

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: On behalf of Abundant Housing LA, please see the attached public comment letter.



12/16/2022

Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Support – Regional Connector Surplus Property Redevelopment – Council File 13-0275-S3

Dear Councilmembers,

We write on behalf of Abundant Housing LA in support of the motion which was referred to various Council committees on September 29, 2022, in [Council File 13-0275-S3](#). The motion calls for the City to approve a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) regarding redevelopment of two publicly-owned properties in Little Tokyo that will be surplus after the completion of [Regional Connector Transit Project](#), which is anticipated to occur in late Fall 2022.

Abundant Housing LA is a pro-housing, nonprofit advocacy organization working to help solve Southern California's housing crisis. We support reforms to legalize more homes, make homes easier to build, increase funding for affordable housing, and protect tenants, which are all needed to make housing more affordable, improve access to jobs and transit, promote greater environmental sustainability, and advance racial and economic equity. As a community organization, in order to maintain our independence, we do not accept financial support from housing developers or their consultants.

The first property in question is located at the northeast corner of 1st Street and North Alameda Street and owned by the City of Los Angeles. The second property is located at the southwest corner of the same intersection and is owned by Metro. Both properties are in the immediate vicinity of the new Little Tokyo/Arts District Metro station that is being relocated as part of Regional Connector construction. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a key strategy to provide badly-needed housing opportunities in locations that allow people to be less reliant on automobiles and live in a more sustainable manner. These sites score extremely well on walkability, transit access, and bikeability per [Walk Score's](#) metrics. The sites are located in Downtown Los Angeles, where residents are experiencing overcrowding and a lack of affordability.

Metro has a policy framework in place to promote equitable TOD on property that it owns or has influence over: the [Joint Development Policy](#) (JDP). The JDP notes that the County's housing affordability crisis falls hardest on lower-income households, who make up Metro's core

ridership. These households are also disproportionately made up of Black, Indigenous and other people of color, due to the cumulative impact of racist policy. Thus it is imperative that TOD serve lower-income households, act as a stabilizing and strengthening force in neighborhoods and be planned with meaningful community input. The JDP prioritizes proposals for 100% affordable housing. If such a proposal is deemed infeasible in a particular case, mixed-income housing can be considered with the following minimum percentages of deed-restricted affordable units: 11% extremely low income, 15% very low income, 25% low income or 50% moderate income. Furthermore, the ideal affordability mix in a particular case is to be determined with respect to conditions in a particular neighborhood, so that affordability levels match the needs of the most vulnerable existing residents. The public land available here provides excellent leverage to secure affordable housing. The JDP also underscores the need to conduct community outreach in partnership with community-based organizations.

The MOU at issue in the current motion does not commit the City of Los Angeles or Metro to approve any specific project on the two subject sites. It merely allows them to proceed with planning for such projects in accordance with the principles of the JDP. The City of Los Angeles is responsible for facilitating the production of about 457,000 new homes between 2021 and 2029 as part of its Regional Housing Needs Allocation, including about 185,000 homes affordable to lower-income households. Actually achieving this level of housing production will require ambitious and equitable housing development around major transit stops, such as the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station.

We are excited about the potential that the Regional Connector project has to make transit more convenient and accessible for the people of Los Angeles County. In order for transit to fulfill its potential to strengthen communities and improve lives, many more people must have opportunities to live near stations. This is particularly important for people with lower-incomes, who are more likely to rely on transit and are suffering terribly due to LA's housing shortage, insufficient investment in affordable housing and inadequate tenant protections.

We must also note that this motion was brought forward by Councilmember de León. We have called for the resignation of Councilmember de León for his part in the [racist tape scandal](#), in which a variety of groups were disparaged as part of a conversation about manipulating the redistricting process, and we repeat that call here. Although we support this motion as a policy, this resignation is necessary to facilitate the healing process and allow Los Angeles to move forward with a new consciousness about the importance of challenging the racist policies and ideas that produce and sustain racial inequality.

For these reasons, we support the motion, and we would like to see it move forward.

Sincerely,

Leonora Camner

Leonora Camner
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