



TOWN OF ATHERTON

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September 8, 2022

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

Senator Josh Becker
1021 O Street, Suite 7250
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: STUDENT HOUSING AND THE RHNA PROCESS

Like all municipalities, the Town of Atherton is struggling with how to achieve the State's 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The Town's strategy is to use a distributed approach by supporting the development of accessory dwelling units, the subdivision of parcels under Senate Bill 9, and the development of faculty and staff housing at local schools (public and private). While the Town believes that this approach will allow the Town to comply, we also believe that there is a fundamental flaw with the methodology that precludes the use of student dormitories in support of the development of affordable housing.

Student dormitories are categorized as institutional/group housing under interpretations of various State laws by HCD (specifically Government Code Section 65583(c)(1)), and the RHNA process. As such, they are not allowed to be counted by local communities toward their RHNA. RHNA only considers the needs of the population in households that are housed in the regular housing market.

However, as we all know, if students are not housed in dormitory projects located within a jurisdiction, the students will find housing elsewhere within the region. By taking up the housing elsewhere, these students take up precious regional resources of affordable housing. Re-housing these students in a local dormitory project will result in MORE affordable housing opportunities in the region.

The Town supports the creation of local student housing and has supported our local institution, Menlo College, in the construction of a multi-story dormitory to house 150 students. The creation of this dormitory removed those 150 students from other affordable housing projects and opened that housing for those who needed that affordable housing. Yet, the Town receives absolutely no credit for this. This makes no sense and it is time for the State to take action to address this. The Town should get credit for this as it is the Town that supported the development of the dormitory project and it is the Town that must manage the impact of that development in the community. Accordingly, we believe that in the next legislative session, you should support a legal change to recognize dormitory housing as satisfying RHNA housing requirements.

Sincerely, 

Rick DeGolia, Mayor

cc: City Council
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair of Housing Committee