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**“OUTSIDE OF THE BOX” STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE
HOUSING CRISIS DISCUSSED AT SCAG HOUSING SUMMIT**

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State, Local Leaders Present Strategies To Improve Housing Affordability and Availability

LOS ANGELES – With median home prices nearing \$500,000 and household annual incomes remaining around \$55,000, residents are being forced to devote increasing portions of their income to housing. Southern California’s population growth continues to far outpace construction, placing additional pressures on the housing market and resulting in higher costs and increased congestion. More than 250 policymakers and housing leaders from across the region convened at the Southern California Association of Governments’ (SCAG) 5th Annual Housing Summit in an effort to devise new approaches to address the growing housing crisis. Summit leaders emphasized the need to “think outside of the box” and implement cost-effective, sustainable strategies such as mixed-use development in urban areas and controlled development in open areas.

Rialto City Councilmember Deborah Robertson, Chair of SCAG’s Community, Economic and Human Development Committee, and Executive Director Mark Pisano discussed how *Southern California Compass*, SCAG’s growth visioning initiative, provides a blueprint to accommodate housing and population growth over the next 30 years by employing relatively small changes in land use planning decisions to reap tremendous results in housing availability and affordability.

“We need to strategically develop housing where it is needed the most; near jobs, along mixed-use corridors, in downtown and suburban centers and at transit stops and stations,” said Robertson, Chair of SCAG’s Community, Economic and Human Development Committee. “By focusing more development in these housing opportunity areas, we can reduce commutes and protect environmentally sensitive places in 98% of the region.”

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Lucetta Dunn, Director of the State Department of Housing and Community Development, discussed the Governor's efforts to streamline environmental review requirements and create real financial incentives for local governments to zone for housing. Dunn underscored the importance of forging more effective partnerships between the state and local governments. Dunn stated, "We can either work together to plan for the growth and implement those plans, or growth will continue to plan us, as it has for the last 30 years."

John Landis, professor at the University of California at Berkeley, discussed the impact of in-fill development as a critical strategy, asserting that about four million housing units could potentially be developed by maximizing vacant and underutilized parcels in urban areas.

Another key strategy identified at today's summit was the development of various incentives to make it more feasible for local governments to zone for residential development at a pace that keeps up with growth. A major factor behind the dramatic rise in housing prices is an inability to zone and build enough homes to keep up with current and future demands.

Summit participants identified a number of legislative and land use strategies to address the regional housing crunch, including:

- *Increase coordination of housing development with transportation, water resource management, and other local planning efforts.*
- *Identify additional state funding for infrastructure and local government general plan development.*
- *Reformulate municipal finance and revenue sources to ensure that local governments have the resources necessary to develop adequate housing stock.*
- *Focus residential development in areas near major transit centers or corridors.*
- *Support greater mixed-use and in-fill development, particularly in urban areas.*
- *Reduce zoning restrictions that can add to housing costs.*