

TO: Olin Woods, Chair, and Members of the
Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission

DATE: September 22, 2008

FROM: Elizabeth Castro Kemper, Executive Officer
Elisa Carvalho, Senior Management Analyst

SUBJECT: Receive update on the Yolo County LAFCO Housing Policy status and direct staff to provide the Yolo County Housing farmworker study to the Commission, upon its completion

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive an update on the Yolo County LAFCO Housing Policy status. Direct staff to provide the anticipated Yolo County Housing farmworker study to the Commission, upon its completion.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Commission directed staff to convene an exploration group to outline the hurdles, challenges, and opportunities of providing affordable housing, especially farm worker housing, in Yolo County. LAFCO staff organized three meetings, the last of which was held on September 21, 2006.

LAFCO's intention was to reconvene the Housing Policy group in January 2007 to discuss a Yolo County Housing (YCH) study scheduled for completion in December 2006 and return with a white paper to inform the Commission about affordable farmworker housing.

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BACKGROUND

LAFCO staff organized three Housing Policy meetings, which included legislative representatives, SACOG, the Farm Bureau, housing advocates, Yolo County, and the cities of Woodland, Winters, West Sacramento, and Davis. Discussions centered around three major themes: demographics, Migrant Housing Centers, and affordable housing allocation numbers.

An important theme that emerged from the meetings was changing farmworker needs and demographics. Anecdotal information seemed to suggest that workers with families are establishing permanent residences in, or closer to, urban areas, which offer more facilities and services to farm workers and their families.

The demand for Migrant Center housing, which is designed to house farm workers and their families during the growing season, has decreased. In 2006, the Davis Migrant Center was only about two-thirds full, even during the busy season and for the first time, the Madison Migrant Center was not fully occupied. The Centers do not serve as year-round, permanent housing because the structures are not winterized and federal restrictions prevent the upgrades necessary for year-round use.

Though migrant centers are not consistently filling up, they cannot house single, individual farm workers, who, in some cases, are staying up to 50 miles away from where they work. State and Federal guidelines prohibit single farmworkers staying at the migrant centers. An applicant must be accompanied by at least a part of their "immediate family" to be admitted to a Center (Office of Migrant Services code section 7601). State and federal admission requirements for the migrant center and other regulations would have to be changed to accommodate single farm workers at migrant Centers.

At the same time as the LAFCO Housing Policy Meetings, YCH planned to do a related farmworker study that would provide information about farmworker demographics and issues. The study was supposed to look at the barriers a migrant farm worker family faces moving to permanent housing in Yolo County, be it housing designated specifically for farm workers or unrestricted market rate housing. The study would also have looked at the barriers a migrant farm worker family faces finding alternate employment, especially self-employment. The study was expected to be completed by the end of 2006. Due to YCH staff turnover, the study was not completed.

YCH Executive Director Lisa Baker expressed interest in having YCH perform the study and said she would contact UCD about a possible partnership. She felt that it was compelling and timely subject for her organization. She also indicated that YCH has been working with Yolo County and farmers on housing issues and provided input on the Yolo County Planning Manual.

The YCH seems to be the most appropriate organization to study and respond to farmworker issues and needs. The YCH owns and manages housing apartments and

farm worker units and works with low and moderate income families throughout the County. The YCH is in a position to collect necessary statistics and information from their clients. Additionally, the completion of the proposed study would provide LAFCO and other interested agencies with more information on this subject that is not otherwise available.