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September 1, 2021

Via Email

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Veto Request for SB 9 (Atkins)

Dear Governor Newsom,

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes writes to express our opposition to SB 9 (Atkins). SB 9 would require cities and counties to ministerially approve, without conditions or discretion, a housing development containing two residential units on an individual parcel in single-family zones and lot splits, creating two independent lots that may be sold separately.

Housing affordability and homelessness are among the most critical issues facing California cities. Affordably priced homes are out of reach for many people and housing is not being built fast enough to meet the current or projected needs of people living in the state. Cities lay the groundwork for housing production by planning and zoning new projects in their communities based on extensive public input and engagement, state housing laws, and the needs of the building industry.

SB 9 will not spur much-needed housing construction in a manner that supports local flexibility, decision making, and community input. Nor does SB 9 establish provisions for affordability. State-driven ministerial or by-right housing approval processes fail to recognize the extensive public engagement associated with developing and adopting zoning ordinances and housing elements that are certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

This bill gives developers too much control over the local housing approval process and does not impose any requirements for the new development to be affordable housing, granting developers the ability to outbid potential homebuyers to turn a single-family lot into multi-unit developments at market rate. Required ministerial review excludes neighbors from the process, eliminating the ability for local input. The increased development may increase the cost of housing, as more potential units on a parcel makes it more valuable for developers who have the ability to price out working-class and lower-income families looking for a single-family home they can afford.

Governor Newsom

September 1, 2021

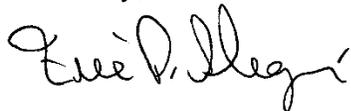
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Furthermore, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes primarily resides in a Cal Fire-designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Due to topography and large amount of dedicated open space, egress is limited. In the event of a wildfire, quickly and safely evacuating the existing population would pose a significant challenge. Increased density as contemplated under SB 9 would exacerbate this problem and could result in the significant loss of life and property.

While we appreciate the intent to ensure that all Californians have access to affordable housing, this bill will not do that. Instead, it will increase unintended hazards and erode local control. Moreover, the bill will likely result in increased housing and construction costs that favor developers and investors rather than those who are in need of housing.

One-size-fits all laws inherently fail to consider the needs of individual communities and their general plans. The current legislative preference for by-right approvals in favor of increasing density fails to consider the nuances in individual communities, potentially risking public safety, and does nothing to inherently promote affordable housing, which is vital to recover from the housing crisis and is the purported aim of this approach. For these reasons, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes opposes SB 9 and strongly encourages you to listen to your cities and constituents and veto the bill.

Sincerely,



Eric Alegria

Mayor, City of Rancho Palos Verdes

cc. Ben Allen, Senator, 26th State Senate District
Al Muratsuchi, Assembly Member, 66th Assembly District
Jeff Kiernan, League of California Cities
Rancho Palos Verdes City Council and City Manager