

January 22, 2009

HUMBOLDT COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Chapter 8

Humboldt County
General Plan—
Housing Element



Our Primary Concerns

Housing Element References

Inclusionary Zoning hurts affordability	H-P3 H-S5 H-IM3 H-IM8
Mixed Use Occupancies should be allowed, not mandated	H-P4
California Building Codes can't be altered by the County.	H-P7 H-P8
Density Calculations should consider All regulations & constraints	H-IM3 H-S2 H-S3 H-S4
Mandatory Density Increases will force housing into mid and high rise buildings changing our community	H-S6

Who We Are

NCHB

Northern California Association of Home Builders
"committed to affordable housing"

- NCHB members are a diverse group of Humboldt County citizens which include contractors, bankers, Realtors, land use attorneys, scientists, architects and engineers.
- Our members are responsible for constructing and renovating over 80% of the housing generated in Humboldt County.
- We Know Land Use Issues!

There are a number of areas in the Housing Element draft that we support. A few areas, however, cause us concern and are summarized below:

● **Inclusionary Zoning Does Not Work:** Under these plans, the buyer does not participate in price appreciation. How then can they advance into standard housing when their target home appreciates beyond their reach? Federal and State grants are unpredictable and can not be properly planned for. Buyers **MUST** sell their property to the sponsor agency or another qualifying individual and do not have the same property transfer rights of a true homeowner. (H-P3, H-S5, H-IM3, H-IM8)

● **Lot Development Costs Hurt Affordability:** The biggest obstacles to home affordability (besides good jobs) are the limitation of buildable land available for sale and the excessive development constraints that overlay the parcels identified in the land inventory. These constraints are numerous. Some are physical, such as wetlands and lack of infrastructure, and some are generated through federal, State and County restrictions. If the County can ease these restrictions and assist with infrastructure, than the cost to develop lots will decrease and housing will become more affordable to our citizenry. (H-S16 and Elsewhere)

● **Redevelopment Appears to be Reintroduced:** There are many references within the Plan to "redevelopment." While we acknowledge that revitalization of former mill and industrial sites is critical, we hope the housing element is not being used to help establish a redevelopment agency without proper public input. We have concerns that such an agency could siphon necessary property tax dollars from districts such as fire districts and service districts; that it would establish a new source of funds for the State to raid during their budgetary crisis; and it can cause an increase in development costs in excess of the benefit due to prevailing wage requirements. (F19, H-IM6, H-IM19)

Let us Help!

We all love Humboldt County and for probably the same reasons. The future health and welfare of our community is a concern to all our citizens. Let us help. Our organization deals with these issues every day and we possess extensive expertise that should be seriously considered when reviewing, editing and adopting the elements of our General Plan. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss these matters in further detail.

Thank you for your time and service.

Facts to Consider:

- Inclusionary Zoning adds significant cost to new housing, pushing home ownership beyond the reach of many first time buyers.
- Single Family Permits let by the County through November totaled 154 units. Only 4 permitted in November.
- The Regional Housing Needs Assessment has not been completed. A trustworthy Housing Element can not be drafted without it.
- The Housing Element does not evaluate the reality of our current economic environment and the impact of old, decaying infrastructure.
- Lot inventory data used is highly optimistic and does not reflect actual "on the ground"