

Outreach Results

City of Norwalk 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan **Housing Summit Summary**

October 24, 2019



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INTERNATIONAL

Overview

On behalf of the City of Norwalk, the Community Development Department hosted a housing summit covering several topics: homeless prevention; fair housing law and discrimination; planning for affordable housing; and workforce development in Norwalk and Los Angeles County. The housing summit was held Thursday, September 19, 2019 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM at Norwalk's Arts & Sports Complex, Sproul Room at 13000 Clarkdale Avenue.

A total of 57 people participated, representing social service agencies, local and county government, and private sector partners with interest in housing in Norwalk. Six (6) speakers made presentations providing attendees with current, insightful information about each of the topics. After the presentations concluded, participants worked in small groups and sought consensus regarding potential solutions to current challenges. A flyer prepared to announce the housing summit is attached.



Introduction and Welcoming Remarks

Director of Community Development, Michael Garcia, welcomed attendees. As part of his opening remarks, Michael highlighted the City's efforts to develop housing, including a project located on a 32-acre property owned by the State of California.

Kristin Maithonis, Housing Manager in the City's Community Development Department, extended the welcome. Kristin oversees Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), Housing Authority, and local funds for the City. She emphasized the importance of the summit and noted the purpose, which is part of the process to prepare the five-year Consolidated Plan and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) for 2020-2025 for the City of Norwalk. Five-Year Consolidated Plans are required by HUD to determine how federal CDBG and HOME Program funding is allocated across the City. The housing summit is part of the first step, to understand barriers, needs and priorities of the public. She closed by noting that the housing summit is designed to focus on solutions.

The housing summit was facilitated by Tina Roseberry, AICP of Michael Baker International. She reviewed the agenda and then she introduced each of the speakers before their presentations.

Speaker Session

Homeless Prevention

The first speaker, Meredith Berkson, is the Director of Policy Systems at the Los Angeles Housing Services Authority. She opened by complimenting Norwalk, a City seen by others in Los Angeles County (LA County) as a model for addressing homelessness.

Meredith noted several statistics pertaining to homeless prevention:

- Homelessness prevention is a critical piece of addressing the current housing crisis.
- Measure H is an important source of funds for preventing homelessness.
- In 2019, 21,600 people in Los Angeles County moved from the street and into homes of their own. This is a significant increase over 2018.
- Economic factors, including low incomes, contribute to homelessness. Approximately 71,000 people in LA County live a single paycheck from homelessness. In other words, they are one unanticipated event, such as a medical emergency, away from becoming homeless.
- In Los Angeles County, 54,000 people fell into homelessness in the last year.



Before closing, Meredith noted ways to improve homeless prevention in Norwalk and in the region:

- Prevention is needed at the macro level with systematic changes addressing needs at earlier stages of need. Examples of early prevention include rental assistance, legal services, mediation, and help with utilities.
- Better collaboration with mainstream systems can be used to help people identify other services, beyond the immediate services being provided.
- State policies are needed to complement local policies and programs. For example, a ban on rent gouging and just cause evictions are both important.
- Production of housing to increase the number of available units should be promoted through creative zoning and “yes in my back yard” advocacy.

Fair Housing Law and Discrimination
Martha Torres is the community engagement liaison with the Fair Housing Foundation (FHF). Her organization offers multi-language services to reach out and educate. FHF provides workshops in 25 cities in LA County and Orange County. Their focus is on eliminating discrimination in housing and promoting equal access to housing choices. Beyond these jurisdictions, FHF also provides training to management companies, realtors, and property owners.



Martha claimed that when housing providers refuse a person based on discrimination, they are removing housing choices. The goal of housing providers is to find the best tenant who meets the basic criteria of needed income. While additional criteria may be used, that criteria must be required of all applicant and may not be applied discriminatorily.

Common forms of discrimination

- Refusal to sell or rent
- Representing that a unit is not available to some when it is
- Requiring different terms or conditions such as asking for an additional deposit for a family with children
- Refusal to accommodate the disabled with reasonable accommodations such as allowing a service animal

Allegations of discrimination in Norwalk

- 7 allegations of discrimination based on physical disabilities
- 3 allegations of discrimination based on mental disabilities
- 2 allegations of discrimination based on race
- 1 allegation of discrimination based on familial status
- 1 allegation of discrimination based on marital status

Questions and answers for Martha

Q: How can we refer clients to this resource? How can we provide workshops?

A: Call (800) 446-3247.

Q: Does FHF do anything with for-sale housing discrimination?

A: Yes. However, most cases pertain to rental housing.

Q: Can landlords ask for citizenship papers?

A: No.

