

**From:** [Ronn Waters](#)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Subject:** Application PGSH-24-0002  
**Date:** Thursday, October 9, 2025 11:06:17 AM

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Public Notice Comment:

The SUP would make a bad parking situation worse. There is already one Group Home on Baker street and their staff/interns take up a lot of the available street parking. Those of us who actually pay taxes here are not able to park in front of our homes. The sidewalks of the recovery homes on Royal Palm are littered with cigarette butts. We don't need that on Baker street.

Ronn Waters

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**From:** [Ronn Waters](#)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Subject:** Application PGSH-24-0002  
**Date:** Thursday, October 9, 2025 4:06:22 PM

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Why would you put a Sober Living Home next door to a Group Home for Kids. That does not sound helpful nor safe. For either.

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**From:** [ddavis@teac.com](mailto:ddavis@teac.com)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Subject:** Official Public Notice: Application No. PGSH-24-0002  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 14, 2025 11:28:06 PM

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To whom it may concern:

I received an Official Public Notice regarding application no. PGSH-24-0002 for a sober living house at 1601 Baker Street. The notice states that public comments must be submitted by 12:00 PM on the date of the meeting.

Following are my comments:

I implore the Planning Department not to allow a half way house in the middle of a prime, family, residential community at 1601 Baker Street. I own property at Baker and Royal Palm. There are many young and teenage children that walk that section of Baker to access the shopping on Harbor Blvd. None of us want to have a child violated.

The property is listed as having 4 bedrooms and two bathrooms. The application is for 7 adults. This is too many adults in the facility which could lead to problems with the neighbors, parking problems, trash and other conditions caused by over crowding.

There are areas of Costa Mesa that are more suited to sober living, sex offenders and halfway houses. This residential community is not so suited.

Please do not allow this residential home to be overcrowded and endanger the neighborhood.

Respectfully,

Derek Davis  
PO Box 10343  
Costa Mesa, CA 92627

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**From:** [msw@scottwatersdesign.com](mailto:msw@scottwatersdesign.com)  
**To:** [MENDEZ, VICTOR](#)  
**Subject:** 1601 Baker Street Sober Living Home Permit.  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 3:47:43 PM  
**Attachments:** [1601BakerSoberliving.pdf](#)

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Mr. Mendez,

Here is my letter of objection to the proposed sober living home on 1601 Baker Street in Costa Mesa.

I would like to speak to the public hearing on Thursday if possible.

Thanks so much for your time,

Marilyn Scott-Waters

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Marilyn Scott-Waters  
1589 Baker Street  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

c. 714 955-7666

[msw@scottwatersdesign.com](mailto:msw@scottwatersdesign.com)

To Jeff Harlan and the members of the Costa Mesa Planning Commission.

From Marilyn Scott-Waters

I am writing to express my concern regarding the application for a special use permit, application number PGSH-24-0002 scheduled for the October 23rd meeting. This item pertains to the application for a sober living group home located at 1601 Baker St.

I'm Marilyn Scott-Waters, a resident at 1589 Baker St. which is located 2 doors down from 1601 Baker St. I have been a resident of Costa Mesa since 1962 and have owned a home in Mesa Verde since 1991. I am submitting this letter to object to the approval of any Special Use Permit (SUP) or Reasonable Accommodation (RA) for this address, based on land-use and public-safety concerns under Costa Mesa Municipal Code §13-200 et seq. (Group Homes)

My main concern is that of the compliance with the proposed Group home conflicting with that of the house adjacent to it being another group home. City Ordinance dictates that under California Code, Health and Safety Code - HSC § 1502 section 13 states that group homes, including sober living homes may not be within 650ft of one another measured by its property lines. Also outlined by California Code, Health and Safety Code - HSC § 1502 "Residential facility" means any family home, group care facility, or similar facility determined by the department, for 24-hour nonmedical care of persons in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of the

individual.

1597 Baker Street is a group home owned by Childhelp USA. Childhelp is a private nonprofit psychiatric residential treatment facility also classified as a group home under **Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP)** as part of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). It is a **State Licensed Residential Care Facility for Children** that provides specialized and intensive care. (License #306000509)

Step House Recovery is a private, for-profit **Residential Treatment Center (RTC)** that is formally licensed by the State of California's **Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)** as an **Alcoholism or Drug Abuse Recovery or Treatment Facility**. However, under the broad language of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code, the facility and its residents are considered to fall under the category of a "**Group Home**" for the express purpose of applying city zoning regulations like separation requirements, as its clientele is protected under the federal Fair Housing Act (FHAA) as being disabled.

Both facilities fall under the umbrella of residential care or treatment facilities that the City regulates to prevent over-concentration in residential neighborhoods. Both facilities are listed to cater to and protect a disabled class.

Title 13 Planning, zoning and Development; Chapter XV GROUP HOMES, outlines why the City of Costa Mesa has this charter in place as well as the possible concerns and purpose to having groups homes as follows, "This chapter is intended to preserve the residential character of single-family residential neighborhoods and to further the purposes of

the FEHA, the FHAA and the Lanterman Act by, among other things: (1) ensuring that group homes are actually entitled to the special accommodation and/or additional accommodation provided under the Costa Mesa Municipal Code and not simply skirting the city's boarding house regulations; (2) limiting the secondary impacts of group homes by reducing noise and traffic, preserving safety and providing adequate on street parking; (3) providing an accommodation for the handicapped that is reasonable and actually bears some resemblance to the opportunities afforded non-handicapped individuals to use and enjoy a dwelling unit in a single-family neighborhood; and (4) to provide comfortable living environments that will enhance the opportunity for the handicapped and for recovering addicts to be successful in their programs.” These 4 main sections help us outline the concerns brought on by group homes within the City of Costa Mesa.

Another concern of mine is that of how these neighboring facilities would cause harm to one another due to congestion of the parking as well as not taking into consideration how much traffic passes through this street on a daily basis. We have roughly 3,250 cars as outlined on the Costa Mesa city government's website with its Average Daily Traffic map. The increased volume of parking by either residents or social workers would further congest traffic as well as street parking on our busy street.

