

Testimony for County of Sacramento Board of Supervisors Meeting of August 8, 2007, Agenda Item 29, Affordable Housing Ordinance

Submitted by Roseanna Torretto, President, League of Women Voters of Sacramento County

The League of Women Voters of Sacramento County opposes any changes to the County's Affordable Housing Ordinance which weaken the original ordinance as it concerns mixed income housing and especially housing for extremely low income people.

The League has been involved with this issue for over four years. In April 2003 we supported the adoption of the County Housing Element and a mixed income ordinance. In June 2004 we supported the draft Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and asked that it be made more specific:

- To make 15% of new housing affordable to extremely low, very low and low income households
- To make this affordable housing available in new residential developments.
- To make alternatives available to builders.
- To make accessible affordable housing available.
- To build market rate and affordable units concurrently.

We agreed that builders should have alternatives, that one size does not fit all; and we supported the use of in lieu fees as an alternative to building on-site, but preferred on-site. We supported the housing built with in lieu fees to be constructed within the same growth area.

Change #1, the Extremely Low Income (ELI) Buy-Down program, is of particular concern. We are not yet convinced of the stated benefits, i.e., less public funding is required and the potential for more ELI units.

Change #2, Concurrency, weakens the original ordinance. The affordable housing in a development must be built concurrently with the market rate units.

Change #3, Credits for the Overproduction of Units, as currently written, can easily lead to an over concentration of affordable developments. If credits are given, the number of units available for credit must be limited by specific number, not by a percent of the development.

We support integrating the affordable units with the market rate units and oppose building more complexes where only poor people live. Neighborhoods should never be stratified: homes for teachers, waiters, laborers, attorneys, builders and developers should be mixed. This can be achieved by mixing rental units with for-sale units. Mid-town Sacramento is a good example of people with very low to very high incomes living peacefully together.

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The County is not meeting its Regional Housing Needs Allocation for low income people. Using the Affordable Housing Ordinance in its original form would certainly improve meeting those goals.

The County is a partner in the Regional Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. Housing those with Extremely Low Incomes will help to realize this goal.

We encourage the Board to reject any amendment that weakens the Affordable Housing Ordinance. We look forward to seeing how creative builders can be in meeting the requirements of the existing ordinance --- as they have been.

The League of Women Voters has been an active champion of openness in government throughout its history. We encourage the Board to make no changes to the hard-fought provisions of the ordinance without full public participation.