Good evening, city staff, city council, and Mr. Mayor. My name is Brooke Clavesilla, and I am a constituent of the 3rd district and a graduate student at Cal State Long Beach. My address is ---------.

Over the past couple of months, I have attended city council meetings, the recent planning commission hearing, and study session. I have heard from those who are opposed to the community platform, saying that we need to develop a long beach that attracts “highly educated” young people. I have heard this statement on various occasions. As a graduate student, someone who may be considered “highly educated,” this is quite concerning. After listening to public comments, it sounds like some Long Beach residents and stakeholders would like to transform Long Beach into a small-town beach city, a city with no poverty and only upper and middle-class residents. While the demographics of a ‘beach city’ may be appealing to some, transforming Long Beach into Newport, Redondo, or even Beverly Hills is not the solution to achieving a prosperous economy and reducing crime rates, as it poses a threat to many Long Beach residents and myself.

The development of housing stock that is only market rate will lead to the displacement of low and middle-income residents and families in Long Beach. Because low-paying service sector jobs that pay minimum wage are growing and city council has not identified a permanent local source of funding for affordable development, many of our valuable residents will no longer be able to live here. Even, I fear that I will not be able to find a job in Long Beach where I
can afford rent, meet my basic needs, and save money to own a home. This is why it’s important for the city to offer its working-class residents a safe and healthy home that is affordable to their income level.

Further, transforming Long Beach into a ‘beach city’ will kill what makes Long Beach one of the most unique cities in the United States, its diversity. When I moved to Long Beach, I was not attracted to the upscale developments or tourism industry; I was attracted to its diverse population, progressive reputation, and unique local businesses. In no other city have I felt a sense of belonging and community, where diverse populations come together to find solutions to the challenges they encounter. If the city continues to develop without affordable developments, many of Long Beach’s residents will be displaced, and our diverse population will be obsolete.

So, rather than focusing on what types of people we need to attract to Long Beach, the city should make the needs of its current residents a priority. Research has shown that when people can afford to live locally, they invest locally, and when residents and families have good paying jobs and stable homes, crime decreases. As a new resident of this great city, I urge you to use your leadership and take action. Make this Housing Element about more than just compliance, but make it about strategic action that improves the quality of life for Long Beach residents and makes Long Beach an even greater city to live in.