworker Housing Study** and an **Action Plan**, which will be completed by the consultant team along with the co-applicant *House Farm Workers!*. These tasks are anticipated to be completed by conducting a robust community engagement, including coordination with all cities in the County and community partners; farmworker/youth community engagement; and a countywide event to discuss the draft Action Plan with all jurisdictions, stakeholders, farmworkers, and interested parties. In addition, this task includes meetings conducted throughout the project with the 40-member Advisory Council to initiate implementation of the Action Plan.

Upon the completion of Phases 4 and 5, the final Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors. At that time, staff will also be recommending that the Study and Action Plan be presented to decision makers for all cities within Ventura County, as implementation of the policies/programs in the Action Plan will encourage the cities/County to take action to facilitate development of farmworker housing countywide.

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This letter was reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel's Office. If you have any questions regarding this item, please contact me at (805) 654-2481, or Ruchita Kadakia, Housing and State Mandates Planning Manager, at (805) 654-2414 or via email at Ruchita.Kadakia@ventura.org.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Curb for Dave Ward". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Ward, AICP, Director
Ventura County Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit 1: Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study Phase 2 and 3 Report: Survey of the County's Agricultural Employers, Farmworkers, and Stakeholders; prepared by BAE Urban Economics, dated August 2024
- Exhibit 2: Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study Phase 2 and 3: Survey Results Summary Presentation
- Exhibit 3: Executive Summary section of the Phase 2 and 3 Report in Spanish
- Exhibit 4: Phase 2 and 3 Survey Results Summary Presentation in Spanish