Lift to Rise, a Coachella Valley Collaborative, Announces the Addition of a Regional Planner for Affordable Housing

Taylor Libolt Varner, the new Regional Planner for Affordable Housing, is jumping in to advance housing stability for all Coachella Valley residents.

PALM DESERT, CA — Today, Lift to Rise, a cross-sector community partnership dedicated to improving quality of life for all Coachella Valley residents, announced an addition to the team, playing a critical new role for the region. Taylor Libolt Varner, the new Regional Planner for Affordable Housing, is charged with coordinating a regional response to the housing crisis in the Valley, promoting policies and pursuing funding opportunities that will bring more units of affordable housing to the region. This role was developed in collaboration with Lift to Rise’s partners and is funded in partnership with the County of Riverside.

“Our 50+ public, private, and non-profit partners in our Housing Stability Collaborative Action Network identified the need for a regional planner dedicated to the facilitation of affordable housing development in the Coachella Valley,” said Lift to Rise CEO Heather Vaikona. “We are grateful to be in partnership with the County of Riverside in providing this role in order to meet our shared goals.”

Libolt Varner will serve as a liaison between local communities and the State—coordinating the training on State policy changes and other relevant issues confronting the region—and increasing
communication and collaboration between local government staff and elected officials around meeting the housing needs of the Coachella Valley.

“I am glad I was able to play a part in the creation of a regional planner position for the amazing housing work being done by Lift to Rise,” said Riverside Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. “Having a regional planner will foster collaboration and assist our Valley in meeting our affordable housing needs.”

Beyond serving as a liaison between the local communities and the State, Libolt Varner will ensure communication and collaboration between the County of Riverside, all nine cities in the region, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments, and Lift to Rise. All of these entities have mutually held goals, and believe it will take collective action to create concrete change across the region.

“There is a critical need for more affordable housing. To meet this need we of course need funding, but we also need to address local policies that create barriers to developing affordable housing,” said Carrie Harmon, Assistant Director of the Riverside County Housing Authority. “The creation of a regional planner dedicated to this policy work is an important step forward.”

While the Coachella Valley is primarily known for its opulence and highly sought after events and festivals, those that live in the Valley are far removed from this lifestyle. Valley residents constantly have to decide whether to pay the rent, the utility bills, buy food, or pay for medication—decisions nobody should have to make. Rent burden and economic insecurity have held back our region for too long, and Lift to Rise is dedicated to pursuing a more equitable future for all Coachella Valley residents.

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**About Lift to Rise**

Lift to Rise is a cross-sector, community-driven movement to improve life in Southern California’s Coachella Valley for the majority of residents that do not experience the opulence and luxury for which the area is known. The web of disadvantages that people face include a lack of affordable housing, transportation infrastructure, health resources, and jobs that pay enough to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Lift to Rise seeks to build upon community strengths and collective vision to realize a future where “All Coachella Valley families are healthy, stable, and thriving.”