A further concern is the number of sober living homes that are currently already in the City of Costa Mesa. ORDINANCE NO. 17-06 also states “it is estimated that the City of Costa Mesa is home to 1,748 alcohol and drug recovery beds, divided as follows: 63 state licensed residential facilities/certified alcohol and drug programs in residential

zones with six or fewer occupants, providing 352 beds; 19 state licensed facilities with seven or more occupants providing 269 beds; 97 unlicensed sober living homes in all residential zones, providing 1,127 beds; included in those 97 homes are 10 homes that have been issued Special Use Permits per the R1 Ordinance, providing 60 beds; and 1 approved CUP application per the MFR Ordinance, providing 11 beds; 3 WHEREAS, the City of Costa Mesa is currently home to almost 29% of the state licensed residential drug and alcohol treatment facilities in Orange County, while the City holds 3.6% of the County's population; thus, it is reasonable to infer that unlicensed sober living homes are locating in the City at a higher concentration than in nearby communities" outlining the sheer number of sober living homes within the City of Costa Mesa.

In closing, I respectfully ask the Planning Commission to thoroughly review the application for **Application number PGSH-24-002** regarding the proposed sober living group home on 1601 Baker Street. Furthermore I have attached several images to depict both the location of the proposed group home in relation to the current group home on Baker Street, also alongside the OC traffic data for that section of Baker St.

Thank you for your time, Marilyn Scott-Waters.

714 955-7666  
1589 Baker Street  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626



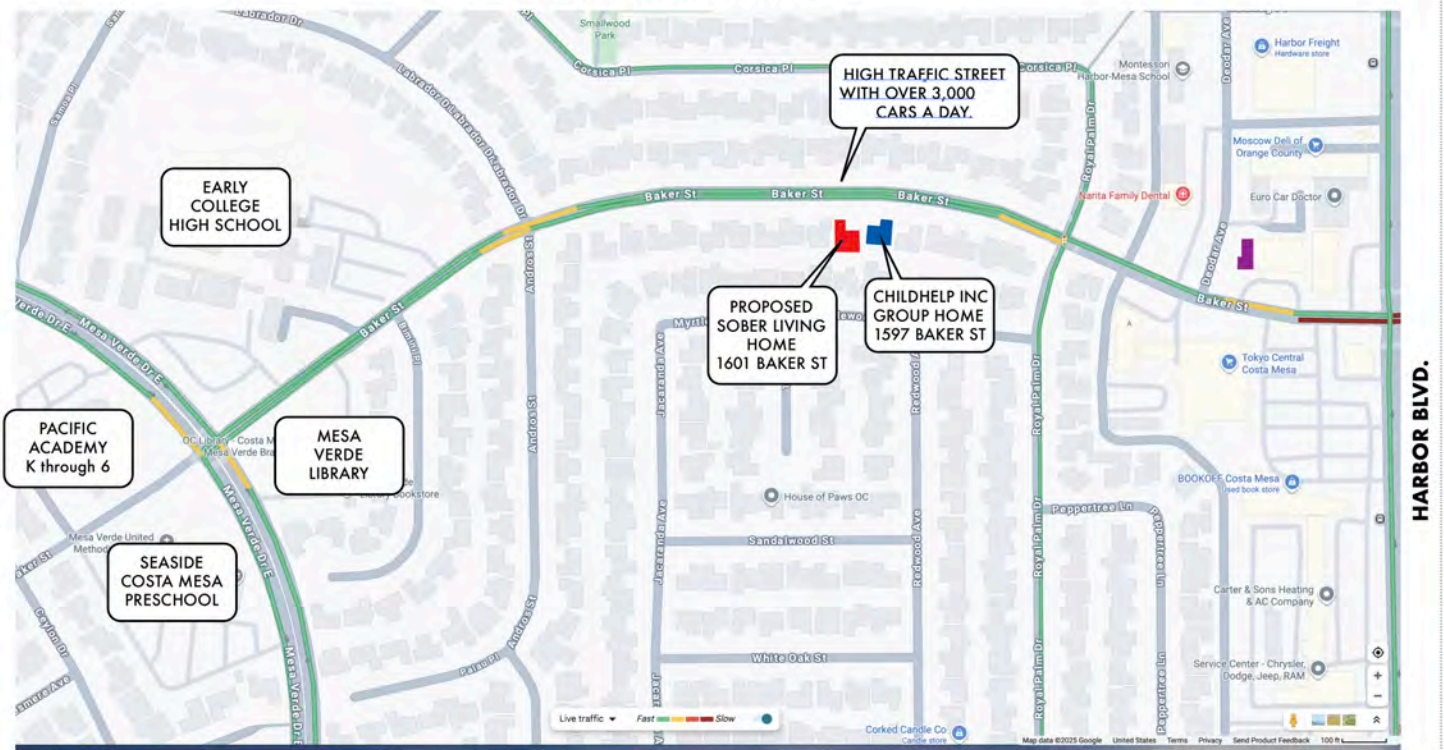
# AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC (ADT) MAP (2019+)



AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC (ADT) MAP  
CITY OF COSTA MESA  
24 HOUR (BOTH DIRECTIONS)  
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIVISION

UPDATED ON 03/05/24

# MAP OF BAKER STREET



**From:** [George V](#)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Cc:** [Mary Wilcox](#)  
**Subject:** Hearing For Application No. PGSH-24-0002 For 1601 Baker St  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 5:32:17 PM  
**Attachments:** [2025-10-21\\_051973-3.jpg](#)  
[2025-10-21\\_051973-4.jpg](#)  
[2025-10-21\\_051973-5.jpg](#)  
[2025-10-21\\_051973-2.jpg](#)  
[2025-10-21\\_051973-1.jpg](#)

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Dear Hearing Officer

Please find attached documents I would like to introduce for our hearing scheduled for October 23rd, at 4pm.

Sincerely

George Vilagut  
CEO  
StepHouse Recovery  
714 394 3494

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## OFFICIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

The Hearing Officer will conduct a public hearing as follows to consider:

<b>Hearing Date:</b>	October 23, 2025	<b>Hearing Time &amp; Location:</b>	4:00 PM or soon thereafter City Hall Council Chambers 77 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, CA; and virtual locations
<b>Application No.</b>	PGSH-24-0002	<b>Applicant/Agent:</b>	George Vilagut / Stephouse Recovery Inc.
<b>Site Address:</b>	1601 Baker Street	<b>Zone:</b>	R-1 – Single Family Residential
<b>Contact:</b>	Planning Division (714) 754-5245	<b>Email Comments to:</b>	Planninginfo@costamesaca.gov

**Description:** Special Use Permit (SUP) application to allow a single-unit sober living home, with six residents and one live-in house manager located at 1601 Baker Street. The purpose of the hearing is to collect information to verify compliance with the applicable provisions of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (§ 13-311). This is a ministerial process limited to confirming that the application meets ordinance requirements.

