



September 7, 2023

United to House LA Citizens Oversight Committee
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Cc: Jenna Hornstock, Deputy Mayor of Housing, Office of Mayor Karen Bass
Cc: Ann Sewill, General Manager, LA Housing Department
Cc: Greg Good, Senior Advisor, LA Housing Department

RE: Comments from the United to House LA Coalition for the September 7, 2023 Meeting of the Citizens Oversight Committee

Dear Members of the ULA Citizens Oversight Committee:

The City Council recently approved the Citizens Oversight Committee (COC) decisions on the first-ever expenditure plan and interim program guidelines for Measure ULA. We celebrate this moment knowing these crucial dollars will now go to work across Los Angeles to keep people housed and to expand the supply of affordable housing available to Angelenos. As we monitor those programs, we are also pleased to see the COC taking up in today's meeting the important work of establishing core infrastructure necessary for your work. Hiring an Interim Inspector General is a big step in this direction, as are other steps we recommend below for your consideration.

Measure ULA is less than a year old, but is expected to be in place for generations to come. For something this big and this important, we need systems to be established to ensure both successful implementation and public accessibility at each stage of the process. We recognize also how young the COC is, but we nevertheless must raise the urgency to remove barriers to participation and advance the critical areas of work that you have before you. To this end, the UHLA coalition offers the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. Hiring the Interim and Permanent Inspector General

Measure ULA requires that the COC hires an Inspector General as the main staff member "serving the Oversight Committee." In doing so, the COC will be making important strides towards having the staff capacity necessary to conduct your oversight and administrative duties as an independent decision-making body. Specifically, we recommend that the COC:

- Move with urgency and attention to quality to hire an Interim Inspector General sufficiently qualified to carry out the work in a timely manner.

- Also give attention to hiring additional support staff and/or consultants needed to successfully implement ULA, as we recommended in our letter dated August 3, 2023.

2. Clarify the Budget Available to the Citizens Oversight Committee

The COC should have a clarity on the budget available to conduct your work, hire staff, consultants, pay stipends to COC members and cover expenses associated with annual town halls, housing needs assessments and related activities. Therefore, we recommend that:

- The COC members take action necessary to clarify the budget available to the COC for its operations.

3. Improve Public Access to COC Meetings and Materials

The Citizens Oversight Committee is still very young and is busy setting up core infrastructure as we speak. Nevertheless, City leadership should be doing more to ensure the COC has everything it needs to be a fully open and accessible public body. Currently, it can be difficult for members of the public - especially older adults, people living with disabilities, and/or low-income tenants deeply impacted by our housing crisis - to access COC meetings and the materials being considered by the COC. There is no way to view the meetings online, no means to provide remote public comment, no portal through which to submit written comment and no online archive of meeting agendas, materials, written comments and communications and meeting recordings.

This should not be the case for any public process, but especially for one established by a citizens initiative that is generating hundreds of millions of dollars each year for the City to implement essential homelessness-prevention and affordable housing programs. To address these significant gaps, we call for:

- **All COC meetings to be streamed live online and phone for the public to view and listen.** There is no other commission that is tasked with establishing expenditure plans and program guidelines as part of the management of hundreds of millions of dollars each year. These hearings should be made accessible to those most impacted and to those who are unable to travel to City Hall because of work, family or community obligations;
- **Telephonic public commenting** options for members of the public to provide input into the process;
- **Written public comment should be accepted and documented online** through a clear and accessible portal and/or emailed to staff dedicated to managing COC communications; and
- **The establishment of dedicated COC website** that would be regularly-updated and provide access to all COC materials, including meeting agendas, minutes, materials, recordings and public communications.

4. Set a Meeting Schedule that is Consistent and Frequent Enough to Meet Objectives

In addition to improving accessibility to COC meetings, a consistent and frequent meeting schedule will ensure the COC has the necessary time to conduct its business. As was noted by various COC members at the August 2023 COC meeting, this body has a lot of tasks placed before it and needs the time to advance its work. Some work may require meetings of the full oversight committee, while other work may be better fit for work done in a committee. With this in mind, we recommend:

- The COC meet at least once a month, on a regular day and time;
- Additional sub-committees be established to accomplish objectives required by the body.

5. Establish the Tenant Council

The Tenant Council will be an oversight body made up of tenants or unhoused individuals living in the City of Los Angeles and will provide crucial lived expertise on matters affecting tenants. Measure ULA requires that the Council be established in a way that is consistent with the appointments to the COC. The expenditure plan approved by City Council last week included over \$88 million for ULA's homelessness prevention programs, including protections from tenant harassment, tenant outreach & education, eviction defense, short-term rental assistance, and income support for rent-burdened seniors/persons with disabilities. The Tenant Council will be an important body to provide additional expertise regarding ULA and other tenant programs or issues impacting tenants in the City. Therefore, we recommend that:

- The Tenant Council be established and convened before the end of 2023.

Thank you to the Mayor's Office, the LA Housing Department and to City Council for the work done so far to identify candidates for the Tenant Council.

6. Long-Term Planning: Program Guidelines

We want to lift up again the time-sensitivity of the establishment of long-term program guidelines for Measure ULA. This will be time-intensive work that will heavily influence the success of Measure ULA's programs for years to come. The COC will need adequate space and time for reviewing and understanding each program area's needs. We therefore recommend:

- Starting the permanent program guideline process no later than by your November meeting and making public a calendar of meetings that will dedicate sufficient time for each ULA program area;
- Establishing committees that may support you in developing and reviewing program guidelines;
- Incorporating the [program guidelines¹ proposed by the United to House LA coalition](https://unitedtohousela.com/app/uploads/2023/05/ULA-Coalition-Program-Guidelines.pdf) as part of a process that engaged over 100 organizations with expertise on programs and issues addressed by ULA programs;
- Consulting directly with experts from each program area. The UHLA members continue to make ourselves available to further support the development of guidelines.

¹ <https://unitedtohousela.com/app/uploads/2023/05/ULA-Coalition-Program-Guidelines.pdf>

We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the COC and look forward to supporting the successful completion of the next steps recommended here. Thank you for all of the work you are doing to implement what is sure to be one of the most impactful programs our city has ever seen.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of the United to House LA Coalition

