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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cities of Rancho Palos Verdes and Lakewood File 'Sister' Challenge to SB 9

June 23, 2022 (Rancho Palos Verdes, CA) — The cities of Rancho Palos Verdes and Lakewood today joined in the growing chorus of challenges to the constitutionality of Senate Bill 9, filing a legal challenge to SB 9 as general law cities as a companion to the lawsuit against SB 9 filed recently by several Southern California charter cities.

Today's action states that SB 9 strips cities of their local land use authority and in essence eliminates all single-family residential zones, destroying in one fell swoop the nearly century-old constitutional right of cities throughout California to establish single-family residential zones.

"We recognize that the lack of housing supply, especially affordable housing, is a serious and worsening issue throughout the state, but SB 9 is not the solution," said Rancho Palos Verdes Mayor Dave Bradley. "The City of Rancho Palos Verdes wants to be partners and collaborate with the state to tackle the lack of housing, but we need to do it in a way that addresses our unique circumstances. Cities need a pathway to meaningfully and effectively combat this problem, and while we appreciate the intent of SB 9 to provide a tool to create affordable housing, this blanket unfunded state mandate simply will not do that. That is why we have joined in this challenge."

The lawsuit states SB 9 will raise land values and make it even harder for first-time buyers to get their foothold in both communities, which are built out, and that allowing four times as many homes in existing neighborhoods will cause overcrowding and increased traffic, adversely impacting infrastructure, require more water usage, and result in little to no parking especially. Additionally, this increase in density, without an increase in law enforcement, potentially means more crime and less safety in our neighborhoods, and would hamper evacuations in the event of an emergency.

Rancho Palos Verdes was incorporated in 1973 following a community-led effort to ensure local control over land use and to preserve the natural resources of the Palos Verdes Peninsula. SB 9 threatens that what is uniquely Rancho Palos Verdes, and tramples on the goals and quality of life of those hard-working Californians who want to live, work, and play in the City.

"People work hard to achieve the 'American Dream' of home ownership, and when they do, there is a sense of accomplishment and belonging as part of a community with unique character," said Rancho Palos Verdes City Manager Ara Mihranian. "Our General Plan describes the City's quality of life that people seek when they move to Rancho Palos Verdes, and SB 9 has essentially taken that away from the residents,

barring local governments from having a say in future residential development in their neighborhoods. And while SB 9 will alter our neighborhoods, it will not necessarily result in the lower cost of housing.”

“Lakewood is an ethnically diverse community where people can live the American Dream and purchase a single-family-sized home on a modest lot that is usually 50 feet wide by 100 feet,” said Lakewood Mayor Steve Croft. “People of all ethnic backgrounds and walks of life come to Lakewood because of this chance to live the American Dream. SB 9 threatens that by allowing developers to buy up properties and build duplexes, triplexes and more on single-family lots, creating overcrowded neighborhoods, without any onsite parking for all the new people. SB 9 threatens the quality of life for existing residents and neighborhoods, and it’s just a shame.”

“The City of Lakewood supports the creation of new affordable housing,” said Croft, “and we have a track record of approving it, such as townhouse projects and apartments. But we do so with requirements for onsite parking and other features that protect the quality of life for existing residents in our community. That’s the proper role of local government, but SB 9 unfairly and unconstitutionally takes that local oversight and decision-making away.”

“We’re proud to work with the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the other cities that have filed a similar lawsuit to bring this issue of SB 9 to the legal system for review. We hope that other cities will join us in protecting the right of local communities to have control over their own zoning and neighborhood quality of life decisions,” said Croft.

Rancho Palos Verdes City Attorney William Wynder said SB 9 takes away the power of cities to respond to the housing crisis in meaningful and practical ways that will best suit the unique circumstances facing each local community. “This notion that one size fits all under SB 9 makes no sense, especially in the context of land use planning,” he said.

Virtually the entire City of Rancho Palos Verdes falls within a Cal Fire-designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, with many properties located on narrow, steep, and winding streets (some with only one-way access) where emergency fire access and first responders and firefighters will be severely restricted. Increasing density in these areas will threaten the safety of not only the new houses built under SB 9, but entire neighborhoods, and the lives of people will be at stake.

Proponents of SB 9 say there’s an exemption where SB 9 housing projects cannot be built in high fire severity zones, but that’s not entirely true because legislation allows SB 9 housing projects in fire zones when a city has adopted certain requirements of the California Building Code, as is the case in Rancho Palos Verdes.

For a copy of the complaint filed today, visit: bit.ly/3Ok1stU

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