The City of Fairfield

Via email: jhernandez@fairfield.ca.gov

Cc: HousingElements@hcd.ca.gov

September 22, 2022

Re: Fairfield's Draft Housing Element

To the City of Fairfield:

YIMBY Law proposes reimagining the City's earnest but uninspired housing element. California faces a "serious housing crisis," and Jane Jacobs's 1961 "attack on current city planning and rebuilding" remains regrettably relevant today. We ask Fairfield to be bold and dismantle any nonsafety rules that constrain housing.

The current draft does not clearly show how hard it is to build a home in Fairfield. Development fees are so high that the City's cost estimates have too many figures to print. (Draft, p.165.) It costs almost five figures simply to have the City redraw an imaginary line. (*Id.* p.159.) There are 17 different residential-review procedures, many of which delay homes for 17 weeks. (*Id.* pp.158.) No wonder that Fairfield approved *no* lower-income housing from 2015–19 (*id.* p.61), and does not anticipate achieving its lower-income allocation in the sixth cycle (compare *id.* p.190 [quantified objectives] with *id.* p.209–10 [allocations and nominal capacity]).

The draft also shows no clear plan to make Fairfield's affordability crisis better. The City's programs and actions (*id.* pp.179–89) groan with dilatory verbs and bureaucratic abstractions like "develop incentives programs" and "implement design standards." These aren't bad ideas, but they raise questions the City ignores as to how its existing incentives and standards have enforced a housing shortage and might be removed.

Dense and broadly affordable cities are possible: they have existed for millennia. Californian cities are unaffordable in part because they have made density illegal. Nobody *needs*, and increasingly fewer Californians can afford, 4,500—or more—sqft. minimum single-home lots. (But see *id.* p.128.) Yet the City's zoning map shows this to be Fairfield's chosen norm; the draft euphemizes this as "support[ing] a variety of housing types" (see *id.* p.127). A more forthright housing element would admit that the City's default FAR of 0.5 (*id.* p.135) makes housing illegal on *half* of that land.

What a waste of space.

Fairfield has too much meaningful planning work, such as coordinating infrastructure, to justify its uncritical fixation on ticky-tack design standards (see *id.* pp.127–50) that "have a considerable effect on the development of low- and moderate-income housing" (*id.* p.150). It's disingenuous to invent "Overlay Zones," "specific [plan] development standards," and "alternative development regulations" to mitigate default constraints (*id.* pp.127–50), when it's "legally possible" to apply the same prohousing standards across the City. (See Gov. Code § 65583(c)(3).)

We look forward to the City's next draft. Please contact me with questions.

Sincerely,



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