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Council candidate Jon Hatami comments on Redevelopment Agencies Ruling

Posted by admin under City of Santa Clarita , Development , State No Comments



Jon Hatami, who is running for Santa Clarita City Council, recently launched his official campaign website on January 1, 2012 and you can check it out here: <http://www.electjonhatami.com/> Hatami all so issued the following comments on the recent state redevelopment agencies ruling:

A

California Redevelopment Agencies, simply put, are an extreme liberal creation that serves only a handful of people at the cost of the average citizen who pays taxes. In theory, Redevelopment Agencies spearhead blight removal. However, they really divert billions of dollars from services that benefit our community as a whole, such as schools, parks, police, health, and firefighting, and instead put money in places such as Old Town Newhall. Furthermore, they use eminent domain to seize private citizen's property for favored developers and run up taxpayers' debt to pay those developers to construct projects of dubious public value. Most Californians are unaware that these agencies exist. Basically, Redevelopment Agencies constitute an unknown government that consumes 12% of all property taxes statewide, is supported by a powerful Democratic Sacramento lobby, and is backed by an army of civil lawyers, consultants, bond brokers and land developers. And, we are doing all this, at a time when our state is in massive debt, and near bankruptcy.

Currently, the City Council has spent approximately \$48 million in hard earned tax dollars to allegedly improve Old Town Newhall. Yet our current City Council claims to be Conservative. How can you be a Conservative, much less claim to be Republican, and be for limited government, and be as Tim Myers stated, "fiscally conservative," support a "free market," "but only be too thrilled to shove [your] hands up to the elbow into the revenue streams created by these agencies?"

B

In addition, Redevelopment Agencies have almost none of the accountability and transparency elements required by state and local government. Specifically, unlike other local agencies, Redevelopment Agencies can incur debt without voter approval. Redevelopment Agencies can also redirect property tax revenues from schools and other local agencies without voter approval or the consent of the local government. And, no state agency reviews redevelopment activities or ensures that project areas focus on the program's mission.

C

Furthermore, recent investigations of Redevelopment Agencies have discovered widespread corruption and questionable spending, including a Sacramento bar with a swimming mermaid, or the city of Palm Desert's plan to spend \$16.7 million to spruce up a luxury golf course. State Controller John Chiang stated the following about Redevelopment Agencies: "The lack of accountability and transparency is a breeding ground for waste, abuse and impropriety."

D

Some have also said that Redevelopment Agencies create new jobs and spur economic activity in a redevelopment area. But studies have shown that redevelopment projects do not increase property values by enough to account for the tax increment revenues they receive. Overall, the agencies stimulated enough growth to cover just above half of those tax revenues. Has Old Town Newhall created \$48 million worth of jobs and economic growth in the City? – Absolutely not.

E

And, I save the best for last – California State law requires Redevelopment Agencies to deposit 20% percent of their tax increment revenues into low income housing funds and spend these funds on affordable housing in our City! So, I am waiting for our current City Council to tell us where they are planning on putting this new group of section 8 housing? And, explain to all the taxpayers in Santa Clarita that we are paying for this with our tax dollars. How is this going to increase property value? It is not; it will do just the opposite, through increased crime, and urban blight, and create a sell-off in neighborhoods that are forced to suffer these projects.

A

The lesson: private enterprise is a better option. Developers don't need subsidies and eminent domain to build in older cities; they need the private seller to agree to sell, and government to stay out of it! In these economic times, we need to use our property taxes for what they were meant for: schools, parks, police, health, and firefighting. And, stop giving our tax dollars to special interests groups, developers, and low income housing projects in our City.

But since I'm only a Deputy District Attorney, a taxpayer, a homeowner, a citizen of Santa Clarita, a veteran, a husband, but not on the Water Board, or a member of the PTA, or a current member of the City Council, what do I know...

Jon Hatami

Santa Clarita City Council Candidate

Analysis by SCVtalk.com

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