

## CF 18-0437: Expo Corridor Transit Neighborhood Plan

In its June 25th editorial, the LA Times has created the impression that the EXPO Corridor Plan being presented to the Council's PLUM Committee is the product of over five years of community input, meetings, It is not.

As noted in the Times editorial, "The Expo Line plan was developed over five years with countless meetings and focus groups to get community input." The line that is missing in that description is that the plan that was developed over those five years is NOT the Plan coming before the PLUM Committee tomorrow. Key portions of that Plan were dismissed and/or modified by the City Planning Commission at the urging of Abundant Housing LA representatives. Did anyone at the Times editorial board know that?

The editorial (and many Abundant Housing advocates in their blogging) seem to suggest that the Plan going before PLUM somehow mandates affordable housing. There are no such requirements. Property along Pico, along with all land in proximity to transit (with or without a transit corridor plan), are eligible to participate in the Transit Oriented Community program (TOC) resulting from Measure JJJ. However, developers are not required to provide affordable units under the EXPO Corridor plan as written. Period.

The October draft Expo Corridor Plan written with community input met and exceeded the stated project objectives and population projections presented to us when the planning initiative was started. The Plan met and exceeded provisions for new job opportunities.

As a community we answered the call and did our job working hand in hand with the City's planning professionals.

There was give and take throughout the planning process. There was buy in because we thought we were part of a democratic process and that we would be heard. We trusted that the City was going to balance interests -- not string us along and throw us under the train.

On the day that the Plan went before the City Planning Commission, the Commission President read from the letter submitted by Abundant Housing and supported the changes and additions requested by that group. All of AH's recommendations were incorporated (so long as they could be "covered" by the existing environmental documents)--- ignoring the years of work invested by stakeholders-- business and community representatives, and residents of apartments, condos and homes.

The staff was then instructed to re-write the Plan to reflect the CPC actions.

A very sad part of all this is that the LA Times failed to do its homework and in its endorsement of the EXPO Plan created the impression that the plan adopted by the CPC is the community's plan now opposed by a small bunch of NIMBYs. We are not NIMBYs. How could the Times publish an editorial hearing only from one side of the debate? How could the Times lump our community into the catchall bucket as being NIMBYs when we have some very rational opinions based upon years of discussion and work.

The Westside Neighborhood Council has proposed a compromise plan for a new hybrid zone on Pico -- to offer another option in this discussion. We had other ideas/offers for land that could be further densified but, as that land hadn't been studied in the DEIR, the

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City indicated that they could not go back and consider it although supplemental EIRs are often done in such cases. However, the planning process in this case has been driven by a METRO grant expiring this month. (Tick tock.)

We understand the need for more housing, the need for affordable and workforce housing. We fought to have a low income housing project built along Pico in this very area well before these kinds of projects were in the public's field of vision. (And in order to have land available for that use, we had to lobby the County not to sell it from their surplus property inventory.) We negotiated with the Casden people to include low income housing in the mega apartment project now under construction at Sepulveda and Exposition (just south of Pico) where there are nearly 600 apartments being built on a lot that was zoned for manufacturing / light industry and that had a 3 story height limit and will now see buildings of 14 stories. (Those apartments, by the way, will be market-rate luxury apartments with a private dog park and penthouse units that will rent for \$8,000/month according to the current owner/developer.)

When market rate housing is built in our area, it is luxury housing. We won't know for many years as to whether the Reagan-esque / Reganomic trickle-down theory of housing (the policy being advocated by those who lobby to build, build, build as much market rate housing possible in order to solve the affordability challenge) being espoused by Abundant Housing will be shown to have any validity at all in Los Angeles, but we can see that that philosophy has NOT been proven out in major cities around the world where the demand for housing from a growing population is unending. And it could be that by providing generous bonus densities on transit corridors through plans such as the EXPO Plan, that developers will decide not to build under the TOC guidelines at all.

What is the impact of building luxury/market rate housing on the cost of nearby housing? We understand that it serves to increase nearby housing costs -- something that this marketplace certainly does not need. Who are the primary users of public transit? Not those living in luxury housing units.

Yes, we have concerns about the projected 8 - 9 percent increase in traffic that the EXPO Plan projects. Wouldn't you? Yes, we have concerns about the fact that our elementary school has no room for an influx of new students or that our water pipes are breaking and that our roads are crumbling. Is it unrealistic to expect that we might have some investment in infrastructure before upzoning occurs-- or at least a credible plan to get to it over time? We don't have assurances of either. Should nearby residents be able to have solar panels on their roof, a tomato or rose bush survive in their garden? These things are all tradeoffs but the trades should be part of a public process-not the product of a last minute switcheroo.

As with most somewhat complicated policy initiatives, the devil is in the details. It is clear in reading the June 25th Times editorial that instead of comparing the **October EXPO Plan developed by LA City's Planning Dept.** in partnership with the community that the Times instead signed onto the **Abundant Housing/CPC November version** without comparing the two or looking at the compromise ( a new mixed use zone developed especially for Pico Blvd.) prepared by the Westside Neighborhood Council. To make an endorsement on the eve of the PLUM Committee's consideration without attempting to talk with those who stand behind the community's plan for our area does a tremendous disservice to all involved.

If the community planning process now underway across the City is undertaken in this manner -- with last minute end runs that undermine years of input and work, -- then the process is a sham. It is then not a community planning process and these are not neighborhood plans. They are just like so much of LA's land use quagmire -- the product of behind the scenes lobbying and negotiating with developer-influenced advocates carrying the day.

In consumer protection terms, this would be called bait and switch. If the City provides us with their goals and objectives and those goals and objectives have been met, what else are we left to think?

The affordable housing crisis and the many challenges presented by the homeless crisis should not be used as an excuse for discarding the principles of sound urban planning. We will be living with the products created by newly adopted land use policies for many years to come, as will our children. We can design and build an attractive, livable and healthy city as the product of inclusionary processes or we can abandon our responsibilities while hiding behind the veils of crisis.

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*Submitted as an individual*