

2-3-26

Chair Lazzareschi and Commissioners:

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P. Davison

My name is Pat Davison. I am a resident of District 5. Thanks for this opportunity to share some thoughts on this Attainable Housing Expedited Process agenda item.

I am not usually a fan of state mandates because of the lack of tailoring to a unique jurisdiction. However, both of the state bills (AB 540 and AB 241) that prompted these code changes tonight head us in the right direction and could actually help Washoe County achieve its housing goals. What has been most important for me is that staff has shown awareness of potential unintended consequences.

Something that was remarkable to me with AB 540 is the attention given to above median income levels – those that are higher than the area median income. This has been a missing part of the federal program where the lower income levels received preference and for good reason. The need was critical to find better housing for those currently in substandard conditions but also to keep others from becoming unhoused in the future.

Now the Governor and State Legislature have not only talked the talk but also walked the walk with new dollars in hand through the Nevada Attainable Housing Account. And they were clear about a priority for funding:

*“In awarding money from the Account, the Division, in consultation with the Council: (a) Shall prioritize projects that demonstrate the highest potential impact on addressing the attainable housing needs of the State, including, without limitation, **prioritizing the need for single-family homes** that are affordable for households that have a total monthly gross income that is not more than 150 percent of the median monthly gross household income for the county in which the housing is located...” [AB 540 Enrolled version - Section 10, subsection 3(a)] (emphasis added)*

ATTAINABLE HOUSING EXPEDITED PROCESS – here are my thoughts on the specific changes:

1) **Expedited review and approval process for some projects**

I always look at the safeguards when new policy or code is proposed. For this change, any project seeking the less burdensome administrative review permit process (versus a discretionary review) must provide proof that it is qualified as an attainable housing project. Additionally, tentative map approvals, master plan and regulatory zone amendments are not eligible for the administrative review permit benefit. The administrative review permit process (Article 809) includes the 500 foot noticing requirement for adjacent property owners plus the CAB, HOAs, and military installations within 3,000 feet. Affected owners may provide written comment and the Director can modify the project with conditions as well as deny the project. Director decisions can be appealed. So the administrative review permit process has some safeguards already built into it.

2) **Prioritization of projects catering up to 150% AMI and the introduction of a new staff role called the staff liaison**

Excellent action! It is clear that projects receiving NV monies can take advantage of these two provisions but I am also hoping and expecting that projects which might not want to apply for State monies but still cater to the below 150% AMI buyer or renter would still be able to ask for a staff liaison. I hope you agree.

3) **Adding two Attainable definitions and removing one Affordable definition**

Given AB 540's new policies, procedures, and vocabulary, the changes are appropriate but I feel like I have lost something that was attached to me. After using the term “affordable housing” for decades, this switch to “attainable housing” may be hard at first to remember. And the federal “affordable housing” programs are not going away just yet so there may still be a need to distinguish between one and the other in the future.

That's it. I urge your support of the proposed changes. Thanks for listening.

Pat Davison