



September 28, 2023

Honorable Rob Bonta  
Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
California Department of Justice

**RE: False and Misleading Changes to the Our Neighborhood Voices Initiative Title and Statement Will Create Prejudice Against the True Effects of the Initiative**

Dear Attorney General,

On behalf of the Our Neighborhood Voices initiative, tens of thousands of California neighbors, and local elected officials and community leaders, we are writing to express our deep concern and disappointment with the misleading changes to our recent title and summary which falsely claim that our initiative would “automatically override” affordable housing laws. For the reasons outlined below, this statement is not true, and would not only mislead voters, but would also create prejudice against the true effects of our initiative. We respectfully urge reconsideration of the circulating title and summary – specifically, that it align with the more accurate title and summary prepared by your office for the nearly identical version of this measure in 2021.

In 2021, your office issued a title and summary that correctly stated that our initiative “Provides that city and county land use and zoning laws (including local housing laws) override all conflicting state laws, except in certain circumstances related to three areas of statewide concern...” (See attached.)

However, in 2023, your office revised this statement to read: “Provides that local laws automatically override conflicting state land use and zoning laws (including affordable housing laws), unless such state laws address specified statewide concerns.”

Your statement that our initiative would “automatically override” affordable housing laws is false. Our initiative does not “automatically override” any “affordable housing laws” – it simply returns land-use decisions back to communities so that neighbors and their local elected leaders can have a say in where and how these projects are built.

Between the time that your office issued the 2021 title and summary and the issuance of the 2023 version, our team, with assistance from the Legislative Analyst’s Office, added an exemption for 100% affordable projects at 80% AMI or less. That leads us to ask the important

question: How does the addition of an affordable housing exemption in our initiative necessitate the addition of the false claim that our initiative would “automatically override” affordable housing laws? Our coalition has always affirmed the need for more affordable housing throughout the state; adding this exemption is further evidence of our continuing support.

To the extent that you and your office suppose that adding luxury housing where it is most profitable for developers will add more affordable housing, your supposition is wrong. Adding luxury towers in highly-impacted communities creates gentrification, displacement and higher costs for low-income workers.

We refer you to [the housing affordability nexus study](#) commissioned by the San Francisco Planning Department, which showed that, unless up to 30% of onsite units were affordable to working people, the addition of new housing made housing more expensive because it increased demand for service workers without meeting their need for affordable housing.

Numerous cities have embraced building luxury housing as a means to creating affordable housing, only to see their “solution” fail – from Vancouver, BC to Austin, Texas. These are not affordable cities, they are increasingly expensive, for exactly the reasons found in the San Francisco nexus study: “trickle-down economics” do not work in the housing market.

Right now, Sacramento has effectively removed the ability of communities to have any say in local land use planning – and these decisions are now in the hands of for-profit developers. This not only damages local democracy, it is a failed strategy for building the affordable housing our state needs.

If we want true and lasting solutions to our state’s affordable housing crisis, Sacramento needs to work with cities and communities to build projects that are truly affordable, protect the character of our neighborhoods, don’t dramatically add to traffic gridlock and higher taxes, and don’t allow developers to gentrify our communities for profit.

**As your office may be aware, the deadline to submit signatures is March 18, 2024. With the deadline fast-approaching, your immediate attention to this matter is requested.**

Thank you in advance for the consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

John Heath  
Peggy Huang  
Jovita Mendoza  
Dennis Richards  
Susan Candell  
Anita Enander  
Kalimah Priforce