

The Star-Ledger

An Opportunity On Housing

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If Gov. Jon Corzine is serious about building 100,000 units of affordable housing in the state over the next 10 years, as he has publicly stated, a three-judge panel of the Appellate Division of Superior Court has given him a chance to do so.

This week the court struck down as unconstitutional the Council on Affordable Housing rules, which have hurt, not helped, to expand affordable housing.

Under state Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin, a former mayor of Cherry Hill, COAH wrote rules, the court said, that allowed suburban and rural municipalities to avoid their legal obligation to provide affordable housing.

The appeals court told COAH to come up with rules that significantly increase the number of affordable housing units in the state.

By any measure, New Jersey is a very expensive place to live. If even middle- and upper-income people can suffer sticker shock when they realize how much it costs to live here, poor folks don't have a chance. Despite three decades of court rulings aimed at reversing that trend, affordable housing remains illusive.

That can change if the governor makes it known that he will not tolerate regulations that frustrate the fair-housing laws. The state could ask the state Supreme Court to overturn the appeals court ruling. A more fruitful reaction would be to come up with new rules in the six months the appellate court has given the state.