June 10, 2024

**RE: AB-1893 (Wicks): Housing Accountability Act: housing disapprovals: required local findings OPPOSE**

Dear Senate Housing Committee:

With all due respect, this bill is an example of the problems that occur when a legislative body with a responsibility to set sound, evidence-based policy falls into a trap of micro-managing. With a myopic focus on “housing” accountability, legislators seem to have lost sight of their own “governance accountability.” Without guidance from economic and housing experts, this bill generate ineffective bureaucracy for end-users: counties and communities.

The contorted language of this bill foretells the likelihood it will lead to more confusion, not policy solutions. What’s at issue? Legislators seem determined to appeased developer/investors by decreasing the amount of housing for low-income households from 20% to 10%. The definitions and language are vague. The unintended consequences are not explored.

Do you forget that the RHNA allocation process assures that jurisdictions will be flooded with market-rate housing? Cities, not of their own doing, but for convoluted laws like this one, will fail to meet their RHNA quotas. Mid-cycle, without corrections, builders will swoop in to build monstrous, market- and above market-rate projects. The projects are a builder’s remedy for more profits, but fail to meet the housing needs of wage-earners. Previous legislation has stripped away communities’ capacity to stop the trainwrecks they see coming.

At a recent gathering of elected officials and community leaders, attendees generated observations about HCD, RHNA, and housing accountability. Here are some of their comments.

* RHNA gentrifies communities and will bankrupt cities. As a strategy for affordable housing, it’s a work of fiction.
* RHNA: a trainwreck greased with greed and legislative give-away to developers/investors
* There is no relationship between RHNA and affordable housing.
* The RHNA narrative is unplugged from economic reality.
* Housing failure in CA foreshadows housing failure around the country.

Passing AB 1893 puts the cart before the horse. Delay action on this bill until you have the Housing Element Audit Report. That will give you data to know where to aim your efforts to improve Housing Element Law. We urge you to OPPOSE this bill.

Sincerely,

 

Susan Kirsch, Director

Catalysts for Local Control