**Environmental Determination:** The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section Sections 15268 (Ministerial Projects) and 15301 (Existing Facilities).

**Additional Information:** For more information, call (714) 754-5245, or email [planninginfo@costamesaca.gov](mailto:planninginfo@costamesaca.gov). Planning Division staff are available from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Thursday and alternating Fridays, except specified holidays. All interested parties may submit comments to the Planning Division in regard to this application. Comments received by **12:00 PM** on the date of the meeting will be provided to the Hearing Officer, made available to the public, and will be part of the meeting record. Any written communications, photos, PowerPoints or other materials for distribution to the Hearing Officer must be 10 pages or less and submitted to the City **NO LATER THAN 12:00 PM** on the day of the hearing via email or submitted to the Planning Division on a flash drive, or mailed to the Planning Division. All materials, pictures, PowerPoints, and videos submitted for display at a public meeting must be previously reviewed by staff to verify appropriateness for general audiences. No links to YouTube videos or other streaming services will be accepted. A direct video file will need to be emailed to staff prior to each meeting in order to minimize complications and to play the video without delay. The video must be one of the following formats: .mp4, .mov, or .wmv. Only one file may be included per speaker for public comments. Please note that materials submitted by the public that are deemed appropriate for general audiences will not be redacted in any way and will be posted online as submitted, including any personal contact information. If you challenge this project in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you, or someone else raised, during the public hearing or in written correspondence submitted to the City, during or prior to, the public hearing.

## OFFICIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

## ANNUAL CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

<b>Provider Legal Name:</b>	The Stephouse Recovery, Inc.		
<b>Contracted Services:</b> (as written in the Agreement)	Recovery Residence Services		
<b>Contract Administrator:</b>	Amanda Calderon		
<b>Contract Term:</b>	July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024		
<b>Date of Last Site Visit:</b>	4/18/2024	<b>Service Area:</b>	Behavioral Health

**Status of issues from last report:**  
None.

<u>Evaluation Category</u>	<u>Evaluation Subcategory</u>	<u>Evaluation Score</u>
<b>Communication</b>	How well does the Contractor cooperate and communicate with the County within a reasonable amount of time?	<u>5</u>
	How well does the Contractor respond <i>within the requested timeline</i> to information requests from the Contract Administrator?	<u>5</u>
	How well does the Contractor respond <i>accurately</i> to information requests from the Contract Administrator?	<u>5</u>
	How well does the Contractor acknowledge and respond to problems identified in a Cure Notice or Corrective Action Plan in a timely manner?	<u>N/A</u>
<b>Contractor Reporting</b>	How well does the Contractor submit all required reports by the established deadlines (e.g. staffing, expenditure/revenue, cost reports)?	<u>5</u>
	How often are the reports typically accurate?	<u>5</u>
	How often does Contractor submit financial reports accurately?	<u>5</u>
	Did the Contractor submit the previous Fiscal Year Cost Report timely and with little to no issue?	<u>5</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>	How well is the Contractor maintaining expenses within the County-approved line-item budget and expenses are being used for authorized purchases?	<u>N/A</u>
	How often does the Contractor obtain approval for major budget changes prior to implementation?	<u>N/A</u>
<b>Revenue</b>	How well does the Contractor report the appropriate amount of contractual revenue per the Expenditure and Revenue report?	<u>N/A</u>
	Does the Contractor have appropriate policies and procedures in place to generate and collect revenue? (If applicable)	<u>N/A</u>
<b>Subcontracts</b>	Did the Contractor submit accurate and complete subcontracts to Contract Administrator prior to the initiation of subcontract services?	<u>N/A</u>
	If changed, how often are subcontracts submitted to Contract Administrator for review accurately and in a timely basis?	<u>N/A</u>
<b>Staffing</b>	How well does the Contractor obtain approval for major staffing changes prior to implementation?	<u>5</u>
	How well does the contractor communicate staffing changes to Contract Administrator appropriately and in a timely manner?	<u>5</u>
<b>Units of Service</b>	How well does the Contractor meet or exceed the expected Units of Service as specified in the Contract? (If applicable).	<u>N/A</u>
<b>Overall Performance</b>	Does the Contractor adhere to the terms of the contract?	<u>5</u>
	Does the Contractor and Contractor personnel have knowledge of the contract requirements?	<u>5</u>
	Overall, does the Contractor collaborate and partner with Contract Services to ensure quality of work?	<u>5</u>

**Issues Identified:**

None.

**Action Plan:**

None.

**Contract Administrator's signature:**

DocuSigned by:  
*Monica Cabral*  
00AEB5B1A9F54EE...

**Supervisor's Initials:**

<sup>DS</sup>  
SK

**Date reviewed with Provider and with whom:**

George Vilagut 6/14/24



# CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING ♦ BUILDING ♦ PERMIT CENTER ♦ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ♦ HOUSING ♦ CODE ENFORCEMENT

2000 Main Street ♦ Huntington Beach CA 92648-2702 ♦ [www.huntingtonbeachca.gov](http://www.huntingtonbeachca.gov)

### NOTICE OF ACTION

October 24, 2023

George Vilagut  
356 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

**APPLICATION:** SPECIAL USE PERMIT NO. SUP-2023-002

**FACILITY OWNER/  
OPERATOR:** George Vilagut, 356 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Huntington Beach CA 92648

**PROPERTY OWNER:** George Vilagut, 356 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

**REQUEST:** To operate a Sober Living Home serving six or fewer residents.

**FACILITY LOCATION:** 8422 Polder Circle, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

**DATE OF ACTION:** October 24, 2023

On Tuesday, **October 24, 2023**, the Community Development Department of the City of Huntington Beach took action on your application and approved your permit. The operation of the subject sober living home is subject to the requirements listed in the Huntington Beach Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance (HBZSO), Section 230.28. This Special Use Permit may not be transferred to any other person or entity. Failure to comply with the requirements listed in Section 230.28 of the HBZSO may result in the revocation of this permit.

