

MOTION

Since 2019, the City has permitted the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) in all parts of the City, including the hillsides and mountainous areas. These units have played a pivotal role in the City's efforts to expand housing, but the City has grappled with striking a balance between expanding housing options and providing adequate protections in fire-prone hillside areas.

In the City's Safety Element in the General Plan there are 37 hillsides in the North East Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley and West Los Angeles categorized as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) by both the Los Angeles Fire Department's (LAFD) Fire Prevention Bureau and State Fire Marshall. These hillsides have a higher susceptibility to fire ignition compared to other areas in the City. Due to this designation and the threat of fires, the City implemented new development standards of ADUs and JADUs for the hillside regions. In 2019, the City Council adopted Ordinance 186481, amending Sections 12.03, 12.22, and 12.33 of Chapter 1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to regulate ADUs and JADUs in accordance with State law. The ordinance prohibited the construction of ADUs and JADUs located in a VHFHSZ unless three additional safety measures were integrated: an automatic fire sprinkler system, one off-street parking space, and roadway improvements of 20 feet or more on the lot front. These regulations would help mitigate damages attributed to fires while addressing traffic and parking congestion, and road degradation in the hillside neighborhoods.

Initially the Planning Department recommended implementing these standards uniformly citywide. However, through the Committee process, changes were made in the proposed ordinance to exempt these ADU and JADU standards in VHFHSZ within the boundaries of the Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan (NELA) and the Silver Lake—Echo Park—Elysian Valley Community Plan. Consequently, these provisions would only apply to areas in West Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, leaving the Northeast Los Angeles neighborhoods in Council Districts 1, 13, and 14 without additional safeguards afforded to other parts of the City.

Communities such as Glassell Park, Mount Washington, Montecito Heights, Monterey Hills, and Cypress Park, among others in NELA, have struggled with the devastating impacts of fires and the challenges of insufficient resources for effective fire response. Over the past decade, these neighborhoods have tragically experienced numerous fires, including a fatal incident that occurred in Glassell Park in July 2022, where a fire burned a 1,093-square-foot home, resulting in the death of the homeowner and the hospitalization of a Police Department officer. These devastating events undoubtedly strain the resources of public safety personnel and put the community at risk. Moreover, the inadequate sidewalks and road infrastructure exacerbate safety concerns as fire engines cannot swiftly navigate through the area, and residents lack a proper evacuation route.

  
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The original VHFHSZ ADU regulations added a crucial step to mitigate the harm and damage caused by fires. These regulations should equally apply citywide along with the Hillside Construction Regulation Supplemental Use District (HCR SUD) and Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO). All of these protections combined will ensure safe and thoughtful development in VHFHSZ.

**I THEREFORE MOVE** that the Council instruct the Planning Department, in consultation with the City Attorney, to prepare and present an ordinance to amend Municipal Code Section 12.22 (*Exceptions*) to repeal the exceptions located within the Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan or Silver Lake -Echo Park - Elysian Valley Community Plan Area found in Section 33 (*Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units*) subsection 4 (i) to ensure that all VHFHSZ hillside neighborhoods across the City can equally benefit from fire prevention and safety measures.

PRESENTED BY:   
EUNISSES HERNANDEZ  
Councilmember, 1st District

SECONDED BY: 

ORIGINAL