

Communication from Public

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Date Submitted: 05/25/2021 08:42 AM

Council File No: 20-0102

Comments for Public Posting: Most Angelenos can agree that housing affordability and homelessness in Los Angeles County has reached epic proportions. Contrary to the LA Times' Carolina A. Miranda's conclusion that 'we've been doing density all along', we actually have not been doing so, for about five decades.....hence thousands living on the streets. What no one seems to agree on is how to fix the problem. Holding design competitions (see <https://lowrise.la/>) for this epic crisis is laudable if, at the same time, we are doing the hard work, which is comprehensive zoning reform. This can only occur when land-use and zoning approvals are removed from the political and litigious control where they currently sit. Most development in Los Angeles is discretionary because we have not been doing density well and our planning and zoning as not kept up with the way we live. In 1987 City of LA officials wrote a report about tens of thousands of garages illegally converted into living units as housing for those on limited incomes, in 1997 a Task Force was created around the same issue and another report was created which noted a 'severe shortage of affordable housing', in 2009 a Councilmember wrote a letter to then Director of Planning, Gail Goldberg, noting his grave concern regarding her recommendations for ADUs (accessory dwelling units), stating that the 'protection of single-family neighborhoods is of paramount importance'....and 12 years later in 2021, the City of LA has now implemented the 'standard plan program' to incentivize them. A process representing 35 years for something that arguably will not increase housing density in a substantial way. Current zoning in no way reflects where we are today OR where we need to go in the future (what is our city going to look like in 50 yrs??) rather, it actually encourages homelessness and meritless litigation through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). If proper zoning was in place, CEQA approvals would not be required. The design of the built environment, and good density, is tied to everyone's health and quality of life.....and we are better served when this in the hands of the urban designers, architects, planners and others who have the experience and resources to collaborate, educate and show us what good density and a great city can look like. Historical examples of 'density done remarkably well' such as the 1919 Horatio Court, would be illegal to build today.

Dingbat apartments? Forget it, cannot be replicated due to parking requirements. What connects us all, what makes livable neighborhoods, is a framework of housing density that weaves throughout the region and is supported by networks of mixed-use commercial boulevards, public space and transportation. Our General Plan, which describes our neighborhoods, does not correspond with our zoning code and hasn't for decades. Our City Charter, which requires the government '....to perform at the highest levels of achievement, including efficiency, accessibility, accountability, quality, use of technologically advanced methods, and responsiveness to public concerns within budgetary limitations' is not being met. All 88 cities in Los Angeles County are updating their Housing Elements to ensure future housing capacity and we have a unique opportunity to coordinate and collaborate on updated zoning to support this goal. The City of Los Angeles is 40% of the total county population and is a crucial link in the region's livability; the five observations presented below, while specific to Los Angeles, relate to other areas and provide an opportunity for future growth, while also increasing livability. Here are five ideas that would have an immediate and meaningful impact on solving the housing crisis: 1 Repeal or correct the City of Los Angeles' 1987 Prop U so our mixed-use commercial boulevards have at least a baseline density commensurate with planning standards. Through Prop U, the voters reduced the allowable floor area ratio (F.A.R.) from 3:1 to 1.5:1 (cut in half!), along all of our commercial boulevards -where density should go! Our own City Charter allows a floor area ratio of 13:1. 2 Eliminate height restrictions stemming from residential zone proximity which effectively downzone our commercial boulevards so that #1 works effectively. 3 Update planning and zoning for the region and tie it to infrastructure improvements, using urbanfootprint.com -a huge software planning database, and mine the data (we don't have to create it, tools are already available for this). 4 Update the City Charter so that departmental silos that have an effect on the built environment (LADWP, BOE, Planning, LAFD, Metro) can more effectively communicate for a common objective. 5 Incentivize and allow as standard, new models of housing (zoning and building code).