

COMMENTARY

Editorials, letters, columns and other opinions

How to Build Momentum on Housing Policies



COMMENTARY

Lori Holt-Pfeiler



COMMENTARY

Mary Lydon

Housing First is known as a homelessness strategy where permanent, affordable housing is built as quickly as possible to stabilize the situation. We need to expand this strategy beyond the homeless community as the housing affordability situation is also at crisis proportions.

In December 2017 median home price in San Diego County was \$540,000, which is almost three times the national average.

San Diego County median income for a family of four is \$72,750, which is only slightly above the national average and does not come close to affording median home price.

From 1980 to 2010 average construction permit activity in San Diego County was 15,000 new homes per year. Since 2011 permit activity has dropped to about 7,500. A **San Diego Housing Commission** study in 2017 revealed that we need to be building 17,000 to 24,000 new homes per year for the next 10 years to address our current shortage and keep up with our region's growth.

It may seem that our housing crisis is not likely to improve unless drastic action is taken. But if we are smart, work together, and take reasonable action with a sense of urgency, we can return to the days of delivering affordable homes to meet the needs of current residents and our children.

The **Housing You Matters Coalition** continues to grow a broad-based, non-partisan alignment in our region comprised of citizens, businesses, environmentalists, labor unions, social service agencies, the health care industry and elected officials. There is government alignment as well, both locally and statewide, and thankfully actions are starting to move into place.

Some Signs of Alignment

The City of San Diego, for example, has adopted policies making it easier to build a granny flat and develop middle-income housing near transit.

There were several key bills at the state level that passed in 2017.

State Senator **Toni Atkins'** \$2.25 million permanent affordable housing fund which is supported by a new \$75 real estate transfer fee.

State Senator **Jim Beall's** \$4 billion bond for affordable housing for low income families and veterans. The statewide bond proposal will be on the ballot in November, and we must work together to support this.

Assembly Bill 1637, authored by Assemblymember **Todd Gloria**, known as the Missing Middle Housing Act, authorizes the San Diego Housing Commission to provide gap financing for mixed-income housing projects.

Keep Focus on Housing

Entering into this conversation is whether housing should be used to also solve our regional and national social issues. There is no doubt we see policies, regulations, and economic forces across our country that are increasing the gap between haves and have nots. Although exceedingly important, trying to solve all issues on the back of housing can slow important first steps. We must strike the right balance and not lose focus. Without a strong economy and an adequate supply of homes, haves and have nots both lose.

Here are a few more solution-oriented ideas for consideration:

— Refrain from changing zoning from residential to commercial. Such a project in Lakeside was recently approved, and this makes absolutely no sense during a housing crisis.

— Create transit-oriented developments at all trolley stations, both on publicly owned land at the stations and in the adjoining neighborhoods. This strategy is a part of **San Diego Association of Governments'** Smart Growth Concept Map established in 2006 and agreed to by all the mayors in San Diego County. Since we all agree, let's get this done.

— Expedite building out our already approved general plans and community plans, preferably at the upper end of allowable density ranges. Having already gone through community vetting, these units are low hanging fruit. According to the Regional Housing Needs Assessment reports created by our region's 18 cities and County of San Diego, we have enough zoned land to meet our growing needs. But having the capacity is not enough, last year Sacramento passed SB 35 which holds cities accountable to deliver the housing they need. If cities drag their feet in permitting new home construction the state can step in and streamline the permitting process for the homebuilder.

— Figure out how to allow micro units, tiny homes, and modular construction. Many advocates are driven by social service providers, churches, community activists and leaders who are looking at innovative and cost effective new ways to build smaller homes for seniors, essential workers, students and other lower income sectors of our population. These small units don't currently have policies in place that allow them. Austin, Portland, and Seattle have figured out how to do this, and so can we.

— Reduce the need for parking at our homes, our jobs, and shopping. This strategy helps to lower parking requirements in new developments. Parking is one of the biggest barriers to building affordable multifamily homes. This strategy might seem future oriented, but many experts agree that the future is a lot closer than we're imagining. Getting people out of their cars will reduce air pollution and turning parking lots into homes and other community serving benefits will add to the overall quality of people's lives.

Let's keep our eye on the goal of increasing housing supply for all income levels by working together to provide a future for San Diego that is economically strong so all can prosper. We can do this San Diego.

Lori Holt-Pfeiler is chair of the Housing You Matters Coalition. Mary Lydon is the executive director.

