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Letters to the editor

Brace for it, Lafayette

Lafayette will be subject to 'Builder's Remedy' projects starting Feb. 1, 2024, which means that developers can submit housing projects literally of any size, anywhere in our city. Prior approved projects can also be revised (think The Terraces, Lafayette Lane, Madison Park, .), ignoring our general plan and zoning. We have already heard from developers, and proposals are being readied now. We could get 20-story projects in the middle of single family neighborhoods, for example, like other cities across the state have experienced.

How did we get here? Lafayette is joining cities across the state who won't have a 'Certified Housing Element' by the Jan. 31, 2024, deadline. Despite working on our Housing Element for 3 years, when Council was presented with the latest revision in October, we were already too late to avoid the Builder's Remedy penalty. Our housing consultant took 6 months to bring this revision, knowing that we would fail to meet the deadline. None of her other 3 cities (Danville, Belmont, and San Mateo) have certified housing elements. We also found out that our 'methodology' is NOT the same as Orinda's or Walnut Creek's, and both have certified housing elements. If Lafayette changed our methodology to be more standard, there would be no 'upzoning' necessary in our downtown at all. And if we include the open space at DeSilva, HCD would not do a detailed review, increasing our chances of getting a 'Certified Housing Element'.

But the only solution to stop penalties like the Builder's Remedy is to support the Our Neighborhood Voices Initiative, a statewide constitutional amendment that will bring back local democracy to our cities, fighting the state's preemption of our local land use and zoning laws. With the 100+ laws passed, there is no way to 'un-do' all of them anymore. Go to <https://ourneighborhoodvoices.com/> and join our movement to restore local democracy so that both you and your City Council will have a say with what happens in our city and in your neighborhoods, like intended in our state's constitution.

Susan Candell
Lafayette City Council Member and Former Mayor
Proponent, Our Neighborhood Voices Initiative

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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