If you have any questions regarding this Notice of Action letter or the processing of your application, please contact Madalyn Welch, the city contact, at (714) 374-5353 or via email at [madalyn.welch@surfcity-hb.org](mailto:madalyn.welch@surfcity-hb.org) or the Department of Community Development at (714) 536-5271.

Sincerely,

Ursula Luna-Reynosa  
Community Development Director

By:

Madalyn Welch  
Associate Planner

# Orange County Certificate of Compliance

Stephouse Recovery  
8422 Polder Circle  
Huntington Beach, California 92647

*The above facility has met the minimum standards set forth in the Orange County Adult Alcohol and Drug Sober Living Facilities Certification Guidelines.*

*The Director has received a copy of the Certificate Guidelines and agrees to comply with all standards and procedures.*

George Vilagut

7-16-2025

Director

Date

Dominic Mejico

7-16-2025

Certification Coordinator

Date

DATE OF ISSUE:

7-16-2025

DATE OF EXPIRATION:

7-16-2026

CERTIFICATE NUMBER:

374



**From:** [Theresa Parra](#)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to Continued Use of Special Use Permit for 1601 Sober Living Home  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 8:50:58 PM

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the continued use of the Special Use Permit for the single-unit sober living home located at **1601 Baker Street Costa Mesa, CA 92626**.

This home is not being operated in accordance with the permit requirements. Most notably, it lacks a live-in, on-site house manager — a critical condition for maintaining the safety, supervision, and structure such a facility requires.

As a direct neighbor of this property, I can say with certainty that it has significantly impacted the safety and well-being of our residential neighborhood. The tenants, many of whom possibly have criminal records and known histories of substance abuse, have contributed to an increasingly unsafe environment. Our neighborhood includes families with young children, schools, parks, and churches within a one-mile radius — all of which should be protected and preserved as safe community spaces.

We have experienced several concerning incidents tied to individuals associated with the property at 1601, including but not limited to:

- An attempted break-in at my home by a man clearly under the influence, barefoot, who repeatedly tried to enter through our front door and attempted to scale our backyard gate. He was arrested shortly thereafter, in front of 1601.
- A man visiting a resident of 1601 jumped over our back wall in an attempt to flee when the facility director finally arrived for a check-in.
- A visitor and resident were found passed out in a vehicle that was slowly rolling in front of our driveway.
- Numerous police and emergency medical responses to the property.
- Ongoing suspicious activity involving individuals loitering in front of and across the street from 1601, whom are visiting residents of 1601.
- Impact of parking in a residential area, directly impacting neighboring homes

These are not isolated incidents. The presence and operations of this home are creating a persistent and escalating safety concern for our neighborhood. Families, including mine, no longer feel comfortable spending time in front of our own homes with our children. We are

constantly concerned about our personal safety, our children's safety, and the security of our property.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider the approval or renewal of the Special Use Permit for 1601. The current operation of this facility is not in compliance and is proving harmful to the surrounding community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,  
Concerned Resident of Baker Street

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**From:** [maw@scottwatersdesign.com](mailto:maw@scottwatersdesign.com)  
**To:** [GREEN, BRENDA](#)  
**Cc:** [MENDEZ, VICTOR](#)  
**Subject:** Request for denial for 1601 Baker St Sober Living Home  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 9:09:27 PM  
**Attachments:** [Request for denial for 1601 Baker St Sober Living Home.pdf](#)

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Ms. Green, hello,

This is my planned “three minutes” for tomorrow’s request for a Special Use Permit that is being heard this Thursday, October 23, 2025 at the Public Hearing.

If you could send it out to the commissioners so that they have a chance to read it before the meeting that would be most appreciated.

Thanks so much,

Marilyn Scott-Waters

Costa Mesa resident.

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Marilyn Scott-Waters  
1589 Baker Street  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

c. 714 955-7666

[maw@scottwatersdesign.com](mailto:maw@scottwatersdesign.com)

**Rebuttal to the Application for a License for a Sober Living Home at 1601 Baker Street  
Marilyn Scott-Waters**

Good afternoon, honorable Planning Commission Members,

In the *Land Use Element* which is the *Costa Mesa General Plan* for our city, it promises to maintain and enhance the great quality of life in Costa Mesa is the foundation of this General Plan.

*The City will also protect and enhance neighborhoods throughout Costa Mesa to ensure these largely residential areas continue to provide value to residents and the community as whole. Foremost, attention will be given to protecting the character and quality of residential neighborhoods.”*

*Objective LU-1A. Establish and maintain a balance of land uses throughout the community to preserve the residential character of the City at a level no greater than can be supported by the infrastructure.*

So Mesa Verde residents are promised that the City will protect the character and quality of our neighborhood.

While having one group home (Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program) on 1597 Baker Street can be a challenge, it is an acceptable impact on our quality of life as good neighbors. However, having two special use homes, right next door to other, even though they are classified differently, is an unfair burden on Baker Street residents. I was told that the 650 feet distance law only applies to sober living homes but the projected uses of both houses are essentially the same thing, that is to say, 24 hour care residential facilities.

The only discernible difference between the two facilities I could find was that Childhelp Inc is a state licensed non-profit and StepHouse Recovery, while licensed, is privately owned.

There is no difference between the uses of these two homes besides the specific protected classes that they accommodate. The impact is the same. The two residential facilities bring the same amount of traffic, noise and parking congestion.

An ordinance passed by the Orange County Planning Commission reads, “*Responsibly-operated homes provide a societal benefit, but over-concentration can lead to the “institutionalization and commercialization” of single-family neighborhoods. Individuals and families often purchase homes in single-family neighborhoods for the tranquility and safety that accompanies such neighborhoods and with the expectation of establishing close and long-standing ties with their neighbors.*”

I ask that the Planning Commission keep the City’s promise as stated in the the *Costa Mesa General Plan*, to continue to maintain the quality of life for the residents of Baker Street.

I believe the burden of proof to deny this project is evident in our City's general plan. These uses are incompatible within proximity to each other. Moreover, the letter and spirit of the law calls for a balance of use, density and intensity that does not appear evident here. Again, I respectfully request that you deny this project.

Thank you for your time.

Marilyn Scott-Waters

1589 Baker Street  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

**From:** [Wyatt Russell](#)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Subject:** PGSH-24-0002 Public Comment  
**Date:** Thursday, October 23, 2025 11:16:04 AM  
**Attachments:** [Written Public Comment PGSH-24-0002.pdf](#)

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Hi Victor,

Here is my public comment for PGSH-24-0002. Please see attached. Thank you, and see you this afternoon.

