



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF VENTURA**

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July 23, 2019

Mr. Kome Ajise
Executive Director
Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
818 West 7th Street, 12th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Subject: SCAG Region 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

Dear Mr. Ajise:

I am writing on behalf of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to share with you that housing production and affordability remains a critical priority for our County. As such, our Board continues to actively pursue methods for promoting and funding housing, consistent with our certified Housing Element. However, the other reality is that much of the unincorporated area of Ventura County is agrarian and protected for the purposes of farming and growing crops. These local constraints were described in detail in the Local Planning Factors Survey submitted to your office on April 30, 2019.

Pursuant to California Government Code section 65584.04, fourteen local planning factors were included in the survey covering a range of planning opportunities and constraints. It's our understanding that SCAG is required to review and consider each of these factors in the development of a proposed RHNA methodology that will ultimately determine each jurisdiction's RHNA allocation. For this reason, our Board wanted to highlight two local planning factors that remain very relevant to Ventura County and long-established land-use policies to preserve agricultural land.

Consistent with the local planning factor cited in California Government Code section 65584.04 (e)(4), the County and the cities in Ventura County have protected open space and agricultural resources through adoption of policies contained in a document called the Guidelines for Orderly Development (Guidelines). These Guidelines have been in place for the past 50 years and consist of policies that direct growth toward the incorporated areas and discourage urban development within agricultural and open space areas of the

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unincorporated County. Under the Guidelines for Orderly Development, proposed urban development within the spheres of influence of a city would be required to annex to the adjacent city to receive municipal services, rather than forming new, or expanding existing County service areas.

Consistency with these Guidelines has been incorporated into the County's General Plan. In concert with other measures intended to prevent urban sprawl and maintain the economic vitality of the County's agricultural industry, these Guidelines have resulted in the successful preservation of agricultural land, including farmland designated as prime, of statewide importance, and locally important by the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Indeed, farmland in the Oxnard Plain has some of the deepest and richest topsoil in the world. Ventura County produce is exported world-wide and the agricultural industry is one of our County's largest economic sectors.

In addition, consistent with the local planning factors cited in California Government Code section 65584.04 (e)(2)(C) and 65584.04 (2) (D), Ventura County voters passed the Save Open-Space and Agriculture Resources (SOAR) measure in 1998 and again as an initiative in 2016. This local ballot initiative protects farmland from urban development through 2050 by prohibiting conversion to non-agricultural land use designations without a vote of the electorate.

These two local planning factors highlight the County's emphasis on protecting agricultural resources for future generations. Our Board urges SCAG staff to weight them appropriately in the development of the RHNA methodology. Ventura County continues to make steady progress toward meeting assigned RHNA targets and remains committed to adopting programs to facilitate and promote new housing to the extent feasible given our constraints. In addition, the County remains an active participant in developing regional solutions and has partnered on projects for housing people who are homeless, farmworkers, and other vulnerable populations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the development of the 6th cycle RHNA methodology.

Sincerely,

Steve Bennett, Chair
Ventura County Board of Supervisors