

Martinez, Ruben

From: Anthony Manousos <interfaithquaker@aol.com>
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To: PublicComment-AutoResponse; Gordo, Victor; Madison, Steve; Rivas, Jessica; Hampton, Tyron; Kennedy, John J.; Masuda, Gene; Williams, Felicia
Subject: Fwd: Op ed plus a letter to the city council to be included in their weekend packet

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Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council members,

We appreciate all the work that the City Council has done to provide affordable housing for Pasadena residents, but our City has clearly fallen short of its vision to provide all our residents with “decent, safe and affordable housing.” We at Making Housing and Community Happen feel strongly that the City must enact creative solutions to our city’s affordable housing crisis, such as those recommended by the Pasadena Affordable Housing Coalition.

We agree with Commissioners and City Council members who say that allowing congregations to have affordable housing built on their property should be a top priority. Unlike many of the proposed sites for affordable housing in the draft Housing Element, there is a very real possibility that congregations will have affordable housing built on their land if zoning is changed to permit sufficient density. We urge you to act on this asap. See our op ed piece below.

We also urge you to:

Incentivize affordable ADUs and JADUs. Allow more flexibility on ADUs (build a second story above parking on 1st floor): Make it less costly and less time intensive to develop ADUs. [City of Los Angeles ADU Accelerator Program](#).

Allow housing in commercially zoned areas: Vacant or underutilized commercially zoned areas are opportunities to build housing in Southern California where vacant land is hard to come across. [Berkeley Turner Center Report on Residential Redevelopment of Commercially Zoned Land in California](#).

Streamline the approval of deed-restricted, affordable housing, and permanent supportive housing within 30 days of application. [Habitat of Humanity Report on Streamlining Approvals for Affordable Housing in California](#).

Vacancy Tax: A vacancy tax called the Oakland Vacant Property Tax (VPT) was passed by the City of Oakland in 2018. The VPT Act establishes an annual tax of \$3,000 to \$6,000 on vacant property. The City of Oakland defined its own definition of “vacancy” which each city will do for themselves. The City of Oakland VPT covers both residential and nonresidential property types. [City of Oakland Vacant Property Tax, Report to City of Los Angeles Council about vacancy tax applicability to the city](#).

Create an Affordable Housing Fund funded by an Impact Fee: An impact fee is a development fee whose purpose is to offset the impact of new development on the need for affordable housing. The fees are collected and dedicated towards affordable housing. [Berkeley Turner Center Report on Residential Impact Fees](#). [Grand Nexus Study on Impact Fees in San Mateo County](#).

Community Land Trusts: Housing subsidies can keep affordable housing affordable. However, often these subsidies have a date of expiration, meaning at the time of the subsidies expiration the housing can become market rate housing. Long-term preservation of housing subsidies is needed to ensure that affordable housing, such as community land trusts remain affordable long term. [Source 1 from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#). [Source 2, second report from Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#).

Anthony Manousos and Jill Shook, Co-founders of MHCH

08/02/2021

Item 11

A Creative Solution to Our Housing Crisis from the Religious Community

By Rev. Bert Newton, Dr. Jill Shook and Dr. Anthony Manousos

Churches across Pasadena want to be part of the solution to our city's growing affordable housing crisis and they are offering to use their land for affordable housing. They are heeding the cry of Isaiah: "Give shelter to the homeless" (Isaiah 58:7). Since most city council members have indicated interest in or expressed approval for letting churches have affordable housing built on their land, we wonder why our city officials are not taking advantage of this generous offer.

An African American congregation, New Life Holiness Church, in a historically Black neighborhood hit hard by gentrification, is partnering with a nonprofit affordable housing developer to build 52 units of affordable housing. In return for the use of land, the church will get an income stream from the ground lease.

Instead of putting this money into the church coffers, they want to use it to help families of any ethnicity at risk of losing their homes to pay their rent or mortgage.

The church has lost members, many of whom who have had to move away due to incomes that could not keep up with soaring housing costs, with rents rising 65% in the last decade.[2] while incomes have not kept pace. If New Life is given a chance, they are also to beautify their neighborhood and bring investment to this divested part of Pasadena.

But to have affordable housing on their church campus, it won't ~~none of this~~ will happen without a zone change, which can be costly and time-consuming. For one affordable housing developer working with a church in Orange County it took three years and half a million dollars to create a one-time general plan amendment to get the zoning right! It should not be this hard and expensive to get permission build affordable housing! Indeed, it does not have to be this way.