Wyatt

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## Written Public Comment – Special Use Permit Application PGSH-24-0002

1601 Baker Street, Costa Mesa

Submitted and Written By: Wyatt Russell

Date: 10-23-2025

To: City of Costa Mesa – Planning Division / Hearing Officer – planninginfo@costamesaca.gov

### Introduction

Sober-living homes can serve an important role in supporting individuals in recovery when they are professionally managed, transparent, and accountable. Unfortunately, across Southern California — including right here in Costa Mesa — many operators have repeatedly exploited the system by opening homes first and seeking permission later, or by providing misleading information to obtain approvals they do not intend to follow.

It was precisely this pattern of unregulated and misrepresented operations that led the City to adopt Municipal Code §13-311, requiring sober-living operators to obtain a Special Use Permit, maintain spacing from other facilities, and demonstrate a verifiable record of compliance and reliability. These safeguards exist not to discourage recovery housing, but to protect residents, neighbors, and the integrity of the permitting process.

The current application for 1601 Baker Street, submitted by StepHouse Recovery Inc. and its owner George Vilagut, exemplifies the type of conduct §13-311 was designed to prevent. The record reveals multiple red flags, including:

- **Operating or advertising before obtaining permits;**
- **Submitting unverified claims** of governmental oversight; and
- **A lengthy history** of litigation and regulatory actions across multiple jurisdictions.

For these reasons, and as a neighboring homeowner directly affected by this proposal, I respectfully urge the City to **deny or continue** this application until these issues are fully verified and resolved.

### 1. Repeated History of Operating Before Permits Are Granted

StepHouse Recovery has an established pattern of **activating homes prior to receiving City authorization.**

**a. Fountain Valley Example:**

Page 29 of this packet contains an Orange County “Certificate of Compliance” dated **July 25, 2023** for **17981 Los Tiempos Street, Fountain Valley**. Yet Fountain Valley’s own public permit tracker still lists that address as **“Pending – No Permit Issued.”** This demonstrates that StepHouse began representing the site as operational **without ever receiving local approval**.

The seriousness of this behavior is underscored by public police records from the Fountain Valley Police Department, which show multiple incident responses at 17981 Los Tiempos Street between April 2023 and December 2024. Calls included a 9-1-1 text, violation of court order, “keep the peace” request, and citizen assist — all occurring while the home’s city permit remained “pending” and unapproved.

This clearly demonstrates the real-world consequences of allowing a sober-living facility to operate without oversight or enforcement. It also further establishes a pattern of noncompliance by StepHouse Recovery and Mr. Vilagut across jurisdictions.

**b. 1601 Baker Street (Costa Mesa):**

The same pattern of operating without a permit now appears here. On **page 146**, StepHouse submitted a nearly identical County “Certificate of Compliance” dated **September 4, 2024** for the Baker Street address. That certificate lists StepHouse Recovery as an *active facility*, clearly implying ongoing use.

Under **CMMC §13-311(E)**:

***“No group home shall operate, advertise, or accept residents prior to approval of a Special Use Permit pursuant to this section.”***

The existence of that certificate and present-tense language in the application constitute **direct evidence of operation or advertisement prior to approval**, in violation of this ordinance. Furthermore, performing the same act in Fountain Valley — a city that also has the permit listed as pending — proves this is a **repeated business practice**, not a one-time misunderstanding.

By law, the City **cannot retroactively authorize or excuse** an unpermitted operation. Doing so would nullify §13-311’s enforcement intent and invite every operator to open first and legalize later.

## 2. City Cannot Verify 650-Foot Separation Compliance

CMMC §13-311(D) requires that group homes be **at least 650 feet apart, measured parcel-line to parcel-line**. The staff packet includes only a spreadsheet of known facilities, not a verified map showing actual distances. That list omits homes operating without permits — precisely the kind of situation StepHouse has created.

If StepHouse has already been operating at 1601 Baker, it is entirely plausible that other unlicensed sober-living residences within 650 feet are also active. Without verified GIS measurement and field inspection, the City **cannot make the legally required finding** that this facility satisfies §13-311(D).

Approving the permit without that confirmation would render the spacing rule unenforceable and create grounds for future inconsistent applications.

### 3. Litigation and Enforcement History Demonstrates Unreliability

StepHouse Recovery Inc. and George Vilagut have been named in **at least ten civil cases** across Orange and Los Angeles Counties since 2015, including:

- *City of Huntington Beach v. StepHouse Recovery Inc.* (2018) – municipal nuisance enforcement;
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This pattern of lawsuits and enforcement shows chronic operational and financial instability — the opposite of the “responsibility and reliability” required under **§13-311(G)(3)(b)** and **§13-311(I)(1)(h)**.

### 4. Unverified Claims of Government Oversight

The application claims that StepHouse is “contracted with the Orange County Health Care Agency” and “certified annually by the Orange County Sheriff’s Department.” No verification was submitted.

Under **§13-311(I)(1)(f)**, any **false or misleading information** is grounds for denial or continuation.

If such contracts exist, the City should demand official documentation; otherwise, the claim should be deemed unsubstantiated.

## 5. Administrative Instability

Secretary of State records show StepHouse Recovery Inc. was **suspended multiple times** between 2013 and 2018 for failing to file required Statements of Information and pay state fees.

Although reinstated later, these suspensions reinforce a longstanding pattern of regulatory neglect consistent with the incomplete nature of this application.

## 6. Parking and Garage Requirements

Under **§13-311(G)(2)(b)** and R-1 zoning, the property must maintain **two enclosed off-street parking spaces**. Garages cannot be converted into bedrooms, offices, or storage. The application does not confirm that these spaces remain available for vehicles, leaving compliance uncertain.

## 7. Collective Pattern and Required Action

Viewed together, the evidence establishes a consistent pattern of:

- **Operating and advertising before permits** (Costa Mesa and Fountain Valley).
- **Unverifiable spacing** due to likely unlicensed neighboring homes.
- **Multiple lawsuits and enforcement actions.**
- **Unsupported oversight claims.**
- **Ongoing administrative instability.**

Each issue individually justifies continuation; together, they make approval indefensible under **§13-311(G)** and **§13-311(I)**.

