

Housing Element – A Promising Start

Comments to City Council on City of Alameda 2017 Housing Element Annual Report

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Alameda's housing policies and development record have markedly improved since 2010. Many elements of our housing policies – notably our mandatory inclusionary policy - are widely admired and we are building hundreds of new housing units to add to the local and regional supply. We are on track to meet our 2023 target for market rate housing. Still, we are far behind in meeting the target for affordable housing.

Like every other City in California, our policies and approach to developing affordable housing are inadequate. We need to draw on funding sources in addition to market rate housing to finance affordable housing.

Just to meet the additional demand created by new market rate housing, we must finance 4 affordable units for every 2 market rate units – that is about 67% of the units we build must be affordable. At best, financing affordable housing solely with market rate units can provide 2 affordable units for every 4 market rate units – that is about 33% affordable or one-half of what is needed. Our widely admired mandatory inclusionary zoning policy requires only about 1 affordable unit for every 5 market rate units – that is about 15% affordable, or less than one-fourth of what is needed to prevent multiple low and middle income families from crowding into a single housing unit, moving to far flung suburbs, or living in parks and under overpasses.

Thus our existing housing policies are leading us to become ever more reliant on Oakland and other surrounding communities to house the new workers required to staff businesses that new market rate housing attracts to Alameda. Affordable housing in these surrounding communities is also becoming scarce. If we move Alameda to the head of the class for funding construction of affordable housing, we will be better positioned to attract and retain both residents and businesses.

The City faces many demands for funding. Still, unless we provide additional funding for affordable housing, the State is moving towards taking away much of our ability to shape development in our City. Let's provide more funding for affordable housing and control our own destiny.

Submitted by Bill Smith
Re: b-c
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