The Arroyo Group, a 45-year-old Pasadena firm (that did the plans for Old Pasadena as well as the Civic Center and the Playhouse District) together with the Congregational Land Team of Making Housing and Community Happen (MHCH), studied every religious site in the city and crafted a detailed and nuanced proposal that would rezone religious land citywide, and kick in only if a congregation provides affordable units. There are about seven interested churches in Pasadena. This would add sorely needed affordable units throughout the city. To support these churches, MHCH met with each council member and the mayor, held public online meetings, and worked with Pasadena's Planning Department to assure that this proposal would fit the unique character of our city.

This proposal provides for density and heights that are sensitive to the neighbors around each religious site. To make the sites feasible, the main source of funding for affordable housing-- tax credits—must be applied. Tax credits are competitive and near impossible to win unless the development allows for 40-50 units. In the past, it was not uncommon for affordable housing to be larger scale of 200 or more. These smaller affordable developments, with smaller unit sizes, meet an urgent need at a scale and design that make a community proud. All developments must go through design review.

When the idea came before the City Council, council member Andy Wilson urged the Planning Department to explore it "with a sense of urgency." Three times the public weighed in on this proposal with about 100 to 1 in favor of it. Since then, this idea has been endorsed in a letter signed by the League of Women Voters, Pasadenans Organized for Progress, NAACP, Pasadena for All, Complete Streets Coalition, Abundant Housing, and All Saints Church. MHCH, with over 20 churches in our network, also strongly supports this proposal.

Despite widespread public support, this proposal was taken off the Planning Commission and City Council agenda and put into the Housing Element process. The Housing Element is like a blueprint required by the state that plans for enough housing in every CA city for all income levels—for the next eight years. And Pasadena's need is urgent: nearly 6,000 units of affordable housing!

The recently released draft of the Housing Element includes further study of this proposal but postpones study of it until 2025. This delay makes no sense!

This is an idea whose time has come. The Housing Element mentions SB 899, a state law that would have rezoned religious land across the state. We support a more local approach, tailored to the unique needs of our city. A citywide zoning amendment, applying only to those churches like New Life Holiness that want to bless their community with affordable housing, allows for local control, something that the city council has repeatedly stated it fears losing. If the state passes a bill like SB899 and Pasadena already has an ordinance in place that permits affordable housing on religious land, the state may well carve out an exception for us.

Other cities, such as Sierra Madre, Yorba Linda, Fullerton, and Gardena, are moving forward in creating city-wide rezoning religious land. Seattle recently approved such rezoning for religious land. (See <https://www.seattle.gov/opcd/ongoing-initiatives/affordable-housing-on-religious-organization-property>.) (add the link) Like the rezoning proposed by MHCH, this plan is tailored to fit into the character of diverse neighborhoods, including single family.

The affordable housing crisis is severe and worsening! Families are leaving Pasadena, resulting in schools closing down, and businesses are leaving the state because lower-income employees cannot afford the out-of-control housing costs.[3] Let's give churches a chance to fulfill their mission and address our housing crisis. Let's take to heart the words of Pastor Othella Medlock of New Life Holiness Church: "We don't have a lot of resources like big churches, but we have a valuable asset, our land. In Acts 4, early Christians sold their property and provided for the poor. We want to use our land for the betterment of our community."

On Monday, August 2, the City Council will consider the Housing Element. On that day members of MHCH along with the Pasadena Affordable Housing Coalition will gather on the steps of City Hall to urge the Council to take seriously this proposal along with many other creative solutions to our city's affordable housing crisis. The public is welcome. To find out more, go <https://makinghousinghappen.net/2021/07/29/join-us-for-affordable-housing-rally-at-city-hall/>

Rev. Bert Newton is a Ministry Associate at Pasadena Mennonite Church and the Liaison and Outreach Coordinator for MHCH.. Dr. Jill Shook and her husband Dr. Anthony Manousos are co-founders of MHCH. A Quaker peace and justice activist, Dr. Manousos earned his doctorate in British literature and is the author/editor of seven books. A resident of Northwest Pasadena for nearly 30 years, Dr. Shook is the author of Making Housing Happen: Faith-Based Affordable Housing Models.

[1] <https://makinghousinghappendotnet1.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/candidates-booklet-final-version-pdf.pdf>

[2] <https://www.latimes.com/business/real-estate/story/2019-12-27/l-a-rent-rose-65-percent-over-the-last-decade-study-shows>

[3] <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/19/californians-fed-up-with-housing-costs-and-taxes-are-fleeing-state.html>