## Requested Actions

I respectfully request that the Hearing Officer **deny or, at minimum, continue** this application until the City:

1. Produces a verified **parcel-based spacing map** confirming compliance with §13-311(D).
2. Obtains **independent verification** of any claimed County or Sheriff certifications.
3. Reviews the applicant's **complete litigation and compliance history**.
4. Conducts a **site inspection** verifying that the garage remains dedicated to vehicle parking.

5. Confirms whether StepHouse has already **operated or advertised** the 1601 Baker Street property, in violation of §13-311(E).

## Conclusion

The City’s group-home ordinance exists to ensure that recovery facilities operate transparently, lawfully, and responsibly. The record here shows the opposite — an operator with a repeated pattern of **premature operation, unverified claims, and legal instability**.

For these reasons, I urge the City to **deny or continue** this Special Use Permit until all facts are independently verified and compliance with §13-311 is proven.

Thank you for your consideration and for protecting the integrity of Costa Mesa’s neighborhoods and permitting process.

Sincerely,  
Wyatt Russell

## Attachments:

- **Exhibit A:** Litigation Summary Table
- **Exhibit B:** OC Certificate of Compliance – Costa Mesa (9-4-24)
- **Exhibit C:** OC Certificate of Compliance – Fountain Valley (7-25-23)
- **Exhibit D:** Relevant Excerpts – CMMC §13-311
- **Exhibit E:** Secretary of State Entries

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4	<b>30-2019-01053575-CU-BC-CJC</b>	<i>Creditors Adjustment Bureau v. StepHouse Recovery Inc.</i>	Orange County Superior Court	2019	Collections / contract debt	Judgment for creditor (confirmed record)
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Source: Orange County and Federal court records; case numbers confirmed via public dockets.

**Exhibits B and C: OC Certificate of Compliance (Issued Well Before Local City Permit)**

**Orange County  
Certificate of Compliance**

**Stephouse Recovery  
1601 Baker St.  
Costa Mesa, California 92626**

*The above facility has met the minimum standards set forth in the Orange County Adult Alcohol and Drug Sober Living Facilities Certification Guidelines.*

*The Director has received a copy of the Certificate Guidelines and agrees to comply with all standards and procedures.*

<u>George Vilagut</u>	<u>9-4-24</u>
Director	Date
<u>Dominic Mejico</u>	<u>9-4-24</u>
Certification Coordinator	Date

DATE OF ISSUE: 9-4-24

DATE OF EXPIRATION: 9-4-25

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 337



**Orange County  
Certificate of Compliance**

**Stephouse Recovery  
17981 Los Tiempos  
Fountain Valley, California 92708**

*The above facility has met the minimum standards set forth in the Orange County Adult Alcohol and Drug Sober Living Facilities Certification Guidelines.*


*The Director has received a copy of the Certificate Guidelines and agrees to comply with all standards and procedures.*

<u>George Vilagut</u>	<u>7-25-2023</u>
Director	Date
<u>Dominic Mejico</u>	<u>7-25-2023</u>
Certification Coordinator	Date

DATE OF ISSUE: 7-25-2023

DATE OF EXPIRATION: 7-25-2024

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 276



## Exhibit D – Relevant Excerpts from the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Section 13-311)

### Group Homes, Including Sober-Living Homes

#### Section 13-311 (A) – Purpose and Intent

*The purpose of this section is to ensure that group homes, including sober-living homes, operate in a manner that is compatible with surrounding residential uses and consistent with applicable laws. The City intends to preserve the residential character of neighborhoods while providing opportunities for housing individuals with disabilities and those in recovery.*

#### Section 13-311 (B) – Applicability

*This section applies to all group homes and sober-living homes located in the R-1 and R-2 residential zoning districts and to any facility providing residential living arrangements for persons recovering from drug or alcohol addiction who are not under the supervision of a licensed medical professional.*

#### Section 13-311 (C) – Definitions (Selected)

*“Group Home” means a dwelling unit occupied by persons living together in a single housekeeping unit who are not related by blood, marriage, or legal adoption and who receive supportive care or supervision.*

*“Sober-Living Home” means a group home providing a supportive residential environment for persons recovering from drug or alcohol addiction, which does not include on-site medical detoxification or treatment services.*

*“Operator” means any person or entity responsible for the management, maintenance, or oversight of a group home.*

*“Resident” means any person living on the premises as part of the program, whether permanently or temporarily.*

#### Section 13-311 (D) – Separation Requirement

*A group home shall not be located within 650 feet, measured parcel-line to parcel-line, of any other group home, licensed treatment facility, or sober-living home.*

#### Section 13-311 (E) – Permit Required

*No group home shall operate, advertise, or accept residents prior to approval of a Special Use Permit pursuant to this section.*

*Operation of a group home without an approved permit shall constitute a violation of this Code and is subject to enforcement action, including denial or revocation of any subsequent permit.*

#### Section 13-311 (F) – Application Requirements (Selected)

*Each application for a Special Use Permit shall include:*

- (1) A detailed management and operations plan;*
- (2) Evidence of compliance with building, fire, and health codes;*
- (3) A parking plan showing availability of required spaces;*
- (4) Certification of insurance coverage; and*
- (5) Contact information for the property owner and on-site manager.*

***(Note: The application at 1601 Baker St. appears to omit or inadequately substantiate several of these required elements.)***

**Section 13-311 (G) – Development and Operating Standards (Selected)**

- (1) Each facility shall comply with all applicable health, safety, and building codes.*
- (2)(b) Each group home located in the R-1 zone shall maintain two enclosed off-street parking spaces and may not convert those spaces to bedrooms, offices, storage, or meeting rooms.*
- (3)(b) In reviewing applications, the City shall consider the reliability and responsibility of the operator, including compliance history with applicable laws and regulations, and may deny the application if the operator’s record demonstrates a lack of such reliability.*

**Section 13-311 (I) – Findings and Grounds for Denial (Selected)**

*A Special Use Permit may be denied, revoked, or suspended if any of the following are found:*

- (1)(f) The applicant has provided false, misleading, or incomplete information in the application or during the review process.*
- (1)(h) The applicant or operator has a history of violations or enforcement actions under federal, state, or local law related to group homes or similar facilities.*
- (1)(i) The use, as proposed, would be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare of the neighborhood or inconsistent with the residential character of the area.*

