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September 25, 2014

Los Angeles City Council
Attention: Holly L. Wolcott, City Clerk
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Subject: Council File 14-0656 – SOHA Support for Baseline Mansionization Ordinance Revision

Dear Councilmembers:

The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association (SOHA) strongly supported and was deeply involved in development of both anti-mansionization ordinances – the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) and the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO). SOHA is very concerned that both the BMO and BHO have not effectively limited massive homes that threaten all neighborhoods. We strongly support Councilman Koretz's Motion (May 6, 2014) to revise the counterproductive provisions of the BMO, and recommend that the Council immediately approve this motion and implement a fast-track BMO revision process. We hope that a similar revision to the Baseline Hillside Ordinance will also quickly follow.

During development of the BMO, all involved parties understood that this ordinance incorporated new, innovative concepts to constrain out-of-scale homes. As such, the City would need to monitor and review BMO effectiveness, and revise and improve the ordinance as necessary to ensure its effectiveness. Communities have now voiced their concerns, and the City needs to act immediately to eliminate BMO loopholes that allow oversize development.

The loopholes include the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) bonuses and exemptions addressed in the Koretz motion. SOHA has always felt that bonuses and exemptions were a fatal flaw in the ordinance, because they ineffectively override its basic FAR limits. The BMO only requires that one of three (one green and two design) provisions be met to receive a 20 percent FAR bonus. This is not sensible or effective. Everyone knows that developers want to maximize floor area and profit, and that they will employ the least costly bonus provision to achieve this objective. Thus, in effect, the bonuses simply increase the FAR limits in the ordinance by 20 percent across the board. A better solution would be eliminating all bonuses, having few, if any exemptions, and returning to the basic BMO FAR limits.

SOHA Support For Baseline Mansionization Revision

SOHA supports the four specific recommendations in Councilman Koretz's motion, and provides the following comments and additional recommendations.

- *Green Bonus Provisions* – Because of an already-in-place Green Building Ordinance, provision for a 20 percent FAR bonus is completely inappropriate and simply proliferates the design and construction of massive out-of-scale homes. The Green Design bonus should be eliminated from the BMO.
- *Two Design Bonuses* – The Koretz motion recommends a careful review of these two design bonuses to determine if they meet the BMO's intended goals. SOHA's position is that all bonuses should be eliminated from the BMO because they are only poorly veiled means to increase the basic FAR limits in the BMO and work against the BMO's basic goal. The design bonuses are counterproductive, should be removed, and should not be replaced with any other bonus or exemption.
- *FAR Bonus and R1 Zones* – The BMO provisions for Section 11, Subsection C of Section 12.08 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code includes an aberration that grants a higher FAR to R1 lots below 7,500 square feet (0.50 FAR versus 0.45 FAR for larger lots). This is not sensible or effective. It permits relatively larger homes on relatively smaller lots, thus increasing density, mass, and intrusion upon neighboring homes. All R1 lots of all sizes should have the same 0.45 FAR limit. We wish the limit could even be more stringent for smaller lots.
- *FAR Exemptions* – The six BMO FAR exemptions are listed below. The Koretz motion addresses attached garages (not one of the exemptions), attached porches/patios/breezeways (exemptions 3 and 4), and double-height entryways (exemption 5). SOHA feels that the motion's reference to "attached garages" should instead be "covered parking area" (exemption 1). We also feel that accessory buildings (exemption 2) should have been included in the motion. Therefore, SOHA recommends that exemptions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 should all be removed from the BMO and not replaced with any other exemption. In addition the basement exemption (number 6) should be studied for possible removal.
 1. The first 400 square feet of covered parking area,
 2. Detached accessory buildings not exceeding 200 square feet; however, the total combined area exempted of all these accessory buildings on a lot shall not exceed 400 square feet,
 3. The first 250 square feet of attached porches, patios, and breezeways with a solid roof if they are open on at least two sides,
 4. Porches, patios, and breezeways that have an open lattice roof,
 5. The first 100 square feet of any story or portion of a story of the main building on a lot with a ceiling height greater than 14 feet shall be counted only once,
 6. A basement when the elevation of the upper surface of the floor or roof above the basement does not exceed two feet in height at any point above the finished or natural grade, whichever is lower.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Bob Anderson at 213-364-7470 or BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com.

Sincerely,



Bob Anderson
Board Member, Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association
Chair, Mansionization Committee

cc: City Council members