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June 6, 2016

Honorable Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: 916-319-2199

Honorable Senator Richard Roth,  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #4  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: 916-323-8386

RE: **Governor's By Right Housing Proposal  
Notice of Opposition**

Dear Honorable Chairs Nazarian and Roth:

I write to tell you that the mayors of the nineteen Contra Costa Cities, acting at our June Mayors Conference meeting, unanimously opposed the recently-released proposal by Governor Brown to pre-empt local discretionary land use approvals of specified housing developments by having all such approvals considered "ministerial" actions, which means eliminating opportunities for public review and comment, eliminating project-level environmental review, and restricting community design review.

We believe that such fundamental policy changes should not be rushed through as part of a budget proposal, but merit extensive review by appropriate policy committees of the Legislature in a deliberative fashion.

We recognize that the amount of housing available and being constructed compared to the growth in population of California has helped cause recent rapid price increases and housing shortages here in the East Bay as well as across many parts of California. All of the cities in our region have been affected and while all of our cities are addressing this issue, the proposals advanced by the Governor are likely to make this problem worse, rather than helping it.

Eliminating opportunities for public review of such major development projects goes against the principles of local democracy and public engagement. While it may be frustrating for some developers to hear concerns about traffic, parking, and other development impacts, those affected by such projects have a right to be heard. Not having such opportunities will increase public distrust in government and, in the long run result in less, not more, affordable housing.

Avoiding or restricting design review is also shortsighted. Community acceptance can be greatly improved through good design that enables a new structure to match community character.

Conversely, it is our experience that if opportunity for community input is denied, public reaction against much needed additional housing supply will be intensified and the long-term result will be less, not more housing of all types, precisely the opposite of what California needs to address the housing affordability issues we face.

This proposal, at this time and in this format, is disappointing from our Governor. He has taken the State of California backwards on both affordable and market-level housing construction by stripping local governments and the State of the few resources available to build these units, and is now seeking to avoid a discussion of how to replace these lost funds by undermining public input, environmental review, and design review.

For the reasons stated, as well as others, and on behalf of the residents we represent, who deserve a voice in the future shape of their communities, the mayors of Contra Costa cities respectfully state our opposition to this measure as presented.

We encourage the Governor and Legislature to sponsor and manage a more comprehensive and deliberative process to discuss the full range of housing issues and solutions, including those related to affordable housing. The mayors of Contra Costa will gladly participate in such a process.

Sincerely,

*Wade Harper*

Wade Harper, Chair  
Contra Costa Mayors Conference  
C/o 2221 Spyglass Lane  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

cc: Senator Steve Glazer, State Capital, Room 4082, Sacramento, CA 95814-4900  
[teresa.gerringer@sen.ca.gov](mailto:teresa.gerringer@sen.ca.gov)

Senator Loni Hancock, State Capital, Room 2082, Sacramento, CA 95814-4900  
[Senator.hancock@senate.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.hancock@senate.ca.gov)

Senator Lois Wolk, State Capital, Room 5114, Sacramento, CA 95814-4900,  
[Senator.Wolk@senate.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Wolk@senate.ca.gov)

Representative Catherine B. Baker, P.O. Box 942849, Room 4153, Sacramento, CA 94249-0016  
[Assemblymember.baker@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.baker@assembly.ca.gov)

Representative Susan Bonilla, P.O. Box 942849, Room 4140, Sacramento, CA 94249-0014  
[Assemblymember.bonilla@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.bonilla@assembly.ca.gov)

Representative Jim Frazier, P.O. Box 942849, Room 3091, Sacramento, CA 94249-0011  
[Assemblymember.frazier@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.frazier@assembly.ca.gov)

Representative Tony Thurmond, P.O. Box 942849, Room 5150, Sacramento, CA 94249-0015  
[Assemblymember.Thurmond@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Thurmond@assembly.ca.gov)

Sam Caygill, League Regional Manager, [scaygill@cacities.org](mailto:scaygill@cacities.org)

Dan Carrigg, League of California Cities, [CarriggD@cacities.org](mailto:CarriggD@cacities.org)

Gary Pokorny, Executive Director, Contra Costa Mayors Conference, [gjpokorn@lmi.net](mailto:gjpokorn@lmi.net)