

Communication from Public

Name:

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Honorable Council Members,

A review of the public communications regarding our current transit upzoning strategies reveals a severe structural blind spot. The present deregulation framework aggressively privileges and subsidizes the housing demands of affluent, single young adults while systematically pricing out and pathologizing families of four who require multi-bedroom spaces.

As currently drafted, market-rate densification plans assume that maximizing raw unit numbers will naturally solve the city's housing woes. Academic, empirical data proves this assumption false. Without explicit policy interventions to protect and mandate family-sized units, upzoning acts as a luxury margin subsidy.

The City Council must address these major deficiencies before advancing this file:

1. The Myth of "Trickle-Down" Filtering for Families

The mainstream argument that generalized upzoning creates housing abundance via downward filtering is empirically unsound in high-cost coastal markets like Los Angeles. Research by Buchholz, Storper, et al. (2026) shows that LA experiences *upward filtering*—high-income, young professionals consistently flood upzoned urban hubs, outbidding median-income earners.

Furthermore, economic modeling by Benjamin Couillard (2025) demonstrates that unconstrained upzoning alters the general equilibrium by "making living alone more attractive." Flooding the market with small-footprint units achieves only 43% of the birth rates that a dedicated large-unit (3+ bedroom) supply policy yields. We are burning through valuable land and regulatory capital to subsidize household hyper-fragmentation rather than family preservation.

2. The Steepening Size-Cost Penalty and Structural Family Banishment

Since 2000, the cost of 2-bedroom and 3+ bedroom multi-family units has skyrocketed far faster than 1-bedroom footprints. Developers do not build family apartments because municipal frameworks inadvertently penalize them. For instance, calculating mandatory parking minimums *per bedroom* rather than *per unit* forces an astronomical cost penalty on multi-bedroom blueprints.

To maximize return on investment (ROI), private developers naturally strip 3-bedroom options from their designs. This floods our transit corridors with transient, high-margin studios and 1-bedroom apartments tailored exclusively to high-earning single individuals.

3. Forcing Families into Suboptimal Urban Forms

Pro-densification agendas assume that young families want to live in high-density, vertical urban transit cores. However, conjoint preference surveys from the Institute for Family Studies (2025) show that 79% of prime-age adults view a detached single-family form as ideal, ranking neighborhood safety and local school quality twice as high as short transit commutes.

Forcing families into dense, vertical urban corridors places a heavy demographic penalty on them. Lyman Stone's (2026) fertility research reveals that women living in multi-family apartments have dramatically lower birth rates than those in single-family homes with identical bedroom counts. Telling a family of four to downsize into an under-built, over-priced urban core is a major planning failure. Tokyo successfully used unconstrained densification to stabilize rents, but it did so *only* for 250-square-foot micro-units. Family-sized space in Tokyo became prohibitively expensive, and its collapsing fertility rate reflects that exact failure.

Conclusion & Actionable Policy Request

Any data-driven critique of unconstrained, market-rate upzoning models is routinely dismissed by advocacy groups as regressive NIMBYism. I explicitly urge this City Council not to capitulate to a dogmatic YIMBY/Abundance narrative that possesses a demonstrable, empirically proven blind spot for working families.

While challenging the current framework often invites severe political pushback from an organized constituency of single and dual-income households without children (SINKs and DINKs), their preferred rhetoric treats complex housing policy as a monolith. Popular urbanist commentators have successfully socialized a shallow description of the supply problem, but they have failed to provide a structural manifesto that accounts for demographic sustainability. Passing flawed, blind-supply legislation to appease vocal, short-term interest groups is an abdication of long-term planning.

The empirical data demonstrates that raw unit counts alone do not build a livable, multi-generational city. Private developers are understandably driven by profit maximization. It is the job of this City Council to protect the long-term demographic health of Los Angeles. I urge the Council to amend our local implementation of these upzoning guidelines to include mandates that will support livability requirements for Los Angeles's working families.

If we do not explicitly implement policy forcing family-oriented infrastructure to pencil out, we are choosing to build an exclusionary city that caters entirely to affluent, single 23-year-olds while systematically pricing out the families who form the civic and economic backbone of Los Angeles.

Academic Sources Cited in Support:

- **Couillard, Benjamin K. (2025).** *Build, Baby, Build: How Housing Shapes Fertility*. Economics Department, University of Toronto.
- **Buchholz, M., Kemeny, T., Randolph, G. F., & Storper, M. (2026).** *Inequality, not regulation, drives America's housing affordability crisis*. UC Berkeley / University of Toronto / Georgia Tech / UCLA / London School of Economics.
- **Cox, W. & Stone, L. (2025).** *Homes for Young Families: A Pro-family Housing Agenda*. Demographia / Institute for Family Studies.
- **Louie, S., Mondragon, J., & Wieland, J. (2026).** *Supply Constraints Do Not Explain House Price and Quantity Growth Across U.S. Cities*. UC Irvine / Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco / UCSD.

- **Stone, Lyman (2026).** *More Crowding, Fewer Babies: The Effects of Housing Density on Fertility.* Institute for Family Studies.
- **DeJohn, Jaclyn (2024).** *Major Cities See Lower Birth Rate Than U.S. Average.* SmartAsset.