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Residents Rejoice: Unincorporated Orange County Gets New Recovery Residence Ordinance

Santa Ana, California – At the Board of Supervisors meeting on September 24, the Board unanimously passed Supervisor Donald P. Wagner’s direction on a new County ordinance, requiring group home operators to submit applications, obtain ministerial permits and enforce a “good neighbor policy” among other mandates.

“I heard from North Tustin residents that unlicensed sober living homes were a growing concern and sought to remedy this issue with a new County ordinance,” said Supervisor Wagner. “The good actors operating group homes welcome more scrutiny, however, there are bad actors who are concentrating these businesses, exploiting unlicensed homes for profit and at the expense of people’s lives. The new ordinance I brought forth will strike a balance between the recovering addicts looking to put their lives back in order, with the residents who deserve to maintain the peaceful, single-family character of their neighborhoods.”

Residents complained of increases in noise, trash, smoking, loitering, parking and general nuisances. Inside the unlicensed homes were reports of overdosing, assaults and more.

“The ‘Recovery Residences’ addressed by this zoning change are businesses that exploit both recovering addicts and residential neighborhoods, siting houses close to one another for their convenience and profit. The zoning change brought forth by Supervisor Don Wagner is a win-win-win for recovering addicts, neighbors and Orange County,” Laurie Girand, Advocates for Responsible Treatment.

Responding to Community Concerns

North Tustin residents contacted Supervisor Wagner’s office regarding their neighborhood’s changing character.

May 31, 2019: Supervisor Wagner held a Town Hall meeting at Hewes Middle School with the Health Care Agency and Sheriff’s Department to answer the community’s questions. Over 100 concerned residents attended to provide input.

June 25, 2019: At the Board of Supervisors hearing, Supervisor Wagner directed a new ordinance dealing with sober living homes to come to the Planning Commission for a vote. The Board unanimously supported his direction.

August 28, 2019: Planning Commission unanimously passed the ordinance.

September 24, 2019: New County ordinance passed at the Board of Supervisors meeting.

Within four short months and working with the community, Supervisor Wagner is proud to have made significant progress in creating healthier, safer communities for all residents.

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