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SUPPORT: Second Dwelling Repeal Ordinance Public Comment (CF:14-0057-S8)

1 message

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We SUPPORT: City Council File: CF:14-0057-S8

As the Director of Government & Public Affairs for the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA|LA), I am writing to share our strong support for the current proposal to repeal Subsections 12.24.W.43 and 12.24.W.44 of Chapter 1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, and grant legal nonconforming status to second dwelling units.

We also encourage City Council and the Department of City Planning to streamline and advance the process to ensure more Angeleno's have the ability to build second dwelling units (SDU's) per California State Law.

In general, SDU's and legislation to streamline and clarify the process is a vital component to adding more housing and greater housing affordability to our region. They also help provide greater economic upward mobility for many Californians - as it allows residents to invest in an opportunity to receive supplemental income. SDU's also culturally facilitate the need to age in place and contribute to the fabric of healthier and more complete communities.

SDU's optimize our existing infrastructure. They diversify the socio-economic factors our neighborhoods. They benefit communities with a greater array of housing typologies, designs and programs. All good things!

As to the fears that many may have about the need for more parking: as a car-free Angeleno (5+ years) that lives in an ADU duplex built in 1921 (Angeleno Heights), I have a feeling that requiring parking for all residential units vastly increases the cost of housing and also takes up precious space otherwise more beneficially used for unpaved, outdoor amenities like gardening, natural habitat, etc.

Parking requirements should no longer be forced upon us. Let the market deliver parking where and when needed and if homeowners or housing providers select to build more housing opportunities for all of those that no longer require full-time car ownership, then please let that housing be provided if and when needed. Sure, most often parking is still going to be built (especially if it's a sound investment and needed) - but to require it does nothing other than to continue to exacerbate issues of equity and fairness.

To go even one step further, since this is an issue I am extremely passionate about: the right to live car-free and unencumbered by the vicinity of the machine immediately adjacent to your place of living should be respected as a civic and human right to peace and dignity. Requiring on-site parking is like requiring each and every house to be built with a pig pen or tar pit on the property.

Now on to the ecological benefits of all that unpaved space we will soon reclaim once we overcome the need to provide a parking space for so many automobiles: lower urban heat islands, greater chances for urban gardens and tree canopy, better opps for stormwater infiltration, less concrete and more dirt (dirt and access to dirt is perhaps a health benefit for childhood development) - and most importantly, with less emphasis on always requiring a spot for cars, there is a chance to place greater emphasis on designing that space in such a way that our mental health (and our physical health) are more readily nourished with delightful, fun programming that soothes the soul and lifts the spirit.

Lastly, I think it is interesting to see the progress made in Seattle They realized that requiring one on-site parking spot per single family home was actually taking away that same amount of space on the street for the driveways and the curb cuts, etc (and also making the sidewalks less safe). So for streets that are otherwise chopped up with so many points of entry via driveways, why not just get rid of the driveway (on-site) requirement altogether and instead park on the street in the space that would otherwise be consumed by the driveway's entry.

Additionally, the parkway isn't consumed by the driveway either, which facilitates more opportunities for the planting of street trees, more attractive neighborhoods and greater biodiversity.

We encourage neighbors to park a few blocks a way if you need to and walk: streets become safer with more activity. Enjoy your neighborhood, say hi to your neighbors - you become a little bit healthier after a few years!

As we become a more walkable city with greater mobility options, we will eventually have less car ownership and perhaps one day those that fear they will never again find a parking space will be forever assuaged and find comfort that they're the last ones left with a car to park. One hundred years ago, all those with horses were about to experience that same transition. Today is much like then. Sure we still see horses from time to time (and enjoy their comforts!), but to require a spot to keep a horse in your yard for all housing sounds a bit archaic, doesn't it. Car ownership may quickly become a similar concept.

That is the future we all aspire to!

Very truly yours,

Will Wright, Hon. AIA|LA

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