Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Housing Debrief
April 23, 2015

Hosted by: Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing, California Housing Partnership, California Community Foundation, and LA THRIVES

Meeting Notes

These notes are drawn from the comments and observations of participants to the AHSC Housing Debrief workshop held on April 23, 2015. Participants included housing developers who applied or are interested in applying for AHSC funds, public agency representatives, and advocates. These notes do not necessarily reflect the positions of the hosting organizations or any other individual organization.

Theme 1: Regulations and scoring pushes toward light transit-related infrastructure (TRI) elements

- GHG/$ formula doesn't reward large (expensive)TRI, instead favors cheapest TRI
- Bike repair kiosks seem most common
- "Joint and Several Liability" makes partnerships with public agencies difficult
- Off-site TRI elements outside of developer control increases developer risk, on-site is less-risky/easier
- CEQA/NEPA threshold doesn't align with realities of project timing for housing/TRI
- Free Transit Passes offer large GHG reduction, but very expensive particularly for LA

Theme 2: Full benefits not accurately scored/captured

- GHGs points don't reflect higher points at deeper affordability
- Cap on GHG benefits of density, parking, pedestrian improvements
- All project elements don't get points (energy efficiency, solar, parks, urban forestry, etc.)

Theme 3: Regulations and scoring do not promote "new" projects

- GHG/$ formula rewards shallow subsidy request, and may lead to lowering $ request, rather than increasing GHG benefits. Could just improve placement of existing projects in existing pipelines
- Shallow subsidy request not enough to leverage 4% tax credit/reduce dependency on 9%
- CEQA/NEPA threshold and importance of leverage mean this is not early money, so cannot plan projects around this source. Also, "by right" developments do not meet CEQA/NEPA threshold.
- GHG model requires you to know mixed use space type before it would normally be selected. Difficult to predict/understand GHG reduction credit for mixed use spaces

Theme 4: Lack of Predictability and Transparency

- GHG/$ formula and scoring makes it hard to understand competitiveness of applications/choices
- Not enough published information on full universe of applications

Theme 5: Regulations and scoring do not promote deep affordability

- GHGs points don't reflect higher points at deeper affordability
- GHG/$ formula rewards shallow subsidy request, which makes it harder for deeper affordable projects to compete

Possible Policy recommendations:

- Decrease total points associated with GHG/$ and/or make GHG/$ tiering closer to continuous; first 11 point drop should not hold so much weight.
- Change GHG/$ formula or scoring mechanism to account for higher funding needed to serve ELI and VLI households
- Refine CalEEMod to reflect more detailed valuation of affordable housing elements
- Revisit Joint and Several Liability requirement to facilitate more partnerships
- Revisit GHG and readiness threshold requirements, perhaps change to scoring not threshold

Possible Implementation recommendations:

- More local coordination to ID and match housing with TRI projects
- More local coordination to better leverage $$