

## eir comments

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### **It's more than a housing crisis**

We are facing a crisis in providing adequate housing at the local, regional and national level. Our economic growth has fueled a need for more workers than can be housed within our existing communities, let alone supported by our existing infrastructures.

ABAG seeks to address this need in a drastic and draconian fashion through mandates to forcibly change the present population density for most communities. This is not a viable solution and, in fact only addresses a symptom, not a root cause.

We cannot simply pile more concrete structures on top of the existing ones without addressing the needs for more schools, better transportation, more city services and utilities, as well as additional neighborhood serving businesses such as grocery stores, medical services, restaurants, etc. This broader manifestation of infrastructure in most communities is clearly already under-performing and substantially overextended.

Broad solutions which encompass, but are not restricted to, holistic communities are called for, but should begin at the regional level and extend state and nationwide.

Let us consider creating new cities that are designed from the ground up, with zero net energy and water demands and which require limited transportation. Cities which have room to grow and are sustainable. Our existing model of "adequate" housing within commuting distance of jobs has been severely challenged in response to the pandemic. The pre-pandemic demand models that ABAG is currently utilizing are undoubtedly obsolete in a post pandemic society.

Finally, we must ask ourselves: How much of our sensitive environment and our quality of life are we willing to sacrifice on the altar of economic growth? We already enjoy some unenviable social and environmental malaise. California is nearly in last place in quality of our roads, crowding of our roads, and performance of our schools. On the flip side we enjoy some of the highest sales, income, and property taxes that combine for almost the highest overall tax impact, also highest cost of electricity, water, and gasoline, highest poverty rate and highest cost of housing. Our electrical energy system, both generation and distribution grid, already teeters on the edge of breakdown under current demand. The current system will need to be more than doubled in all aspects to meet the needs of a society that just 20 years from now is envisioned to be independent of fossil fuels.

### **All this in the pursuit of the siren song of growth.**

Isn't it time to seriously begin to question the trajectory of our society – to find leadership that can think of a societal structure that is sustainable?