

Communication from Public

Name: Brilliant Corners

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Council File No: 19-0603

Comments for Public Posting: Brilliant Corners is writing in opposition of the motion to explore expansion of Fire District 1. Attached is a letter detailing our concerns with this motion. We urge members of the PLUM committee to vote against it when the item is considered.



August 17, 2021

Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee
200 N Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Expansion of Fire District 1, Council File 19-0603, Item 2

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of Brilliant Corners, I am writing in opposition of the motion to explore expansion of Fire District 1. Brilliant Corners is a nonprofit supportive housing provider focused on innovative strategies to scale supportive housing for vulnerable, extremely low-income Californians, including people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Brilliant Corners develops new supportive housing through the identification, acquisition and rehabilitation of underutilized real property that can be rapidly converted to housing. The expansion of Fire District 1 would disallow building types that are often used by affordable housing developers.

As detailed in the report submitted to the Committee from the Fire Department (LAFD) and Department of Building and Safety (LADBS), **expanding Fire District 1 would be extremely harmful to the future production of affordable housing. Such an expansion would limit developers' access to land, increase building costs, and eliminate the efficient and sustainable building approach used by affordable housing developers in our region.**

We strongly encourage you to vote against this motion when it comes before the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee.

Cost analyses from LADBS data show that buildings constructed in Type I, II, and III (the only permitted in Fire District 1) cost 15-47% more than those constructed in Type IV and V. A survey of 84 properties funded by HCIDLA showed that the majority were constructed as building types disallowed by Fire District 1. The report also argues that because of these limitations "there are very few HCIDLA-financed projects located in Fire District 1 areas" and that an expansion of the district would "likely reduce the financial feasibility of affordable housing projects." SCANPH corroborated this information by polling its own members, the majority of which rely heavily on Type IV and Type V construction to produce the affordable housing our city so desperately needs. The report also argues that the California Building Code, along with Los Angeles' own fire code, provide ample protection for our City's residents as is. When clad in fire retardant material such as stucco, wood framing used in Type IV is a safe building material. Additionally, mass timber is also a new building material which offers an efficient and sustainable building approach for developers of affordable housing; these buildings methods are used throughout the City outside of Fire District 1 without trouble.

Out of the ten other jurisdictions surveyed in the report (including San Diego, San Francisco, and cities in Los Angeles and Orange counties), *none* used fire districts in addition to the state building code. This demonstrates that this district is an outdated tool for fire control, and an expansion of its boundaries is not a viable approach for increasing safety in the City of Los Angeles.

To be clear, Brilliant Corners does not stand against public safety and is thankful that the committee is interested in responding to our area's increasingly deadly wildfire seasons. However, we believe that the report submitted to the Committee clearly demonstrates that the expansion of Fire District 1 is not the best way to keep Angelinos safe.

This expansion will limit access to land and increase building costs for the builders of affordable housing in our region. Brilliant Corners implores the committee members to send a "no" recommendation to Council regarding this motion, and explore other options for increasing fire safety in our city without exacerbating our housing crisis.

On behalf of my organization and the greater supportive housing industry, we strongly urge you to vote against this motion when it comes before PLUM.

Thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to end this city's housing crisis.

Sincerely,



William F. Pickel, CEO | Brilliant Corners