Q: What is the most common form of discrimination?

A: It is against disabled persons, including clients with service animals

Neighborhood Housing Services of Los Angeles County

Speaker 1: Jesse Ibarra

Jesse Ibarra is Assistant Vice President of Business Development for Neighborhood Housing Services of Los Angeles County. He began with a teaser. The organization is celebrating a 35th anniversary for one woman who participated in a program the organization offered in partnership with the City of Los Angeles. They were working with public housing tenants to help them transition into home ownership. At that point, Jesse pauses and shares information about the work of his organization.



Neighborhood Housing Services of Los Angeles County (NHSLA) is a non-profit affordable housing lender and community developer. They believe that housing ownership builds generational wealth, stabilizes communities and offers additional benefits. Jesse said that these benefits can be realized through placemaking and focusing on people.

NHSLA Follows a Lifecycle Lending Model

Step 1: Classes to develop financial literacy. Subjects include credit, savings and income. Equipped with knowledge about their own circumstances, students may ask themselves what they can do to increase financial capacity. As part of this first step, NHSLA also provides landlord training for homeowners with space to build accessory dwelling units. These new landlords need to be trained as well.

Step 2: Affordable lending services. NHSLA offers down payment assistance paid back through deferred loans.

Step 3: Neighborhood revitalization and advocacy. Beyond owning homes, people must have the services needed to succeed in those homes. Therefore, NHSLA promotes neighborhood community development in the areas of transportation, health, and more.

Examples of NHSLA Projects

- Sustainable Communities Initiative in Compton: Purchased and rehabbed an abandoned Blue Chip store that sat vacant for 30 years. The repurposed building serves as a recreation center and a fire station. Organizations work in the space to build

community and capacity by promoting entrepreneurship and addressing health, trauma, and drug and alcohol abuse.

- Affordable home ownership development through employer assisted, faith-based housing.
- Hope Villas: A new small lot subdivision and housing development that includes a farm. NHSLA offers down payment assistance through Wells Fargo's Lift program.
- Manchester Villas: A new 122-unit development funded, in part, by the Affordable Housing for Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program. The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) includes new transit related infrastructure, an on-site community garden, and bicycles plus three years of free Metro passes for tenants.
- Sylmar Villas: A TOD, small lot subdivision with healthy communities programming and the opportunity for tenants to grow food through a hydroponic system.
- A partnership with Airbnb to provide low-income residents funding to build ADUs.

Speaker 2: Alexa Washburn

Alexa Washburn is Vice President of Policy and Planning for National Community Renaissance (National CORE), a non-profit affordable housing developer specializing in building and managing affordable housing with supportive services. National Core is the fourth largest affordable housing non-profit in the nation and the largest in southern California. They do everything in house including entitlements, environmental documentation, financing, general contracting, and more. As a result, they are invested long term through property managers who live on site.



Because housing is very complicated, Alexa's team has an entire division that does compliance. Resident services vary by site and are tailored for each community. National CORE wants to see units turnover by stabilizing individuals and families living in rental housing and then educating them to launch into home ownership or non-subsidized housing. Five of their residents in San Bernardino have recently become owners.

National Core's projects represent a variety of building types, including a recent project built near a train station in partnership with LA Metro. The project includes new construction, rehabilitation, preservation, and an inclusionary housing ordinance for for-profit developers.

Project definition is a complex decision-making process. The three main factors are a) having a site, b) having political support, and c) funding. National Core uses a scoring system to determine if a proposed site meets criteria. Considerations also include plausible funding sources, land costs, and zoning.

Funding is a very difficult part of the process. The State of California offers unique funding sources and they offer a new Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) tool to help plan the pipeline of projects. Cap and Trade Funding includes AHSC and Transformative Climate Communities. Grants fund infill infrastructure construction and transit-oriented development and planning for supportive housing. Grant programs are oversubscribed meaning applications are submitted for more shovel ready projects than there is funding to cover costs.

Strategies for sites should consider school districts with excess land, regional shopping centers, and healthcare facilities.

Alexa shared a few best practices:

- To make a project pencil out in South Orange County where the community was built-out and no site had been identified, National Core found a site with two old office buildings. They could subdivide the site and sell one of the office buildings. However, the cost of construction was still too high. The cost for conventional construction would be about \$590,000 dollars a unit. National Core considered integrated “cost savings” measures and are looking at modular construction. They have a built example and have determined that the most significant cost saving was due to the length of construction. With modular units buildings could be constructed in weeks rather than months. They are also looking at shipping containers.
- Parking is a huge cost to a project. Structured or below grade can be \$65,000 per parking space. To alleviate some of the cost, National Core is starting to work with cities on “car less” projects where cities control surface parking and are designing for ride share and autonomous vehicles. In addition, they are looking at adaptive reuse of parking spaces where they could become something different in the future.
- Do extensive community outreach. Outreach helps their project and helps other future developers. Communities tend to invite National CORE back because their process includes community outreach and they deliver quality projects.

