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August 19, 2010

Mr. Clif Clendenen, Chairman
Board of Supervisors
Humboldt County
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: County Housing Element
General Plan Update

Dear Chairman Clendenen and Members of the Board:

Three times, the State of California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) has told the County why it's latest Housing Element does not comply with State laws, and what must be done to bring it into compliance. The first time was on April 10, 2009; the second time on November 30, 2009; and now in its August 5, 2010 letter, HCD denied certification of the County's Housing Element.

The State continues to tell the County to engage the public, including the FOL (Find Our Lots) team, and "work together" to revise the Element and its Land Inventory. Your Planning Department continues to ignore that advice.

For six years, HELP has urged the County to form a Citizens Planning Committee to facilitate the public's input to the General Plan update, including the Housing Element. In our November 29, 2007 letter to then County Counsel Mr. Ralph Faust, we recommended to the Board such organizations as NCHB, HAR, HumCPR, FRC, HELP, Buckeye Conservancy, Chambers of Commerce, Healthy Humboldt, Labor Unions, Builders Exchange, Harbor Commission, CSDs (Community Services Districts), and County staff, be invited to serve on such a Committee. We believe the Farm Bureau and Cattlemen's organization should be added to this list. ^ACLMP,

It is clear from the workshop your Planners held two days ago, the revisions being proposed to the Housing Element don't come close to responding to HCD requirements. The changes HCD and members of the public recommend, would take several months to complete.

The County's land inventory is grossly overstated. Just one example is the inclusion of sites dependent on the Martin Slough Interceptor project being complete within the 5-year planning period. The official schedule for its completion shows it will not be complete within the planning period. In addition, there is no assured funding for the completion of the project. According to State guidelines, the County must know where the funding will come from before the MSI-dependent dwelling units can be included in the inventory. Funding for the MSI project is not assured.

This inflated land inventory lays a false foundation for every other element in the General Plan update, as land availability and land use is a common thread which runs throughout the rest of the General Plan.

We urge your Board to stop all work on the General Plan now, with one exception. The Governance section, which includes staff's proposed policies for Public Participation, is currently scheduled to be discussed after all other elements are reviewed. This section should be reviewed and discussed by the Planning Commission at this time. Only when the Housing Element has been certified with an accurate Land Inventory, should work on the remaining elements of the General Plan proceed.

State guidelines call for the General Plan, including the Housing Element, to reflect the citizens' vision for the future.

To satisfy the States' requirements for the Housing Element, HCD says:

http://www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/housing_element2/GS_home.php

- Start with the existing plan. The update should build on what has been effective in the past.
- **Immediately** engage all critical stakeholders in the community including residents, special needs populations, businesses, and real estate and housing providers.
- While the housing element must address specific State statutory requirements, it is ultimately a local plan and **should reflect the vision and priorities of the community.**

For several years, a diverse cross-section of the private sector has been eager to participate in the drafting of a Housing Element which reflects their vision. It's not too late. Please establish such a committee. We and many others are anxious to participate in such a meaningful effort.

Please do not adopt this latest version of the Housing Element until HCD's requirements referenced above, and those in their August 5, 2010 letter are complied with.

Sincerely,

Kay Backer

Kay Backer, representing
Humboldt Economic & Land Plan

cc: Supervisor/Chair Jimmy Smith, District 1
Supervisor Mark Lovelace, District 3
Supervisor Bonnie Neely, District 4
Supervisor Jill Duffy, District 5
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Carolyn Ruth, Deputy County Counsel
Kirk Girard, Community Development Services Director
Michael Richardson, Senior Planner
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board
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