



CITIZENS PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, INC.
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5 September 2007

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Tom McClintock
223 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 400
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Assemblymember Pedro Nava
101 W. Anapamu Street, Suite A
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Senator Don Perata
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblyman Sam Blakesley
1302 Marsh St.
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Speaker Fabian Nunez
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0046

RE: State Housing Mandates

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger, Assemblymember Nava, Assemblymember Blakesley, Senator McClintock, Senator Perata, and Speaker Nunez,

Citizens Planning Association of Santa Barbara County (CPA) has been an active force for sound community planning for nearly five decades. Throughout that time, we have promoted living within our resources including land, water, air quality, transportation, waste treatment, and visual resources, while at the same time promoting a diverse community. We championed the commission of one of the first studies of its kind into the impacts of various levels of growth on our community; ranging from the capacity of our water supply and traffic systems to the impact on our workforce and the diversity of our population. We have supported ballot measures to enforce sound planning based on such studies – all of them overwhelmingly supported at the polls by residents who care deeply about the very special community they call home.

Many times over the years, our local Supervisors and City Council members have acted positively on CPA's proposals and recommendations. Sometimes they have not - but in every case the decisions followed extensive public input and debate, and, in the end, were based on what these locally elected officials felt was best for their community. It is a sound process which, by and large, results in sound decisions reflecting the interests and desires of the citizens who will be affected by those decisions. The State Housing Mandates, by contrast, are the antithesis of sound planning. They have simply been imposed on local jurisdictions from on high in a manner that represents neither art nor science. The population "projections" on which they are based have twice been revised downward since they were used to determine how much housing the state would need to accommodate the influx. In fact, the projections are based solely on past trends that are no longer relevant.

But if the projections on which the mandates are based are dubious, at best, the manner in which they are applied is absolutely draconian. The State ignored such factors as local water supplies, transportation systems and job creation capacity; let alone which areas in the state are already actively courting growth and development. Instead, the highly questionable projected number of needed housing units was randomly scattered throughout the state, county by county – and sound community planning, based on very real local constraints, was just so randomly cast asunder.

Communities throughout Santa Barbara County are already grappling with an undeniable need for affordable housing. CPA recognizes that without more affordable rental housing, our goal of maintaining a diverse community will quickly slip from reach. These mandates do absolutely nothing to provide affordable housing. On the contrary, the main affordability tool available to localities is an inclusionary scheme, which in some cases actually increases the demand for more affordable housing. In other words, these mandates may actually worsen our existing affordable housing shortage – not help it.

It is a widely held view in many affected communities that these mandates have been forced upon us by influential lobbyists working for wealthy landowners and developers. After all, the required massive rezoning of land benefits those two groups immensely, while providing little or nothing to its supposed beneficiaries; those who are in genuine need of affordable housing. Whether this legislation really was just a political payoff, or simply the misguided result of good intentions, the result is the same: a bad law.

After many hours of input, study and discussion, the Citizens Planning Association has voted to adopt the position that the California State Housing Mandates should be repealed, before the next five-year cycle that begins in 2008 is imposed. We urge you take a leadership role in repealing this ill-conceived and counterproductive legislation. The voters whose lives and communities will be changed forever by this law are only now becoming aware of its impacts, and if the anger and resentment being expressed in local editorials and letters to the editor is any indication, this is not an issue that will go away. In fact, the battle is only beginning – and leaders are needed.

CPA urges you to show your constituents that you're on their side. Repeal the Mandates NOW.

We ask that you please respond to this letter in writing.

Sincerely,

Naomi Kovacs
Executive Director
Citizens Planning Association

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