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To: <barbara.greaves@lacity.org>, <patrice.lattimore@lacity.org>
Date: 7/29/2008 1:20 PM
Subject: Comments to 7/29/2008 PLUM Agenda Item NO. 2, CFI 08-1732
Attachments: Neighborhood Council Letter on LA River Lofts APN 5442031043.pdf

The Correction Ordinances does not address the issues on this SUBAREA 33 that were brought up in CPC-2005-6796_GPA-ZC-ZV-ZAA and ENV-2005-5458-MND for 2943 Gleneden Street, applicant LA River Lofts LLC.

This ordinance is not in conformance with those issues and that case needs to be addressed in this report.

We testified on this case, as have others.

Joyce Dillard
P.O. Box 31377
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Attachment:
Elysian Valley Community Letter dated 2/7/2007

CF 08-1732

February 7, 2007

President Jane Ellison Usher
Los Angeles City Planning Commission
Los Angeles, California

- affordability
- housing type

Dear President Usher:

The undersigned members of the community sought to speak at today's City Planning Commission hearing regarding CPC-2005-6796-GPA-ZC-ZV-ZAA, the proposed development at 2943 North Glenden Street. Unfortunately, the Commission could not approve our request to adjust the agenda to accommodate community members. The reason we sought this change was to meet work schedules and school schedules. Since we understand you could not meet this request, we ask that you accept this letter in place of the testimony we would each give. This letter also serves as the formal objection of Elysian Valley United, the only non profit organization that serves the Elysian Valley community.

The undersigned community stakeholders oppose the proposed development at 2943 North Glenden Street as well as any and all zoning variances requested pursuant to that development. The River Lofts project stands as a danger to our community and all of its residents. As designed it will permanently alter the population, feel and character of our neighborhood. It will cement a process of gentrification that has been marked by the displacement of residents who lived in single family rental unit and hence had no protections under Los Angeles City Housing Code. Further, the project destroys the unique residential character that has long offset a lack of resources for neighborhood residents. Finally, as the first project in our new Commercial Manufacturing Zone, the proposed development sets dangerous precedent in term of both the content and the quality of newly designed housing stock in the Elysian Valley corridor that adjoins the Los Angeles River.

Specifically, the undersigned oppose this project because there is absolutely no affordability component to the development. As designed, almost no neighborhood families could afford to live in these "River Lofts." Presenting the development as lofts will further discourage families who might consider stretching to make an investment. Next, the proposed development is completely incongruous with existing neighborhood housing stock. The neighborhood consists almost exclusively of single family craftsman or Spanish style homes. The largest apartment complex in the community has eight rental units. That means the River Lofts Development is seven times the largest existing housing unit. And, while models exist for increasing density without altering neighborhood character, the developers have resisted such ingenuity and have instead developed a project with the ambiance of a residential strip mall. Finally, the development stands to highly impact traffic flow in this heavily traveled part of the neighborhood. The actual volume of cars does not reflect the fact that there are only two ingress and egress points for the approximately 6500 residents in this section of our community.

Scott Anastasi and Associates (LA River Lofts LLC) met with community stakeholders three times over the last two years. Each time the developers heard the same concerns. Stakeholders, including the undersigned, expressed strong opposition to the project's scope, design and impact. Each time stakeholders suggested specific ways to gain the community's support and trust for this project. Specifically, the developer was asked to build some affordability component (even a few units) into the project. He was asked to consider redesigning the project to liken its style to the existing housing stock. He was asked to make adjustments that would increase existing residents' access to the river. He was asked to consider commissioning a full traffic study and an EIR so stakeholders could be assured the project would not be detrimental to their health, safety or lifestyles. He was also asked to consider marketing the development to appeal to families instead of advertising the project as lofts. The project never changed.

The undersigned are please to understand that the developer did make some adjustments after meeting with Commission Vice President Roschen. As we understand these changes, however, they do little to address the central concerns of community stakeholders. While we appreciate adjustments that will re-open the community's "sight-line" and access to the Los Angeles River, we are dismayed that the developer was only willing to make changes when challenged by a City Commissioner. The input of the community has been irrelevant to River Lofts LLC. To paraphrase Commissioner Roschen's comments at the last Planning Commission, this project is too important to have a developer that is uninterested in or unmoved by the concerns of a community whose very character will be altered the second ground is broken on this project. We deserved better and we can do better.

The undersigned have adapted three basic principles for development in the Elysian Valley River Corridor adjoining Blake Avenue and the Los Angeles River. First and foremost, the stakeholders who have suffered the most during the river's degradation should be the first to benefit from its revitalization. Second, each development project should increase current residents' access to housing, employment or recreation. Finally, all development along this corridor should be architecturally congruent to the existing character and housing stock of the neighborhood. The L.A. River Lofts Development is antithetical to each of these principals.

The implications of this project stretch far beyond the reaches of your hearing room. This project sets precedent for development of the entire corridor. We do not expect the Commission, the City Council, nor every developer to adapt these principals. But we expect people to care. If we demolish the character of this neighborhood through "revitalization" we turn our backs on the history of Northeast Los Angeles. It is no small irony that Elysian Valley lies in the shadows of what used to be a neighborhood called Chavez Ravine. The revitalization of the Los Angeles River is designed improve not to displace communities along the river's banks. This commission can send an important message today. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Nestor Albert Vargas	Gloria Moya Vargas	Lupe Garcia	Alex Leiva
Tashania Villalvazo	Citlali Valdez	Regino Reynoso	Steve Zimmer