Questions and answers for Alexa

Q: Would you share information about modular construction?

A: Yes. To view projects people can go to La Quinta and Riverside County.

Q: What’s the typical timeframe from concept until move in?

A: It can be 3-5 years including any necessary General Plan or Zoning Code updates.

Q: What are you hoping to see in zoning codes?

A: The first thing we look for is density. Typically, we look for a minimum of 30 units per acre, but we need to start going much higher because of the increasing cost of land. We look for a local city density bonus in addition to the density bonus from the state. National Core also looks for balanced and creative parking solutions.

Workforce Development

The two speakers from the Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board were Tammy Ferranti-Lansdown and Corina Coronel. Tammy is a Program Administrator and Corina is the Career Center Manager. Their program is part of America's Job Center of California and their mission is to connect job ready individuals to employment. They help job seekers search for jobs, build resumes, and more. They also provided resources like computers, internet, copy machines, people, labor market information, and bus schedules. Individualized services are provided by a career development specialist specifically matched to the person. The specialist assists with counseling, career planning, case management, and follow-up.



Programs offered include:

- Occupational training offered in key areas with priority in local growth sectors.
- On-the-job training can be used to help applicants fill a gap in their skills. While working trainees can earn up to 50% of wages.
- Innovative workforce training programs allow high school juniors and seniors to gain work experience while in school.
- Career academy in targeted growth sectors is offered to those between 17 and 24 to give youth a better understanding of growth sectors and career choices.
- The Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative aims to help homeless or those at-risk to generate income.

Questions for Tammy and Corina

Q: Do you work with organizations like Alexa's?
A: Yes.

To conclude the presentation, Tammy and Corina invited people to take a tour and see activities on site. They are located at 10900 E. 183rd Street in Cerritos.



Small Group Session

For the second segment of the housing summit, attendees were divided into small groups of about 10 people. Each table was given a question and asked to reflect on the question and report back to the large group. Each question appears below along with areas of consensus among small group participants.



What policy changes are needed to ensure affordable housing?

- Allow the use of big lots to build “small” housing (zoning)
- Speed up placement in housing
- Community and political support including embracing affordable housing and collaboration

What is our biggest barrier to providing affordable housing?

Barriers	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Income levels ○ Local government ○ Zoning ○ Cost to build ○ How we define affordability ○ Difficulty maintaining affordable housing ○ NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of innovative low-cost housing materials ○ Inclusionary housing ○ Government support

What are the ways we help residents increase their earning capacity?

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disability ○ Legal status ○ Education and job readiness ○ Criminal and employment history ○ Housing status + expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Connecting to mental health services ○ Connecting to trade school/training ○ Job education/life skills ○ Expungement programs ○ Job coaching in high schools/mentorship ○ Rent caps/control

How can housing development companies be enticed to provide affordable housing?

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land cost ○ Over regulation ○ CEQA ○ Zoning ○ Economic development ○ NIMBYism ○ Perception of residents ○ Politicians and developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SB 50 ○ Density bonuses ○ AB 1486 ○ In lieu fees ○ Employer incentives

What are the ways we can make our neighborhoods more sustainable?

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affordability of housing stock ○ Management ○ Food desert ○ Fixed income ○ Land availability ○ Site control ○ Employment skills gap ○ Civic resources ○ Disconnection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Empowerment ○ Safer roads/streets ○ Partnerships ○ Leveraging resources (transportation, child care) ○ Community-based policing ○ Awareness ○ Education (dispute resolution for landlords and tenants) ○ Engagement (early intervention, building connections) ○ Community pride (networks and advocating)

What are the barriers and solutions to reducing homelessness?

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Price of housing/cost of rent too high○ Inequality in wages○ NIMBYism○ Politics○ Discrimination against homeless neighbors○ Lack of integration among systems and coordination○ Different housing criteria○ Disconnect b/w service providers and developers○ Money – lack of availability○ Personal challenges of homeless neighbors (complexity of system navigation)○ Lack of space – land and property	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ More subsidized housing○ Education to public at large, public officials, educators○ Creating mobility out of homelessness – prioritize the homeless populations in workforce development and other systems○ Focus on individual's needs – not all homelessness is caused by the same thing○ Streamline development opportunities with cities – incentivize developers – limit bureaucracy○ More funding for best practices – more opportunities to leveraged funding

