



NEWS RELEASE

THE STATE REJECTS COUNTY SUPERVISORS' HOUSING PLAN

Eureka CA, December 2, 2009

In a 6-page letter issued to County officials yesterday, the State Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) denied certification of Humboldt County's Housing Plan which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors August 28, 2009. A key factor in the State's decision was the lack of a credible land inventory.

For years citizens' groups have exposed the flaws in the County's land inventory, while County Planning Director Kirk Girard continually misled County officials. As late as a month ago, he informed the Planning Commissioners, "We have the most accurate inventory in the State. Don't listen to everything you hear." Now it's time for you to listen, Mr. Girard. Due to the arrogance of some County officials, the citizens of Humboldt will suffer because of the likely loss of millions of dollars of Federal and State grants, which could have been used to provide much needed infrastructure and affordable housing.

This is a huge credibility issue for long-time Supervisor Bonnie Neely, Director Girard, and County Counsel, who have openly defied the work of such groups as NCHB (Northern California Association of Home Builders), HAR (Humboldt Association of Realtors), HELP (Humboldt Economic and Land Plan) and now more recently, the FOL (Find Our Lots) team.

All of the past efforts of these groups came together over the past two years when the FOL (Find Our Lots) team put their heads together and looked at thousands of sites, either physically or by using the County's GIS system. The goal was to identify the actual number of properties, and the number of dwelling units that could be built on those sites within the next five years. It's a mandate from the State of California to perform this analysis and report the facts to HCD to assure each California city and county is preparing for a certain level of growth.

Long-time member of HAR, NCHB, HELP, and a dedicated FOL volunteer, Coldwell Banker Realtor Tina Christensen says: "I don't like being lied to. I want the citizens to know the truth. Our County government has been misrepresenting the truth for years."

According to Linda Disiere with North Coast Investors Group: "So many people from a variety of groups have donated thousands of hours, working to have the County provide an accurate land inventory for housing and adequate accounting for availability of infrastructure. The County has continued to exaggerate the number of lots and the availability of infrastructure. The citizens of Humboldt County really deserve better and will be the ones to suffer for the County's refusal to adhere to the law and provide accurate information. This is especially unfortunate after being repeatedly reminded that their information is not correct and that they need to follow the law."

"As a member of the FOL team over the past couple of years I have seen firsthand our attempts to make the county aware of the problems with the document that was submitted to HCD, and that there would be ramifications if these issues were not corrected. It is my hope that while this will be an economic hit to the county, it triggers some internal reflection, an awakening of sorts that stimulates review of both the County's personnel and policies that have put us in this position", Dave Varshock, President and Broker of Coast Central Realty said when hearing the news.

Auditor/CPA Brian Mitchell reminds us: "As Thomas Jefferson once said, 'When citizens fear their government, it is tyranny, but when the government fears its citizens, it's called liberty.' " It's long past time for our County government to pay attention to its citizens.

Jim Furtado, homebuilder and President of JLF Construction says: "The County claims builders won't build low income housing. This is not true. We would welcome the opportunity to, if only the County would do its part by removing some of the constraints which stand in the way of making it happen."

HELP representative Kay Backer puts it this way: "All of this agony could have been avoided if County officials had only respected the truth and followed the law".

We can only hope that our county government will now work with its citizens and follow the law at all levels of government....including their own.

For further information, contact HELP consultant Kay Backer at 707 834-8006.