



Newport Beach: If You're Not Rich, Get Out

Christmastime is here, and what better way to foster goodwill towards all than by [trying to exclude affordable housing from your community](#). And not just any affordable housing: affordable housing *for seniors and veterans*:

A plan for a 12-unit affordable housing project for veterans and seniors in the Newport Shores neighborhood was blasted by residents who complained it was too expensive and expressed concerns about who would live there....

...of the dozens of people who showed up to the meeting, most opposed the project, which will have seven units for veterans and five for seniors.

Brent Duque, an attorney who lives in Newport Shores, called the plan “the projects of Newport Shores.”

Newport Shores is part of Newport Beach, CA, where the median house price in 2010 — the bottom of the California housing market — was \$1 million. [Portfolio.com listed it as the wealthiest place in America](#), with more than quarter of households boasting incomes of more than \$200,000. Obviously the best way to express gratitude for this is to spit at everyone else.

Of course you see, the people there really appreciate seniors and veterans, as long as they aren't anywhere near them. Where should seniors and veterans live? [Well, somewhere else](#):

Some of the project's critics cited the high cost of developing in Newport Shores rather than in another area of the city where the money would cover more housing units. Others expressed concerns about the development's close proximity to a neighborhood park, saying that the housing project would change the character of the community.

Translation: make sure to stick affordable housing in the poorest areas of town, far away from open space or anyplace that isn't a slum.

Two things pop up from a policy perspective here:

1) The money for the project comes from a fund that developers have to pay into in order to get other entitlements. And it raises a potential issue with such programs, although they have promise. You could get the bait-and-switch of not forcing the developer to build affordable units, and then wind up with so much community opposition that there isn't anywhere where the affordable housing can be built.

2) As a matter of environmental policy, of course it makes sense to have affordable housing in more affluent areas: otherwise, workers in those areas will have to commute long distances, leading to more congestion, air pollution, and of course VMT.

It's hard not to agree with the headline writer for LAist, who described the controversy as "[Newport Beach Jerks Throw Hissy Fit Over Housing For Vets & Seniors](#)". The project was approved, but Mayor Ed Selich was surprised by their behavior. "I've lived in Newport Beach for almost 40 years, and I've never seen anything like this," he said.

And if housing for seniors and veterans attracts such wrath, what about the bigger problem of affordable housing for families and workers?