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

4909 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite 200
San Diego, CA 92123
858-277-6359 • Fax 858-277-6398
Email: sdbj@sdbj.com • www.sdbj.com

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER

Huntley Paton hpaton@sdbj.com • 858-277-2914

PUBLISHER EMERITUS

Armon Mills amills@sdbj.com • 858-277-6795

EDITORIAL

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Nels Jensen njensen@sdbj.com • 858-277-6897

Managing Editor

Vik Jolly vjolly@sdbj.com • 858-634-4623

Copy Editor

Steve J. Adamek sadamek@sdbj.com • 858-277-6591

Reporters

Sarah de Crescenzo sarahd@sdbj.com • 858-277-6971

Brad Graves bradg@sdbj.com • 858-277-6586

Ray Huard rhuard@sdbj.com • 858-277-8904

Jared Whitlock jwhitlock@sdbj.com • 858-634-4636

Contributing Writers

Stephanie R. Glidden sglidden@sdbj.com

Photographers

Melissa Jacobs • mj@sandiegophoto.com

Jamie Scott Lytle • jamiesscottlytlephotography@gmail.com

Stephen Whalen • peak15@roadrunner.com

RESEARCH

Researcher

Gina Bertuzzi gbertuzzi@sdbj.com • 858-634-4635

ADVERTISING

Sales Manager

Dale Ganzow dganow@sdbj.com • 858-277-4832

Account Executives

Norma Bialas nbialas@sdbj.com • 858-634-4234

Rick Bushree rbushree@sdbj.com • 858-277-6692

Julie Sargent-Helm jsheilm@sdbj.com • 858-277-6397

Melissa Scofield mescfield@sdbj.com • 858-277-1516

Director, National Accounts & Local Brand Partnerships

Jim Barker jbarker@sdbj.com • 858-277-6499

Classified/Legal Advertising Executive

Lucinda Lauridsen llauridsen@sdbj.com • 858-277-6359

ART & PRODUCTION

Director

Sandra Powers spowers@sdbj.com • 858-634-4628

Production Artists

Angela Castillo acastillo@sdbj.com • 858-277-6359 x 3117

Suzan Peterson suzanp@sdbj.com • 858-277-6359 x 3116

CIRCULATION & EVENTS

Audience Development Director

Shelley Barry sbarry@sdbj.com • 858-277-6391

Events & Marketing Manager

Audrey Marlow amarlow@sdbj.com • 858-277-6359 x 3145

Events Specialists

Aleah Durkee adurkee@sdbj.com • 858-277-6359

Administration

Controller

Mark J. Misiano mmisiano@sdbj.com • 858-277-6778

Accounting Assistant

Kayla Polgar accounting@sdbj.com • 858-277-6696

Receptionist

Vanessa Quartuccio vquartuccio@sdbj.com • 858-277-6359

BUSINESS CALENDAR

Upcoming Events

What Mexico's July Presidential Election Will Mean For The U.S.

Organization: San Diego World Affairs Council

When: 6 – 8 pm, Feb.19

Where: Sanford Auditorium of National University, 11355 N. Torrey Pines Road

ACG San Diego February: Private Capital Markets Outlook 2018

Organization: ACG San Diego

When: 5 – 8 pm, Feb.20

Where: Marriott Del Mar

Communication Skills

Organization: San Diego Employers Association

When: 9 am – 12 pm, Feb. 20

Where: 8799 Balboa Ave. San Diego

MS in Executive Leadership Annual Breakfast

Organization: University of San Diego School of Business

When: 7 – 9 am, Feb. 21

Where: Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, USD Campus 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego

Tech Showcase: Alzheimer's Therapeutics

Organization: MIT Enterprise Forum

When: 5:30 – 8:30 pm, Feb. 21

Where: Knobbe Martens Davinci Auditorium, 12790 El Camino Real

14th Industry/Academia Translational Oncology Symposium

Organization: UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center

Host Ida Deichate, Ph.D.

When: 8 am – 6pm, Feb. 22

Where: UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center

Cannabis Economic Impact Forum

Organization: South County Economic Development Council

When: 8 – 10:30 am, Feb.22

Where: Chula Vista City Council Chambers, 276, Fourth Ave., Chula Vista

To submit an event for possible inclusion, email the following information to Steve Adamek at sadamek@sdbj.com: **name, time and location of event; event host, event speaker(s) and/or description of event.**

