



Local Affordable Housing Projects Highlight Limits of Covina's Authority Under State Housing Law

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For Immediate Release

Covina, CA — Three affordable housing projects now moving forward in Covina illustrate a challenge facing cities across California: state housing laws that require local governments to approve qualifying projects with little or no discretionary review, even when developers have done little to inform the surrounding community.

Over the past several years, the State has enacted a series of laws that streamline housing approvals, limit environmental review, and narrow the grounds on which a city may deny or condition a qualifying project. While the City of Covina has worked in good faith to meet its state housing obligations, these laws leave the City with little or no discretionary authority to require developers to engage with the community, or to deny a project that meets all objective standards, regardless of resident concerns.

That challenge is not hypothetical. Three separate affordable housing projects are actively advancing in Covina under this state framework: the State-owned property at 2nd Avenue and Italia Street, proposed as senior affordable housing; the Covina Methodist Church affordable housing site at San Bernardino Road and Hollenbeck Avenue; and the Saffron Covina affordable housing project on Cypress Street, just east of Grand Avenue in unincorporated Los Angeles County. Construction fencing has already been installed at the State-owned site — a visible sign to residents of a project they know little about.

City staff is reviewing each project and preparing to update the City Council next month on Covina's limited role and lack of discretionary authority over these projects. Staff seeks Council's direction on how the City can best keep the community informed going forward.

A Case Study in State vs. Local Authority

The projects moving forward in Covina reflect a pattern playing out statewide:

- Limited local discretion: Cities must process qualifying housing projects with little or no discretionary review, except under narrow circumstances.

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- Little or no outreach required: Developers utilizing these state pathways are not required to conduct meaningful public outreach before a project advances.
- Objective standards only: Cities generally cannot impose additional conditions, such as design elements reflecting neighborhood character, unless those standards are already codified as objective, and cannot deny a qualifying project on other grounds.

“This is not a Covina-only issue; it's a statewide challenge,” said Mayor Hector Delgado. “These projects make clear that state law limits our ability to require developers to talk to the neighbors who will be most affected. We support building more affordable housing, but our residents deserve to be informed, not surprised by construction fencing. While we continue to advocate for change, we must comply with the law to protect Covina taxpayers from costly litigation and penalties.”

On behalf of the City of Covina and its residents, Mayor Delgado has written to Governor Newsom, asking the State to reassess the cumulative impact of recent housing legislation and to consider measures, such as baseline community outreach requirements, that would restore public trust in the process.

The City encourages residents with questions about these projects to visit the City's website for updates, and to contact their state representatives to share their views on housing legislation that has limited local discretion. Covina will continue to advocate for reforms that balance the State's housing production goals with the needs of local communities.

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