



September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

To: County of San Bernardino Planning Commission and Planning Department  
Supervisor Dawn Rowe of San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors

For your consideration:

**What are we (the State, the County, your communities, and your residents) trying to achieve with this Housing Element Update?**

Secure existing housing and encourage opportunities for new housing for the residents and workforce of our County.

This is reflected in the Staff Report for Sept 9<sup>th</sup>:  
the Housing Element's *"purpose is to ensure that current and future housing needs for all residents in the community are addressed. It provides goals, policies, and actions to maintain and improve existing housing, and accommodate the County's fair share of housing growth needs."*

Progress is measured in how the County meets its RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Allocation) numbers set out by the State.

**What does the County need to do to accomplish this?**

Go above and beyond requirements and merely just filling in the form. Use the Housing Element Update as well as the Annual Progress Report (APR) processes as tools towards fixing the problem of housing insecurity in your County.

Seek, present, and review a clear valid picture of the realistic housing situation in each region and community, addressing their individual needs and unique conditions.

Use current rents, current housing prices, and current construction costs in analysis.

Find problems ("constraints") and address them at the policy level, while maintaining consistency with the General Plan (Policy Plan) and Countywide Vision.

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Review whether policy contributes to or erodes the community fabric and/or whether it has a positive or negative impact on workforce/residents housing opportunities and revise it concurrently during the Update and APR review processes.

**Suggestions for specific steps to be taking during the Update of the Housing Element:**

- 1) Provide a clear census of existing housing stock and types in each unique community. Update this census with each APR. Also include population and demographics.
- 2) Include a specific accounting line-item of the quantity of vacation short-term rentals (STRs) in each community and neighborhood. Do not roll into “vacancies”.

These houses used as vacation rentals are no longer “housing” but instead are now “lodging”. Just as the Housing Element does not include hotel/motel units, it should not include STRs. The hotel units do not satisfy RHNA numbers, nor do the STR units (while they are used as such). If an STR ceases operations and moves back into being a housing unit available to shelter community residents, the numbers can be updated in the APR.

- 3) Utilize current sales prices and sales trends to determine affordability of each project and the likelihood of a new house becoming an STR or a residence when updating the Housing Element and completing the APR.

Avoid misrepresenting affordability based on square foot size or lot size. Present the reality of what they are selling for/renting for in certain markets. Houses most likely being built for sale as an STR should not be included as projects satisfying RHNA. This skews the view in a counter-productive way.

The appearance is that there are many vacancies and new homes being constructed to house community members, but that is not the case. This incorrect picture could lead to deficiency in funding for future low-income housing projects, or other programs based on RHNA numbers.

In an analysis of the projects listed on the 2019 APR, for just the 92252 zip code: Of the 107 projects shown as potential housing units:

36 have been built and “final-ed”.

Of the 36, as of July 13, 2021, 20 are permitted STRs.

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Since the county has extended its enforcement, this number may be way higher now.

12 were presented as for low income on the APR.

These were listed in July on Zillow as having a sales value of \$260k to \$305k and one low-income house being an ADU on a \$862k property. None of those are affordable to low-income households.

14 were presented as for moderate income.

They are listed at \$302k (yes, moderate) to \$771k (not moderate) and one is \$1,080,000 (really not moderate).

- 4) Review how the STR's impact that community's housing opportunities for its own residents by looking at affordability and availability of housing units as well as economic opportunities as jobs and housing are linked.

Are local schoolteachers buying the homes for their families or as a vacation rental to supplement their incomes (residential scale activity), or are outside investors taking advantage of policy tearing down the line between residential zoning and commercial zoning, and buying multiple homes for vacation rentals (commercial scale activity) and pushing out long-term renters while steam-rolling the schoolteachers?

Are long-term rentals too expensive and decreasing in availability?

Are families being displaced, and forced to move out of the area, decreasing school enrollment thus reducing funding to the school, and leaving a deficiency in the workforce?

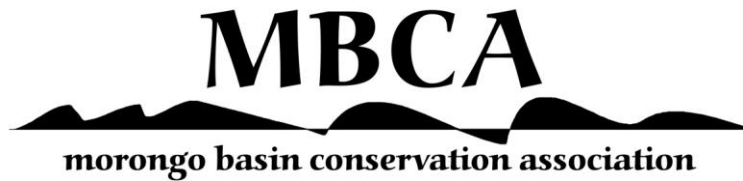
Are jobs paying enough so workers who clean the houses and fix air conditioner units on the houses can also afford a house in their own community.

Can young adults in the community successfully find employment and find housing for the various stages of their lives?

Locally owned STRs can provide jobs and economic opportunities for local residents. This keeps economic competition on the local and residential scale in residential

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zones. This means opportunities are attainable for the local community members. Profits made locally most likely stay local. Local owners are directly accountable to their own community. That is a good balance.

- 5) Analyze the available specific properties to be included in the Vacant Land Inventory for suitability with the specific local hazards and environmental conditions in mind, including (but not limited to): native plants, wildlife corridors, terrain, fire flooding threats, as well as the goals and objectives of the local community. Land Use considerations should also be tied to what works best for various phases of life: children, teens, young adults, families, seniors, etc.