**Section 13-311 (J) – Enforcement**

*Any violation of this section shall constitute a public nuisance and may be subject to fines, criminal prosecution, and revocation of any permit. Each day of unpermitted operation constitutes a separate violation.*

**Section 13-311 (K) – Revocation**

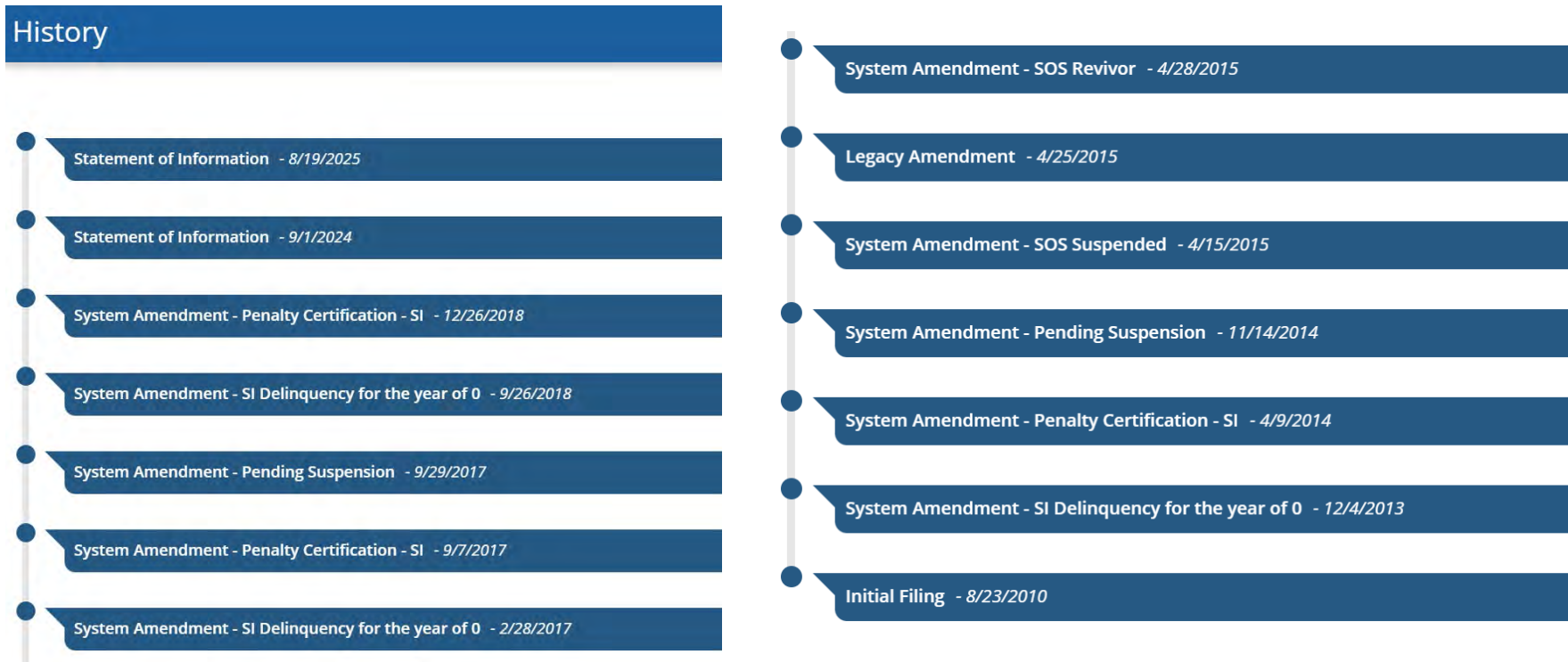
The City may revoke a Special Use Permit if the operator fails to comply with the conditions of approval, operates contrary to the representations made in the application, or otherwise violates the provisions of this Code.

### Summary of Relevance

The provisions above clearly establish that:

1. A permit must be obtained before operation, advertisement, or accepting residents (Section 13-311 E).
2. Homes must be separated by at least 650 feet (Section 13-311 D).
3. Operators must demonstrate reliability, compliance history, and maintain required parking (Section 13-311 G).
4. False information, prior violations, or detrimental impacts are legal grounds for denial (Section 13-311 I).
5. Operating without approval is a public nuisance subject to enforcement (Section 13-311 J).

## Exhibit E: Secretary of State Entries



**From:** [Kristin Auslander](#)  
**To:** [PLANNING INFO](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment for PGSH-24-0002  
**Date:** Thursday, October 23, 2025 11:18:30 AM  
**Attachments:** [Written Public Comment PGSH-24-0002.pdf](#)

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Dear Planning Commission,

Attached is my public comment for PGSH-24-0002.

Thank You.

-Kristin

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Report any suspicious activities to the Information Technology Department.

## Written Public Comment – Special Use Permit Application PGSH-24-0002

1601 Baker Street, Costa Mesa

Submitted and Written By: Wyatt Russell

Date: 10-23-2025

To: City of Costa Mesa – Planning Division / Hearing Officer – planninginfo@costamesaca.gov

### Introduction

Sober-living homes can serve an important role in supporting individuals in recovery when they are professionally managed, transparent, and accountable. Unfortunately, across Southern California — including right here in Costa Mesa — many operators have repeatedly exploited the system by opening homes first and seeking permission later, or by providing misleading information to obtain approvals they do not intend to follow.

It was precisely this pattern of unregulated and misrepresented operations that led the City to adopt Municipal Code §13-311, requiring sober-living operators to obtain a Special Use Permit, maintain spacing from other facilities, and demonstrate a verifiable record of compliance and reliability. These safeguards exist not to discourage recovery housing, but to protect residents, neighbors, and the integrity of the permitting process.

The current application for 1601 Baker Street, submitted by StepHouse Recovery Inc. and its owner George Vilagut, exemplifies the type of conduct §13-311 was designed to prevent. The record reveals multiple red flags, including:

- **Operating or advertising before obtaining permits;**
- **Submitting unverified claims** of governmental oversight; and
- **A lengthy history** of litigation and regulatory actions across multiple jurisdictions.

For these reasons, and as a neighboring homeowner directly affected by this proposal, I respectfully urge the City to **deny or continue** this application until these issues are fully verified and resolved.

