

Summary of Affordable Housing Recommendations

Noah Briel's former twelve years of experience as a Teamster Union Steward taught him one valuable lesson. There is no better answer for a problem than a win-win solution. Many of the recommendations listed in the El Dorado County Affordable Housing Policy Implementation draft could be considered win-lose by opponents of affordable housing or uncontrolled growth. The new reality is "affordable" now refers to our grown children, our retired parents, and the back bone workforce of our county. We believe that educating the public to this reality is absolutely crucial to dealing with this huge problem. We are sure that most citizens of El Dorado County are not aware of the various levels of affordability. They perceive "affordable" as synonymous with poor and would fight to keep it out of their neighborhoods. Our county is in danger, in the long run, of a workforce shortage created by lack of workforce housing, resulting in long commutes from other counties, increasing traffic congestion, and stressing our county infrastructure even more. The infrastructure costs to supply a workforce in El Dorado County ideally should be spent on solving affordability problems instead of building new lanes on the freeway for the same people to commute from elsewhere. We want our community to have the diversity of many economic layers. We do not want to live in a gentrified environment that excludes all but the wealthiest people. In addition, if we do not address these affordability issues, El Dorado County is at great risk of being sued which could once again freeze our General Plan. The City of Folsom recently experienced a two year shut down for not addressing their affordability issues. Clearly, El Dorado County does not want to experience the same fate.

Some government agencies deal with this problem by taxing their citizens or pushing the burden of affordability onto new development. We believe there is a creative solution that benefits all. The win-win solution in our opinion is to promote smart growth, mixed-use projects and package them in such a way that the normal opposition perceives these projects as an asset to their community. The county can best facilitate these projects by encouraging developers to follow the SACOG Blueprint for smart growth, and granting changes of zoning conditioned with affordable housing requirements mitigated by a multi-level density bonus program. With this solution, the county may not have to give up much needed fees to subsidize construction of affordable units. Ideally, the developer would have the feasibility leeway provided by higher densities to profitably build workforce housing without subsidy. Low and very low income units could be supplied by non-profit organizations tapping existing funding sources which are contingent upon access to smart growth infrastructure.

We have learned by traveling to Europe and other regions in the United States that smart growth projects can solve affordability issues without sacrificing the environment or compromising design quality standards. To win over public opinion, we believe it is necessary to build the highest quality, aesthetically pleasing projects.

Achieving an aesthetically pleasing, smart growth project that incorporates affordable housing requires creativity and will power. Where there is a will, there is a way. El Dorado County should be doing all they can to encourage creativity by partnering with innovative people and providing the necessary incentives to foster smart growth principles while not crushing the spirit of willing developers. The risks of inaction are enormous. The large numbers of affordable housing units requested of El Dorado County by SACOG require courage by government officials to guide the county in a new bold direction. If the county believes in smart growth principles and sets policy to promote these principles, we believe developers will rise to the challenge.

2007 Affordable Housing Task Force Members

Noah Briel
El Dorado Hills

Kathy Waldie
El Dorado

"Art Marinaccio"
<artmarinaccio@hotmail.com>

07/30/2007 08:37 AM

RE: Reminder: AHTF comments due

The main comment is a disappointment that there was never a correction to the basic flaw that persists in the analysis. The decision to choose to selectively analyze those jurisdictions that have enacted inclusionary housing ordinances makes the PMC document unresponsive to the questions asked under HO-C.

These types of large expenditures on "studies" that are designed only to arrive at a predetermined outcome need to be eliminated.

These comments are in addition to those previously made.

The Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County reiterates its insistence that no new contracts be issued to this contractor until these basic issues are resolved. Studies need to help arrive decision makers at good decisions. Studies are not expenditures of taxpayer money to confirm staff's opinion.