

Levesque, Jennifer

From: Jessica Trounstine <jtrounstine@ucmerced.edu>
Sent: Friday, April 16, 2021 3:41 PM
To: cityclerk
Subject: Inclusionary Zoning

Dear Merced City Council,

I write as a Professor of Political Science and expert on local politics, land use regulation, housing policy, and segregation in the United States. It is my understanding that the Council will be considering the adoption of an inclusionary zoning policy for the city of Merced. I came to UC Merced in 2009 and since that time I have witnessed exponential growth in the population of the campus community and surrounding cities/towns. There is no doubt that California metropolitan areas are facing severe housing shortages with rapidly rising prices. Although Merced remains much more affordable than much of the state, our community is also facing rising prices, increased demand for housing, and increasingly cost burdened households. Overall about 55% of Merced renters pay more than 30% of their income for rent. But among households that earn less than \$50k/year, more than 75% are rent burdened. The disparity is similar among home owners. About 25% of Merced households that own their homes pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs. But among households making less than \$50k/year, nearly 60% of are housing cost burdened. Clearly, the need for affordable housing is much more pronounced for Merced residents who earn lower incomes. This exciting period of growth and development for our community is the perfect time to revise our land use regulations and housing policies to create more opportunities for our most vulnerable residents.

Simply put, we need to build more housing that is affordable to families with lower incomes and inclusionary zoning is one policy that can help to generate this outcome. Inclusionary zoning may also help Merced to meet its RHNA obligations imposed by the state. Scholarly studies show that when demand for housing is high and rising (as it is in Merced), there is no negative effect on the development of market rate housing with when inclusionary zoning laws are enacted.

All my best,

Jessica

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