

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 1

**SUBJECT: HOUSING FORWARD: DISCUSSING HOUSING AND LAND USE POLICIES
IN THE UNINCORPORATED COUNTY, DEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY
ANALYSIS FINDINGS, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

In the midst of concurrent housing and climate/environmental crises, the County is navigating interrelated policy issues around where and how to direct development and what types of development to focus on in the unincorporated area. County staff will be bringing forward several items for decisions in 2026-2027 that will affect future development in the unincorporated area, such as the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) mitigation program, Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, various zoning ordinance updates, and the Sustainable Land Use Framework, including how the Sustainable Land Use Framework will explore implementation of smart growth principles. Today's discussion will provide background information and current data to support future decision-making on those items. Staff will also present County-led policy opportunities in incorporated areas that may align with broader regional housing strategies. Staff is not requesting any decisions or action today, but the Board may provide input at their discretion.

Housing continues to be a critical issue in the San Diego region, and local jurisdictions are making efforts to address the need for housing. The State of California (State) has increasingly implemented legislative changes to address housing challenges statewide, but has also implemented new laws to address climate change and lower greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), which impact where new development occurs. Local jurisdictions, such as the County of San Diego (County), still need to consider how to balance these changes with local policies to support our unique communities. Housing solutions benefit all segments of the population, including providing housing for those experiencing homelessness, seniors, and vulnerable populations that need steady housing.

As mentioned, State legislation has increasingly emphasized where and how new development should occur, seeking to balance the need for housing with environmental protection. For instance, the implementation of Senate Bill (SB) 743, which redefined transportation impact analysis from traffic congestion to VMT, has created uncertainty for developers in the unincorporated area. Broader pressures, including rising interest rates, supply chain challenges, State regulatory requirements, and litigation risks, have also impacted development patterns in the unincorporated area. As such, large discretionary housing projects in the unincorporated area have declined in the past few years. However, smaller-scale developments, such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and lot splits, have increased in response to other legislative changes that have streamlined certain types of housing. Financing programs like the Innovative Housing Trust Fund (IHTF) have also significantly supported local investment for affordable housing and demonstrated housing progress despite challenges. These shifts highlight how housing development has changed and continues to evolve. Housing is a complex policy issue requiring multifaceted solutions. Understanding and determining effective solutions requires a thorough evaluation of current conditions, shaped by recent legislative changes and broader trends, to establish a clear direction for future land use and housing policy.

The purpose of this item is to set the stage regarding housing in the region, providing background and policy context ahead of upcoming Board decision points on Planning & Development Services (PDS) initiatives related to housing. The information presented in this item will allow the Board to have a strategic understanding of barriers to development in the unincorporated area and discuss upcoming Board hearings where the Board can provide direction to shape future development. Today's housing discussion provides information about County efforts to address the housing crisis within the unincorporated area where the County has land use authority in three ways:

1. Staff will summarize the current state of housing production in the unincorporated area and discuss the County's current land use policy foundation, the 2011 County of San Diego General Plan (General Plan). The General Plan emphasizes smart growth principles and directs compact, sustainable development into existing Village centers while preserving surrounding Semi-Rural and Rural lands. The General Plan allows for an estimated 50,000 additional units to be produced in the unincorporated area, but key changes in State legislation since its adoption in 2011 have affected where and what types of development have occurred. Market conditions, the regulatory environment, and other factors identified in the Development Feasibility Analysis (DFA) also suggest a relatively slow and partial buildout of the General Plan.
2. Staff will share the results from the Board-directed DFA from February 9, 2022 (7). The DFA studied four key unincorporated communities to identify barriers to housing development and potential solutions. The study sought to understand whether housing goals could be achieved, and found that poor market conditions, limited land, and complicated County regulations were key barriers. Fundamentally, the study confirmed that the County is unlikely to be able to meet its housing goals in the study areas, as there are broader issues that must be addressed. There are a multitude of factors that contribute to whether housing development in the DFA areas is feasible. The recommendations respond to the identified barriers that need to be overcome, and the market conditions needed for housing to be feasible in these areas and the unincorporated area overall.
3. Lastly, staff will initiate a strategic discussion for the Board around housing development priorities. This will provide the Board with the opportunity to discuss information that will be central to development-related items coming forward in 2026-2027 that will require Board direction, such as the: VMT mitigation program, Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, various zoning ordinance updates, and the Sustainable Land Use Framework. These upcoming Board items center around VMT, fire risk, smart growth, environmental sustainability, equity, and affordable housing, and should be considered within the context of the DFA findings.

Today's discussion will present information to help the Board understand what each of these future items could achieve and how items are connected. It will also allow the Board to connect how future Board decisions may guide housing development and implications for housing supply, sustainability, and community needs. No decisions or direction are required at today's hearing, but the Board may provide input at its discretion.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Planning & Development Services recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Find that the proposed project is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project as defined in Sections 15378(b)(5) of CEQA Guidelines.

2. Receive the Development Feasibility Analysis (DFA) Report (Attachment A).
3. Receive the Planning & Development Services (PDS) Housing Element Implementation Update (Attachment B).
4. Receive the “Housing Forward: How the County is Supporting Housing in the Region” presentation.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County of San Diego (County) leads multiple initiatives to facilitate equitable housing development. One of these initiatives, the Development Feasibility Analysis (DFA), evaluated the potential for focused County investments and partnerships to facilitate more housing opportunities and economic growth, prioritizing sustainability and equity. The DFA also considers ensuring housing options at various income levels, addressing disparities in infrastructure and service access, minimizing negative environmental impacts, and supporting economic growth through development. Ultimately, these efforts strive to reduce inequities caused by the uneven distribution of services, amenities, schools, parks, and affordable housing. Housing solutions can address homelessness, help individuals gain wealth through home equity, and facilitate intergenerational wealth transfer. The DFA engaged with over 600 individuals ranging from industry professionals to community members in and near environmental justice communities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Development Feasibility Analysis (DFA) supports the County of San Diego’s Sustainability Goals and Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Operational Plan Sustainability Commitments by seeking to develop land use and development policies to equitably balance natural spaces, housing needs, and workforce development. The DFA evaluated opportunities to facilitate housing within four communities to support a more sustainable land use pattern, encourage the efficient use of infrastructure, redevelop within established communities, reduce commute times, and rejuvenate underutilized Infill Areas. Today’s item further explores opportunities to emphasize sustainability by exploring policy considerations to support housing that balances environmental, economic, social, and health/well-being factors through an equity lens.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today’s item. Receiving the Development Feasibility Analysis (DFA) report and information on land use and housing policy considerations would have no fiscal impact.

There is no immediate fiscal impact, as implementing the DFA recommendations would largely occur through existing housing-related projects, such as zoning updates, and other ongoing initiatives. Funding to implement Capital Improvement Projects to address infrastructure gaps and community improvements would be a longer-term effort that could include the use of existing funding for roads, grant funding and implementation of local funding districts; however, no specific funding source has currently been identified. Staff will continue collaborating internally, with community partners, and with State and regional agencies to identify and pursue funding opportunities to support investments in DFA communities.

There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Desmond, seconded by Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended.

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



A handwritten signature of Andrew Potter in black ink.

Signed

By Andrew Potter