



PRESS RELEASE

REPORT SHOWS IMPLEMENTING THIRD ROUND PLANS WILL BOOST ECONOMY, HELP WORKERS

\$230 Million Stimulus Available Today; \$15 to \$25 Billion Over Next Decade

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Trenton, New Jersey- In housing plans submitted by municipalities to respond to new Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) rules, many towns took innovative approaches – freeing up \$230 million in existing funds for new housing and cutting regulatory barriers expected to result in \$15 to \$25 billion in new private sector development over the next decade. In the first published analysis of the housing plans submitted by 268 municipalities, Fair Share Housing Center (FSHC) warned that any impediment to implementing the COAH rules would hurt the state’s economic recovery by encouraging municipalities to reinstate red tape and slow economic development.

The report, *Jumpstarting the Economy by Creating Housing: What COAH Really Means For New Jersey’s Communities*, emphasizes the ability of municipalities to provide an immediate cash infusion to New Jersey’s economy using funds that have been collected to meet COAH’s fair share requirements. “Banks aren’t making loans and the state is experiencing a budget crunch, but municipalities have \$230 million that they could spend tomorrow if COAH directed them to do so. We’re calling on Governor Corzine and COAH to direct municipalities to stop hoarding money and to start spending those funds to help with the state’s economic recovery,” said Kevin D. Walsh, Associate Director of FSHC. (A list of how much each municipality has is included in the report.)

The report prepared by FSHC also details how COAH can help the economy by expediting review of plans. “The new plans remove regulatory barriers that will allow private investment of \$15 to \$25 billion in the next decade, much of it through redevelopment of dilapidated shopping centers and parking lots,” FSHC Staff Attorney Adam Gordon said. “If COAH strengthened its rules, we could see \$9 to \$15 billion more in development on top of the \$15 to \$25 billion. That is economic development that New Jersey needs to encourage, not roll back.”

FSHC cited as examples redevelopment of the Highland Cross site in the Meadowlands, which Rutherford has long stalled, creating 800 new homes at a range of prices, in addition to a hotel and stores, and a plan by Toms River to allow redevelopment of parking lots and single-story stores in its downtown area, creating 660 new homes plus new retail space.

David Kinsey, FAICP, PP, a Princeton-based planning consultant and lecturer at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School, said that the new results were consistent with COAH’s twenty-year history.

“COAH, from its start, has resulted in removing municipal barriers to development, and spurred significant economic growth that would not have happened otherwise,” Kinsey said. “In particular, COAH has been the source of much of New Jersey’s middle-class housing over the last two decades, because the same regulatory changes that help encourage low- and moderate-income housing also allow middle-class housing to be built where it otherwise would not.”

Camden County NAACP President Colandus (“Kelly”) Francis, speaking on behalf of the New Jersey State NAACP, said the report confirms the soundness of the changes made by the Legislature in last year’s landmark housing bill.

“New Jersey can make progress in economic development and building homes for low- and moderate-income families — those two goals do not conflict,” Francis said. “Those who would roll back the advances we have made also threaten New Jersey’s economic recovery.”

Rev. Kent Pipes, head of not-for-profit housing developer Salt and Light Housing in Burlington County, warned that the recent talk of a COAH rollback has encouraged towns to reject ready-to-go developments, including two developments his group had proposed in Eastampton and Hainesport.

“We are ready to go with building this housing and creating jobs,” Pipes said. “The only thing that stands in our way is local governments that do not want us to proceed.”

Fair Share Housing Center, founded in 1975, is the only public interest organization devoted entirely to defending the housing rights of New Jersey’s poor through implementing the Mount Laurel doctrine.

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