



SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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August 13, 2008

Ms. Lucy Voorhoeve, Executive Director
NJ Council on Affordable Housing
P.O. Box 813
Trenton, NJ 08625-0813

**Subject: Somerset County Planning Board Review Comments
Proposed Amendments and New Rules: N.J.A.C. 5:96 and N.J.A.C. 5:97, published in the NJ
Register on June 16, 2008**

Dear Ms. Voorhoeve,

The Somerset County Planning Board, as demonstrated through its Adopted County Master Plan and Smart Growth Strategic Plan – Guiding Principles and Objectives, supports planning and implementation strategies that increase the supply of affordable housing within Somerset County. The County Planning Board has a history of encouraging its municipalities to participate in the COAH substantive certification process, and applauds their success in creating over 4,000 low- and moderate-income units in accordance with the 1985 Fair Housing Act.

The County Planning Board encourages and supports COAH's efforts to improve the rules so that 1) affordable housing obligations are equitable, fair and reasonable; 2) they are more consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, the Highlands Regional Master Plan and municipal master plans endorsed by the State Planning Commission; 3) they are better coordinated and balanced with other critical State land use planning priorities including natural resource protection, economic development, infrastructure investments and community revitalization; and 4) realistic and do-able without imposing an undue financial burden on taxpayers.

We remain concerned that the proposed changes still fall short in each of the preceding areas. Attached please find the Somerset County Planning Board's detailed review comments regarding COAH's proposed amendments to the Third Round Substantive and Procedural Rules adopted on June 2, 2008, submitted in accordance with the public comment period that concludes on August 15th. Thank you for taking these comments and recommendations into consideration as you work toward developing a refined set of rules with more realistic obligations and improved mechanisms through which the state's affordable housing needs can be successfully addressed.

Sincerely,

Bernard Navatto, Jr., Chairman

C: Somerset County Legislative Delegation
NJDCA Commissioner Doria
NJDEP Commissioner Jackson
NJ County Boards of Chosen Freeholders and Planning Boards
Mayors and Planning Board Chairs, Somerset County Municipalities