

"HOUSING FOR ALL"

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San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund
4111 Broad Street, Suite A-6, San Luis Obispo, CA

Affordable Housing Opportunities: Second Units

Encouraging second units can be an excellent way for communities to produce affordable housing units with a minimal impact on local infrastructure and existing neighborhoods. Second units, which are called many things including granny flats and accessory units, are small homes that are built on existing residential family lots.

Under state law, second units are allowed on most residentially zoned lots. Local governments have the authority to regulate the size, setback, design and parking for second units. Second units must, of course, also have an adequate water supply and waste-water facilities (i.e., sewer or septic system).

Second units are efficient to produce because they use existing land and public infrastructure. They cost less for both the home owner who builds them and the local jurisdiction in which they are built.

Second units also create affordable housing without causing sprawl. Because they are built within the

fabric of existing neighborhoods, they epitomize smart growth.

Second units also help stabilize neighborhoods because they provide a source of income for home owners. In addition, they provide housing for elderly parents or adult children who could not otherwise afford to remain in the community.

Broad Support – Local Opposition

For these and other reasons, second units are supported by a diverse group that includes the Sierra Club, Smart Growth Coalition, Urban Land Institute, AARP, National Association of Realtors and many other local, state and national organizations.

Many cities and counties oppose state second unit laws because they feel the laws usurp local control over land use and planning. And, many neighborhood groups oppose local second unit ordinances.

They argue that second units violate the sanctity of single family neighborhoods. They also raise fears that second units will have profound

adverse impacts on their neighborhood by doubling the housing units, population and traffic.

Reality Check

In reality, however, allowing second units in single family neighborhoods has little impact. The main reason is that few home owners actually build second units. The rule of thumb is that, on average, only one home owner out of a thousand who are eligible to build second units will do so each year.

To bring this into perspective, only 71 second units would likely be built each year if they could be built on every single family-zoned lot in San Luis Obispo County. But because many lots lack adequate water and/or waste-water disposal capacity, the potential production of second units is actually far lower.

Other limiting factors are that local governments retain the ability to set development and, to a lesser extent, occupancy standards for second units. Second units can be limited based on lot size and can be barred from neighborhoods with documented problems with parking and traffic congestion.

Small, but Important Contribution to Local Housing Crisis

While a relatively small number of second units will be produced even under the most favorable circumstances, they are an important housing resource for people who live and work in San Luis Obispo County. While only 240 second units were produced throughout the unincorporated county between the 1993 and 2000 (i.e., 34 per year), they represented 44.3% of the affordable units built during that period.

Online Resources for Second Units

Additional information on second units can be found in the following publications, including policy issues, legislative language and unit plans.

Bibliography of Selected Resources on Second Units, California Department of Housing and Community Development—
www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/secondunit.pdf

Accessory Dwelling Unit Manual and Prototype Plan Sets, City of Santa Cruz—www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pl/hcd/ADU/adu.html

Accessory Dwelling Units: Options and Choices, Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington—
<http://search.mrsc.org/nxt/gateway.dll/mSite/publications/adu30.pdf>

Accessory Dwelling Units: Model State Act and Local Ordinance, AARP—http://research.aarp.org/consume/d17158_dwell.pdf

Items of Interest...

Publications

Manufactured Housing Tenants: Shifting the Balance of Power is an update of an AARP report that has helped improve living conditions for mobile home park residents throughout the nation. The report includes a state-by-state comparison of mobile home park tenancy laws and recommends model legislation for states to consider. Download it from http://research.aarp.org/consume/d18138_housing.html.

126 is a new quarterly newsletter published by Housing California, a state-wide housing advocacy group. The newsletter's title comes from the number of hours a minimum wage worker in California must work each week to afford the rent for a 2 bedroom apartment. The first issue of **126** focuses on inclusionary housing. It is available online at www.housingca.org/Quarterlynews/126frameset.htm.

Websites

The Campaign for Affordable Housing (TCAH) is a new nonprofit headed by former California HCD director Julie Bornstein. Its mission includes providing information to dispel myths about high density and affordable housing. Visit its website (www.tcah.org) often to see how this young group develops.

The website of the **California Housing Law Project** (www.housingadvocates.org) should also be checked periodically. It has extensive information on state housing policy and legislative issues.

Events

Oct. 4 — Southern California Association for Nonprofit Housing (SCANPH) Annual Conference, Pasadena Convention Center. For more information — www.scanph.org.

Oct. 21-22 — Rural Housing Summit, Asilomar, Pacific Grove. Policy-oriented forum for affordable housing in small towns and rural areas — www.calruralhousing.org/HOME_RHS.htm.

Reminder

Call Marilyn at (805) 534-5970 or surf over to www.sloctf.org/grocery.htm to join our Grocery Store Partnerships. After you join, Scolari's and Ralph's will make donations to the HTF based on what you spend at their store. It's easy! Join now!



Note: "Housing for All" has active links — when you view this newsletter in Acrobat Reader, referenced documents and websites open when you click on them.

Please submit Items of Interest to news@sloctf.org

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