

March 27, 2026

Ad Hoc Committee on Measure ULA  
Los Angeles City Council  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Opportunities to Improve Measure ULA - [Council File: 26-0088-S1](#)

Dear Committee Chair Jurado, Councilmember Lee, and Councilmember Padilla,

As the Director of Government and Public Affairs with the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIAILA), I am writing to share strong support for this Committee's work to reform Measure ULA — and to urge you to advance two specific, targeted fixes that will make the measure more effective, more equitable, and more durable for years to come.

- 1. Exempt newly constructed multifamily and non-residential properties from the tax for a defined period of time.**
- 2. Cap the maximum tax rate on multifamily and non-residential properties.**

AIAILA represents more than 4,500 architects and design professionals in the greater Los Angeles region. Through our annual Design for Dignity Conference, our Government and Public Affairs program, and our sustained advocacy for housing production and equitable urbanism, we have a direct stake in how Los Angeles plans, zones, and builds.

We want to be clear from the outset: we support Measure ULA. Since taking effect in April 2023, it has raised more than \$1 billion for affordable housing production, tenant protections, and homelessness prevention — resources that are urgently needed in a city facing one of the worst housing crises in the nation. That mission is worth protecting and strengthening.

But protecting that mission requires confronting an uncomfortable truth: as currently designed, Measure ULA is working against itself — and increasingly out of step with the direction California's own leadership is moving.

## **THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR**

The academic record is no longer in dispute. Researchers at UCLA's Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies have established a robust causal link between Measure ULA and a decline in multifamily housing production of at least 1,910 units per year — an 18% drop among projects with 20 or more units, relative to the 2020–2022 average. A separate UCLA study found that since the tax went into effect, the odds of a Los Angeles property selling above the tax threshold have fallen by as much as

50%, with non-single-family transactions — the exact properties we need turning over to build new housing — declining by 30–50%. Research from RAND, Harvard, and UC Irvine has reached consistent conclusions.

Council President Harris-Dawson said it well on the day this committee was formed: taxing the construction of affordable housing is not in the spirit of what voters intended. We agree — and the two reforms we recommend below would bring Measure ULA back into alignment with that intent.

### **A PIPELINE IN CRISIS — AND MEASURE ULA IS MAKING IT WORSE**

A March 2026 report from Enterprise Community Partners puts the stakes in sharp relief. California currently has 39,880 affordable homes — across 461 developments — sitting fully designed, entitled, and approved, but unable to break ground due to insufficient funding. In Los Angeles and Ventura counties alone, 9,533 of those homes are in the pipeline, many in communities still recovering from the 2025 wildfires.

These are not hypothetical projects. They have completed community engagement, secured local land use approvals, and applied for or received at least one source of public funding. What they lack is the final capital to move from shovel-ready to under construction. Enterprise estimates that moving this pipeline forward requires \$2.3 billion in state subsidies, \$1.8 billion in state tax credits, and \$5.8 billion in tax-exempt bonds. For every \$1 of state funds invested, nearly \$3.60 in local, federal, and private dollars is leveraged — meaning California stands to lose an estimated \$7.7 billion in matched investment if that public subsidy is not forthcoming.

This is the environment in which Measure ULA is operating. At a moment when affordable housing development is straining under a statewide funding shortfall — when even fully entitled projects cannot break ground — Los Angeles is also imposing a 4–5.5% transfer tax on the very multifamily transactions needed to unlock that pipeline. The compounding effect is severe: a financing gap on one end and a transactional disincentive on the other. The Enterprise report also flags that fragmented, multi-agency financing systems add as much as \$47,000 per unit in unnecessary costs — underscoring that every additional barrier, including Measure ULA's current design, matters enormously to whether a project pencils out.

Reforming Measure ULA will not solve the statewide funding gap. But it will remove one significant, self-imposed obstacle that is making an already difficult development environment even harder — specifically in the city where the need is most acute.

### **CALIFORNIA IS MOVING IN ONE DIRECTION. MEASURE ULA IS PULLING IN ANOTHER.**

In July 2025, Governor Newsom announced the creation of a first-of-its-kind California Housing and Homelessness Agency — a standalone state agency consolidating the Department of Housing and

Community Development, CalHFA, the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, and other key bodies under unified leadership. The Governor's stated rationale was unambiguous: housing and homelessness are too important and too complex to be treated as secondary priorities. The new agency is explicitly designed to streamline financing, reduce per-unit costs, and create a more coordinated housing continuum — with a target of 2.5 million new homes by 2030, including one million affordable units. Enterprise Community Partners independently estimated that this coordination effort alone could generate \$463 million in annual cost savings.

