

# Another View: Inclusionary housing ordinances would create opportunity

By Shamus Roller Special to The Bee

Dan Walters got one thing right: Living in California can be an expensive proposition, one driven by extremely high housing costs. He uses this backdrop to question mixed-income housing ordinances (“[State’s big housing shortage](#)”; Dan Walters, Aug. 9).

But his critique misses the role inclusionary housing ordinances play in creating opportunity for families and ignores the major causes of the housing crisis.

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Inclusionary housing ordinances help create affordable development, but they also counter a history of excluding whichever group was politically undesirable at the time from communities through zoning restrictions.

Recent research clearly shows that poor children who move into higher-income neighborhoods make significantly more money when they grow up than kids who remain in poverty-stricken neighborhoods. One of the easiest ways to create these opportunities is to make sure new development includes housing for people at a range of incomes.

If we care about income inequality and giving kids the opportunity to succeed, inclusionary housing deserves a closer look.

Walters gives almost no attention to the major causes of housing costs in California. The legislative analyst’s report mentioned in the column lays out many of the real cost drivers, including the fact that local government has tremendous authority over what gets built. Another major contributor to high housing costs is California’s tax code, which encourages speculation on real estate. Major private equity firms, foreign interests and multinational corporations are buying homes in California as investments, pricing out regular people.

High housing costs in California are having all sorts of effects. They make our businesses less competitive and place an increasing strain on our social service systems.

To make housing more affordable for all, we need to invest in programs that provide homes to our most vulnerable and to people who won’t succeed without some help. Inclusionary housing is part of that effort, but so is Assembly Bill 35, which would increase state tax credits available to developers of affordable homes and Assembly Bill 1335, which would create a housing trust fund.

There is not one comprehensive solution to the housing problems in California, but that’s no excuse not to take action on the things that will help.

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