



Local

S.F. trailing on affordable homes

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SAN FRANCISCO -

Although San Francisco has one of the strongest laws requiring developers to offer below-market rate housing opportunities with every new residential building project, The City has trailed behind others in the state in actually creating the new, affordable homes, according to a study released Tuesday.

City housing officials say that's old news and that hundreds of new units for low- and middle-income families are in the works.

The report, "Affordable by Choice: Trends in California Inclusionary Housing Program," was created by the San Francisco-based Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California.

As of now, 170 jurisdictions — one-third of all cities and counties in the state — have some type of inclusionary housing program.

San Francisco's inclusionary housing ordinance is one of the strongest in the state, said Paul Peninger, co-policy director with the Non-Profit Housing Association. The law applies to all residential developments of five units or more and requires a 15 percent affordable set-aside if the units are built on-site and a 20 percent set aside if the units are built off-site or if in-lieu fees are paid.

The number of inclusionary housing units created in The City in recent years, however, trailed behind other municipalities in the state. From 1999 to 2006, San Francisco averaged about 91 inclusionary units per year, for a total of 634 — while the city of Sacramento averaged about 251 units per year and the city of San Diego averaged 183 units annually.

Doug Shoemaker, from the Mayor's Office of Housing, said San Francisco's inclusionary housing program is on the upswing, with 155 units permitted in 2006, and the number of units expected to be approved this year estimated at 309. The City also invests in affordable housing developments that are not part of the inclusionary program, he said.

Cities such as San Diego and Sacramento likely built more inclusionary housing because they were approving more housing overall, Peninger said. Those areas have more land to be developed, he said — but they're also areas known to be more accommodating to development.

"It's not always easy for developers of any kind of housing to get their projects approved [in San Francisco]," Peninger said.

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What can San Francisco do to provide housing?

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