This is the direction the state is moving: toward less friction, faster permitting, better-aligned financing tools, and a whole-of-government approach to housing production. Measure ULA, as currently structured, moves in precisely the opposite direction — adding a significant transaction cost to the very multifamily and mixed-use projects that the state's new agency is designed to accelerate. A city tax that deters the housing production the Governor is restructuring state government to deliver is not a feature — it is a misalignment the City of Los Angeles cannot afford.

Reforming Measure ULA is not just a local housekeeping matter. It is how Los Angeles demonstrates that it is a willing and capable partner in the state's housing agenda — rather than an obstacle to it.

## **LOS ANGELES IS LOSING GROUND TO ITS OWN NEIGHBORS**

There is a third dimension to this problem that deserves equal attention: Measure ULA applies only within the City of Los Angeles. Every neighboring jurisdiction in Los Angeles County — Long Beach, Culver City, Glendale, Burbank, Santa Monica, Pasadena, Alhambra, El Segundo, Inglewood, and dozens more — operates under no comparable tax burden. Developers, investors, and property owners are not leaving the region; they are simply crossing city boundaries.

This matters because housing development is highly sensitive to relative cost and risk. When a multifamily project in the City of LA carries a 4–5.5% transfer tax at sale and the same project two miles away in Culver City or Inglewood does not, the calculus shifts. Capital flows to lower-friction markets. Entitlements and permits follow. And the City of Los Angeles — the jurisdiction with the greatest concentration of housing need, the largest unhoused population, and the most ambitious affordable housing goals — is left at a structural competitive disadvantage of its own making.

This dynamic is further underscored by the emergence of LACAHSAs, the Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency — a new regional intergovernmental body created by state legislation, with a countywide board and a mission to accelerate housing production and homelessness prevention across all of LA County. LACAHSAs' funding model draws on Measure A, capital markets, and philanthropic partnerships and is explicitly designed for regional scale and coordination. Its very existence reflects a growing consensus that housing solutions must be designed for the full region — not fragmented by city boundaries. A city-only tax structure that unintentionally diverts investment to neighboring jurisdictions works against that regional logic, and against LACAHSAs' own goals.

Reforming Measure ULA is not just good policy for the city — it is essential to keeping Los Angeles competitive within its own county and credible within its own region.

## **OUR TWO RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1: Exempt newly constructed multifamily and non-residential properties from the tax for a defined period of time.**

New housing construction is not a wealth transfer. It is the act of creating the very housing stock that Los Angeles desperately needs — to meet its state-mandated goals, reduce rents, and contribute to California's 1 million affordable homes target. A time-limited exemption for new multifamily construction — modeled on the 15-year exemption proposed in Councilmember Raman's January 2026 motion — would remove the tax as a barrier to new projects while preserving full revenues from the resale of existing high-value properties. Given that nearly 9,500 pipeline homes in the LA region are already stalled for lack of capital, removing an additional transactional cost at the point of sale is not a favor to developers — it is a necessity for getting housing built. This is a targeted fix, not a repeal.

### **2: Cap the maximum tax rate on multifamily and non-residential properties.**

Measure ULA was widely understood by voters as a mansion tax — a levy on luxury residential sales. Yet at its current rate structure, the tax also falls heavily on apartment buildings, mixed-income projects, and commercial properties that transact at higher nominal values not because of speculative wealth but because of their size and use. The Enterprise report makes clear that affordable housing developments are already navigating razor-thin margins, fragmented financing systems, rising insurance costs, and federal funding uncertainty. A cap on the effective tax rate for multifamily and non-residential properties would reduce the measure's deterrent effect on institutional investment, make the City more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions, and bring Measure ULA into better alignment with the state's drive to lower per-unit costs — without meaningfully reducing revenues from true luxury transactions.

## **CONCLUSION**

We want to name and reject a false framing that has emerged in this debate: that reforming Measure ULA means choosing between low-income tenants and housing developers. It does not. The evidence from UCLA, RAND, Harvard, UC Irvine, and Enterprise Community Partners tells a consistent story: a measure that stalls housing production, drives investment to neighboring cities, compounds an already severe statewide funding gap, and runs counter to the state's own housing agenda ultimately fails the very tenants it was designed to protect — by keeping supply constrained, rents high, and homelessness intractable.

California has restructured its state government to fight the housing crisis. LA County has stood up a new regional agency to coordinate that fight across all 88 cities. Nearly 10,000 affordable homes in the LA region are sitting in a pipeline, ready to be built, waiting only for the financial conditions to make them viable. The City of Los Angeles now has the opportunity — and the obligation — to reform Measure ULA so that it amplifies these efforts rather than works against them.

We urge this Committee to move swiftly and to advance recommendations that make Measure ULA what voters always intended it to be: a powerful, durable, and regionally coherent engine for affordable housing in our city and our county.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to getting this right.

Truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Wright', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Will Wright, Hon. AIALA  
Director, Government & Public Affairs