

Westwood South of Santa Monica Blvd
Homeowner's Association
Incorporated November 8, 1971
P. O. Box 64213
Los Angeles, CA 90064-0213

December 7, 2016

LA City Council

RE: Council File 14-0656 / Council Agenda Item 15

Dear President Wesson and Honorable Council Members:

The Westwood South of Santa Monica Homeowners Association Board has carefully considered the proposed ordinance governing potential home sizes as provided by the R1 variation options and the proposed changes to the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance. We continue to voice our strong support of efforts to close existing loopholes in the BMO /BHO that have resulted in out-of-scale properties being developed on R1 lots. Councilmembers Koretz and Ryu 's hard work on this measure are much appreciated.

We were terribly concerned and disappointed to have hear the recommendations made by PLUM last week that would significantly compromise the pending revisions of the BMO.

It is important that you understand that the neighborhood councils who have voted to support the BMO/BHO and have submitted Community Impact Statements do not support the changes recently recommended by the PLUM Committee. The majority of community's have held firm in their support for a strong BMO/BHO that addresses overbuilding that is out-of-scale to lot size. The agenda for your December 7 meeting simply lists the neighborhood councils as being supportive; it does not explain that those Community Impact Statements were, for the most part, issued prior to PLUM's consideration.

We continue to seek the inclusion of any attached garages, whether attached in the front or rear of a home, in the calculations of home square footage. There is no reason to exempt any portion of an attached garage. To do so increases the bulk of a home AND creates an artificial incentive to attach a garage to a home which, more often than not, results in a garage built at the front of a lot thus significantly altering the character of many neighborhoods. The traditional driveway provides a built-in buffer zone between homes. It provides privacy, and allows light to filter onto neighboring properties which is important when considering quality of life issues and critical should a homeowner desire to install solar power. At a time when the City seeks to make our streets more pedestrian friendly, it is a mistake to promote homes with wider front driveways that remove street trees and replace them with added driveways and concrete – not pleasant elements of a truly walkable community. No doubt the added paving also adds to the heat island effects being experienced in our urban environment.

The second PLUM recommendation with which we disagree and for which we seek Council action to correct was PLUM's change (increase) of the allowable RFA for R1 zones. The change from .45 to .50 as the residential floor area ratio to be permitted on lots of less than 7500 square feet does not reflect the wishes expressed to us by our membership. We have supported the .45 ratio.

In our correspondence with PLUM, we asked the Committee to consider establishing a defined formula to provide a budget for enforcement of the ordinance as part of the ordinance.(including

provisions for increases to reflect inflationary/cost of living increases). There should be a provision included for the addition of staff to provide for the enforcement of all provisions defined and those staff should be supported by fees charged as part of the construction approval/permit process. Inconsistent enforcement should not be tolerated. Neighbors should not have to hire architects to review neighboring property plans to ensure that the structures comply with the plans and the law (as now happens). It would seem to us that there should have been some kind of economic analysis to determine the level of fees needed to administer this initiative so that fee recovery could be included as part of the ordinance.

Most of all, it must be understood by all who do construction in the City that any construction that deviates from approved plans resulting in a change in square footage/home size will be required to be brought into compliance and cannot be retroactively permitted.

We continue to request that the City keep the ordinance as straightforward and enforceable as possible. We specifically request the addition of enforcement provisions including explicit requirements that project design documents clearly demonstrate compliance with all aspects of the ordinance in order to facilitate efficient and timely review by City officials.

We conclude with our expression of hope that all Bonus Options will be eliminated. In the absence of design review standards/boards, it is very important that the ordinance retain all articulation requirements so that any new homes or large-scale additions do not have the side and back walls appearing as one long flat wall. This articulation is important to the existing neighboring homes as it gives some design to the side and back walls visible all around.

Please note that there was a typographical error in the ordinance that appeared on PAGE 11, Sec. 16, Encroachment Plane, and we do not know if it has been corrected:

“Encroachment Plane. Buildings shall not intersect a plane, commencing 20 feet in height at the minimum required front and side yards and extending a an angle of 45 degrees from the vertical toward the interior of the site”....

In the first sentence as copied, the word “a” may be an error that should read “at.”

We thank the City for the opportunity to comment on this important measure and wish to recognize the Planning Department for its excellent outreach work to engage communities during the crafting of the ordinance.

Sincerely,



Barbara Broide
President

Cc: CD 5 Councilmember Koretz