Housing is successful when it is an integral part of a well-functioning neighborhood with a strong community fabric including schools, parks, safe roads, and strong local identity. An STR here and there with the owners living locally and accountable to their neighbors and cleaners living nearby, provides spice to a neighborhood. A neighborhood completely taken over by STRs with owners hundreds of miles away and unaccountable/unknown, and cleaners not able to afford to live there either, is no longer a neighborhood, it has become a resort/commercial zone. This also deteriorates the experience for the tourist who wants to experience the community.

The Housing Element Update must take into account such a closely related policy as the Short-Term Rental Ordinance, which has such a large impact on housing in many areas of the County.

Thank you for your consideration and work on this,

Janet Johnston, Director  
for the  
Morongo Basin Conservation Association

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**Word on the Street**

How do you think the housing situation in the Morongo Basin could be improved?

**Christina Phillips**  
Joshua Tree

"Less Airbnbs, more homes for families. We are losing our home due to it being sold, and they said they are turning it into an Airbnb. Me and my family have to move out of town, because there are no rentals and the very few rentals, they require so much! I don't want to leave here, this is my home."

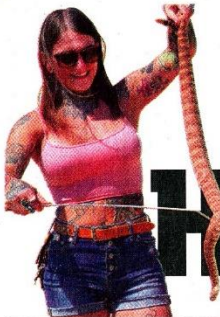
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# MBCA

morongo basin conservation association

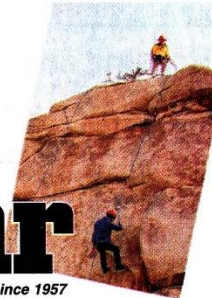


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Wednesday, July 28, 2021

## Housing crisis hits Basin residents

### ■ Shelter gets eviction order as nonprofit warns people are running out of options

By Jenna Hunt  
Hi-Desert Star

MORONGO BASIN — The national housing crisis has hit the Morongo Basin as more people are receiving notices to vacate their homes, according to homeless advocates.

Even a nonprofit helping to house locals has been served with a 60-day notice from their landlord to vacate the house they rent for a men's program.

People are at risk of becoming homeless now more than ever, said Astrid Johnson, a retired teacher and president of Morongo Basin Aligning Resources, Challenging Homelessness (ARCH).

"We need to look at the whole picture," Johnson said during a July 19 phone interview. "Both cities (Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms) need to stop and think of how this is evolving. What is the long-term effect on

the community?"

Johnson said forming a committee of locals to examine housing issues across the Morongo Basin is an urgent need.

Rent is skyrocketing across the region for everyone. In summer 2019, rental ads in the local papers show prices ranging from \$425 for studios to \$850 for two- and three-bedroom homes, including utilities. Today, rental costs are double or triple that, a survey of ads and listings shows.

The effects on seniors, people with disabilities and families without incomes in particular have caused advocates to caution about the future.

Johnson shared the news of the 60-day notice she got for the

men's home, which houses up to six people, during a board meeting on July 16.

In the first few weeks of this month, Johnson said, she talked with a family of four — parents with two small boys — who can't find a place to live. The father has a full-time job, but no affordable housing is available and the mother does not meet the income or credit requirements of most rentals.

They will be homeless if they can't find housing, Johnson said. They do not have any other options.

"The biggest problem we have is permanent housing," Johnson said.

On July 19, Gov. Gavin New-

**BOTH CITIES  
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HOW THIS IS  
EVOLVING.**

— ASTRID JOHNSON  
PRESIDENT, MORONGO BASIN ARCH

som signed the largest funding and reform package for housing and homelessness in California  
See **Housing crisis** A2

A2

HI-DESERT STAR

## Housing crisis From A1

history as part of the \$100 billion California Comeback Plan.

The package includes \$5.8 billion to add 42,000 new housing units through Homekey — a grant program that allows agencies to buy hotels, apartments and other buildings to provide homes.

"I don't think homelessness can be solved — I know homelessness can be solved," Newsom said in a press release.

In the Morongo Basin, finding homes for people in need, especially those on lower incomes and with-

out access to credit, is the biggest challenge facing a large portion of the community, Johnson said.

Johnson also believes vacation rental properties are taking rentals off the market and making it impossible for people to stay in the Morongo Basin.

"You are going to lose a certain population if they can't afford housing," Johnson said.

Morongo Basin ARCH is a nonprofit organization run by volunteers. It has two major services: food and shelter.

The nonprofit provides

temporary financial assistance to overcome whatever barrier is keeping local families from living in permanent housing.

"The biggest problem we have up here is housing people," Johnson told Yucca Valley Town Council earlier this year.

She expects the need for emergency shelter to rise as more people face evictions as the moratorium is lifted.

"It is getting harder and harder to rent here," Astrid told the Town Council on April 20. "The senior population is being hit hard with homelessness."

### Join ARCH

Morongo Basin Aligning Resources, Challenging Homelessness (ARCH) holds board meetings at 2 p.m. on the third Friday of each month at the Lutheran Church at 6336 Hallee Road in Joshua Tree. For information, email morongobasinarch@gmail.com or contact President Astrid Johnson at (760) 861-6433 or skyviewfarm29@gmail.com.

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