

Look for refugees from California's environmental laws

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=5328>

The old saying in business is that if you want your business to be successful, study a successful business and do what they do. But sometimes it is just as profitable to look at those who are failing and don't do what they do.

The Washington Post recently printed the ten most expensive areas in the country, based on median home prices. It should come as no surprise that nearly all of them were in states where land is heavily regulated.

The highest was Honolulu, which I understand has a lot of regulations, with a median home price of \$579,300. But come on, it's an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Of course, it's going to be an expensive place.

The second highest at \$545,000 were the cities of San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara - all in California.

Number three were Anaheim, Santa Ana and Irvine, all in California, at \$511,800. Number four at \$465,900 were the California cities of San Francisco, Oakland and Fremont.

Wayne, N.J., and White Plains, N.Y., came in fifth at \$439,300.

At sixth place, Northern New Jersey and Long Island, N.Y., at \$375,900 barely edged out seventh place San Diego and San Marcos, Calif., at \$374,800.

Nassau County and Suffolk County of New York came in at eighth place with a median price of \$372,000.

Newark, N.J., came in at number nine at \$360,700.

Finally, the only area that wasn't in a coastal state - Boulder, Colorado - came in tenth with a median home price of \$353,400.

Prices are high in these areas because of regulations that create land shortages and impede development. Though these prices are classified as home prices, they don't reflect the actual value of the home as much as they reflect the value of the land that the home is on.

Even California Gov. Jerry Brown is getting frustrated with the amount of regulations and opposition from environmental groups he is encountering as he attempts to get renewable energy infrastructure built in his state. According to a New York Times article, he thinks the "innumerable planning commissions" in "California's 58 counties and more than 400 cities" give the public too many chances to kill a project.

Brown said, “There are technical problems, financial problems, regulatory problems, coordination problems...The fact is, the regulations are so embedded in our culture or legal system that to overcome it is difficult.”

Despite Brown’s frustration (and I am sure he is not alone), California continues to create more regulations in order to shape the kind of urban environment that planners and environmentalists prefer.

In an article on the NewGeography.com website, Joel Kotkin authored an article entitled, “California Wages War on Single-Family Homes.” According to Kotkin, 71 percent of Californian adults prefer living in a single-family home, but the California legislature apparently isn’t listening. Kotkin writes, “In California, the assault on the house has gained official sanction.

Once the heartland of the American dream, the Golden State has begun implementing new planning laws designed to combat global warming. These draconian measures could lead to a ban on the construction of private residences, particularly on the suburban fringe. The new legislation’s goal is to cram future generations of Californians into multi-family apartment buildings, turning them from car-driving suburbanites into strap-hanging urbanists.”

Kotkin suggests that the policy will ultimately drive people out of California in search of affordable, suburban, single family homes, a trend that actually began over a decade ago. Meanwhile, the City of Vancouver recently announced that they would be offering “\$42 million in land and capital grants to developers” in a plan to end homelessness over the next decade. The money will be used to create 38,000 affordable (a euphemism for “subsidized”) homes.

Not to be outdone, Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey just signed a bill giving away \$1.5 billion in tax credits to develop projects near urban train stations.

If Oklahoma and its cities can resist following suit with similar foolish ideas, we could be soon be welcoming many urban refugees to our state, along with a lot of businesses who also want to escape outrageous regulations and high home and land prices.

Our willingness to put freedom above financial and regulatory gimmickry might make Oklahoma the oasis the rest of the country yearns for.

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