



Chair Deryl Henderson and Commissioners
Planning & Environmental Quality Commission
City of Gardena, Council Chamber at City Hall
1700 W. 162nd Street
Gardena, California 90247

TO: publiccomment@cityofgardena.org, cityclerk@cityofgardena.org

DATE: 12/3/2024

SUBJECT: Comment Letter for Gardena PEQC on Normandie Ave Project

Dear Chair Henderson, Gardena Planning & Environmental Quality Commission, and City Staff,

South Bay Forward is a volunteer-run advocacy organization that seeks to move the South Bay region forward on housing, transit, and active mobility. We are a local chapter of Abundant Housing LA, a grassroots nonprofit organization working to solve Southern California's housing crisis. We envision a South Bay with abundant and affordable housing near good jobs with convenient, sustainable transportation.

We advocate for more housing of all types and for all income levels in the South Bay for a more inclusive, equitable, affordable, and sustainable community. We are actively monitoring housing proposals and tracking RHNA progress in our priority member cities of Torrance, Gardena, Redondo Beach, and Hermosa Beach and submitting letters accordingly. We mobilize support on a grassroots level and in coordination with pro-housing organizations working to address the local and statewide housing crisis. Locally, we remind you that the South Bay is the 3rd largest jobs center in LA County and suffers from a severe jobs-housing imbalance with the number of jobs far outweighing the availability of housing units. In high-opportunity and high cost-of-living areas like the South Bay, a greater supply of housing can bring down the cost of housing, as seen consistently in economic data and studies on the housing market.¹

Together with our active members and steering committee members based in Gardena, we are writing this letter to strongly urge you to approve the proposed project at 16831-16911 South Normandie Avenue ("Normandie Crossing") without further delay. We remind the City that it is obligated to follow state law in processing housing applications which are consistent with applicable objective general plan, zoning, and subdivision standards. The denial in April stated in part, "the Normandie Crossing Specific Plan project is out of character with the community."² We note that the "community character" of this land parcel at the present moment includes, in the City's own description, a warehouse showing "extensive and/or severe physical blighting conditions that ... [impair] the value of the existing use" of the site.³ The proposed housing

¹ <https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/supply-skepticism-revisited-research-supply-affordability>

² City of Gardena Resolution No. PC 6-24, 2 April 2024

³ City of Gardena Housing Element, 2021-2029, Readopted February 15, 2023, pg. 73

project continues to comply with all relevant building standards and addresses all comments raised by local regulatory agencies, and will revitalize these parcels of land.

The project provides much-needed infill housing units for over 300 households on a blighted industrial parcel with no residential displacements. The housing crisis facing our region is caused by a shortage in the supply of housing at all income levels. Our region is over a quarter million housing units short of the amount needed to meet the current demand.⁴ In a jobs- and resources-rich community like Gardena this housing project will provide much-needed options for people who live and work in the South Bay. This project includes a mix of studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments, as well as for-sale townhomes supplying different options for people in a wide range of life, income and family situations. Through the filtering effect, we know that those who move into new housing units usually reside within the same community, and that new units free up older housing stock in the community, allowing rents to stabilize or lower.⁵ This phenomenon is well-documented in places that have actively built new housing such as Austin and Minneapolis.⁶

As residents and advocates, we support new housing in our community for multiple reasons. This development will positively impact property and sales tax revenues in Gardena, providing additional revenue to the City for infrastructure and community improvements. Such improvements could include nearby Gardena Boulevard, which the City Council has expressed a desire to reinvigorate. Residents will frequent local businesses, especially those along Gardena and Artesia Boulevards, and add to deeper community ties in Gardena. Many of these business owners have already identified the new residents as being beneficial to their businesses and written in support of Normandie Crossing. The project includes secure bicycle parking for residents and pedestrian mobility enhancements on the sidewalks adjoining the site, allowing future residents the ability to safely walk to nearby restaurants like California Fish Grill, Aunties Cafe, or The Pan, or to pick up groceries at Sam's Club by bike or cargo bicycle. The Planning Commission should look to enhance safe pedestrian and non-car mobility on Normandie Ave and Gardena Blvd to enhance mobility around the City as areas are redeveloped or streets repaved. We suggest requiring new development to include street improvements such as Class IV protected bike lanes, as seen with new mixed-use and housing development in Long Beach. This can alleviate traffic concerns and create a citywide network of safe mobility lanes.

We also want to express our disappointment in the down-scoping of the original plan. The current Normandie Crossing plan before you has been reduced by 70 apartment units from the original 403-unit plan presented to the Planning Commission in March 2024. This number represents 70 fewer households that can live closer to their employer, in a safer neighborhood, or in a larger space than their current housing situation. The original plan also set aside 5% of the apartment units for lower-income residents, but this number has been reduced to less than half this amount in the amended plan, and now 13 fewer low-income families will have an option to rent a home in Gardena. By delaying the project by almost a full year, reducing the scope and

⁴ <https://theangelenoproject.org/the-hard-facts/>

⁵ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-061520.html>

⁶ <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/real-estate/high-housing-costs-minneapolis-solution-rcna170857>



compelling the developer to add costs with a subterranean parking garage as a result of the initial denial, the City has all but guaranteed the final rent prices of the apartment units and sale prices of the townhomes will be more expensive than under the original plan.

We also wish to remind you that the original project and 403 units was included in the City's approved Housing Element as part of its future sites inventory. With the decreased number of units in the updated plan, the City will now have less of a buffer to meet its RHNA requirements and the upcoming mid-cycle review. Your role in the Planning Commission is to adequately plan for future housing and use opportunities such as this one to improve the vitality and fabric of the City. Every large development such as Normandie Crossing adds to our sorely needed housing stock and helps alleviate rising prices caused by the imbalance of housing supply and demand. Every long delay, enforced downsizing, and increase in construction cost only serves to increase final market rents. For the benefit of its residents, current and future, the City of Gardena must approve this rezoning and development application and we ask that you recommend its approval to the City Council and consider mobility enhancements as described above.

South Bay Forward is a chapter of Abundant Housing L.A., a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. You may read more about our mission at www.southbayforward.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

South Bay Forward Steering Committee & Gardena Residents

Brandon Smith, Gardena City Lead, Gardena Resident
Irvin Samuel, Gardena Resident
Chester Li, Gardena Resident
Hope Furukawa, Gardena Resident
Courtney Alicia Miles, Field Organizer, Gardena Resident
Brianna Egan, Co-Chapter Lead, South Bay Forward
Matthew Lawrence, Co-Chapter Lead, South Bay Forward