### 1. Repeated History of Operating Before Permits Are Granted

StepHouse Recovery has an established pattern of **activating homes prior to receiving City authorization.**

**a. Fountain Valley Example:**

Page 29 of this packet contains an Orange County “Certificate of Compliance” dated **July 25, 2023** for **17981 Los Tiempos Street, Fountain Valley**. Yet Fountain Valley’s own public permit tracker still lists that address as **“Pending – No Permit Issued.”** This demonstrates that StepHouse began representing the site as operational **without ever receiving local approval**.

The seriousness of this behavior is underscored by public police records from the Fountain Valley Police Department, which show multiple incident responses at 17981 Los Tiempos Street between April 2023 and December 2024. Calls included a 9-1-1 text, violation of court order, “keep the peace” request, and citizen assist — all occurring while the home’s city permit remained “pending” and unapproved.

This clearly demonstrates the real-world consequences of allowing a sober-living facility to operate without oversight or enforcement. It also further establishes a pattern of noncompliance by StepHouse Recovery and Mr. Vilagut across jurisdictions.

**b. 1601 Baker Street (Costa Mesa):**

The same pattern of operating without a permit now appears here. On **page 146**, StepHouse submitted a nearly identical County “Certificate of Compliance” dated **September 4, 2024** for the Baker Street address. That certificate lists StepHouse Recovery as an *active facility*, clearly implying ongoing use.

Under **CMMC §13-311(E)**:

***“No group home shall operate, advertise, or accept residents prior to approval of a Special Use Permit pursuant to this section.”***

The existence of that certificate and present-tense language in the application constitute **direct evidence of operation or advertisement prior to approval**, in violation of this ordinance. Furthermore, performing the same act in Fountain Valley — a city that also has the permit listed as pending — proves this is a **repeated business practice**, not a one-time misunderstanding.

By law, the City **cannot retroactively authorize or excuse** an unpermitted operation. Doing so would nullify §13-311’s enforcement intent and invite every operator to open first and legalize later.

## 2. City Cannot Verify 650-Foot Separation Compliance

CMMC §13-311(D) requires that group homes be **at least 650 feet apart, measured parcel-line to parcel-line**. The staff packet includes only a spreadsheet of known facilities, not a verified map showing actual distances. That list omits homes operating without permits — precisely the kind of situation StepHouse has created.

If StepHouse has already been operating at 1601 Baker, it is entirely plausible that other unlicensed sober-living residences within 650 feet are also active. Without verified GIS measurement and field inspection, the City **cannot make the legally required finding** that this facility satisfies §13-311(D).

Approving the permit without that confirmation would render the spacing rule unenforceable and create grounds for future inconsistent applications.

### 3. Litigation and Enforcement History Demonstrates Unreliability

StepHouse Recovery Inc. and George Vilagut have been named in **at least ten civil cases** across Orange and Los Angeles Counties since 2015, including:

- *City of Huntington Beach v. StepHouse Recovery Inc.* (2018) – municipal nuisance enforcement;
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This pattern of lawsuits and enforcement shows chronic operational and financial instability — the opposite of the “responsibility and reliability” required under **§13-311(G)(3)(b)** and **§13-311(I)(1)(h)**.

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The application claims that StepHouse is “contracted with the Orange County Health Care Agency” and “certified annually by the Orange County Sheriff’s Department.” No verification was submitted.

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Viewed together, the evidence establishes a consistent pattern of:

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- **Unverifiable spacing** due to likely unlicensed neighboring homes.
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Each issue individually justifies continuation; together, they make approval indefensible under **§13-311(G)** and **§13-311(I)**.

## Requested Actions

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## Conclusion

The City’s group-home ordinance exists to ensure that recovery facilities operate transparently, lawfully, and responsibly. The record here shows the opposite — an operator with a repeated pattern of **premature operation, unverified claims, and legal instability**.

For these reasons, I urge the City to **deny or continue** this Special Use Permit until all facts are independently verified and compliance with §13-311 is proven.

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**Orange County  
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**Stephouse Recovery  
1601 Baker St.  
Costa Mesa, California 92626**

*The above facility has met the minimum standards set forth in the Orange County Adult Alcohol and Drug Sober Living Facilities Certification Guidelines.*

*The Director has received a copy of the Certificate Guidelines and agrees to comply with all standards and procedures.*

<u>George Vilagut</u>	<u>9-4-24</u>
Director	Date
<u>Dominic Mejico</u>	<u>9-4-24</u>
Certification Coordinator	Date

DATE OF ISSUE: 9-4-24

DATE OF EXPIRATION: 9-4-25

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 337



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Director	Date
<u>Dominic Mejico</u>	<u>7-25-2023</u>
Certification Coordinator	Date

DATE OF ISSUE: 7-25-2023

DATE OF EXPIRATION: 7-25-2024

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 276



## Exhibit D – Relevant Excerpts from the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Section 13-311)

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*The purpose of this section is to ensure that group homes, including sober-living homes, operate in a manner that is compatible with surrounding residential uses and consistent with applicable laws. The City intends to preserve the residential character of neighborhoods while providing opportunities for housing individuals with disabilities and those in recovery.*

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***(Note: The application at 1601 Baker St. appears to omit or inadequately substantiate several of these required elements.)***

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*A Special Use Permit may be denied, revoked, or suspended if any of the following are found:*

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- (1)(h) The applicant or operator has a history of violations or enforcement actions under federal, state, or local law related to group homes or similar facilities.*
- (1)(i) The use, as proposed, would be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare of the neighborhood or inconsistent with the residential character of the area.*

**Section 13-311 (J) – Enforcement**

*Any violation of this section shall constitute a public nuisance and may be subject to fines, criminal prosecution, and revocation of any permit. Each day of unpermitted operation constitutes a separate violation.*

**Section 13-311 (K) – Revocation**

The City may revoke a Special Use Permit if the operator fails to comply with the conditions of approval, operates contrary to the representations made in the application, or otherwise violates the provisions of this Code.

### Summary of Relevance

The provisions above clearly establish that:

1. A permit must be obtained before operation, advertisement, or accepting residents (Section 13-311 E).
2. Homes must be separated by at least 650 feet (Section 13-311 D).
3. Operators must demonstrate reliability, compliance history, and maintain required parking (Section 13-311 G).
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5. Operating without approval is a public nuisance subject to enforcement (Section 13-311 J).

## Exhibit E: Secretary of State Entries

