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PLUM committee mtg 11/1/16- Re: Item #8 (council file 16-1048) VTT-73704-SL-2A/ ENV-2015-2618-MND support of appeal

1 message

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Wed, Nov 2, 2016 at 12:18 PM

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Dear honorable members of the PLUM committee,

Last Tuesday you heard the appeal of the proposed small lot subdivision project at Hermitage and Weddington streets in Valley Village and recognized that there are significant concerns with this project application and approval. As you will be considering this appeal tomorrow at the next PLUM meeting, I urge you to recognize the destructive nature of this project and validate the public opposition by upholding the appeal for the following reasons:

1. The city has been notified and served evidence that there is an issue over site control, as the developer does not own one of the three parcels and the validity of the developer's agreement with the rightful property owner is being legally contested. With a lawsuit pending, and the possibility that the city, in its approval, could be party to a fraud; it is imperative that this appeal be upheld and project approval be halted.

2. The city has acknowledged a loss of more than 20,000 rent-stabilized units since 2001 and has admitted that preservation of existing affordable and rent-stabilized housing stock is a substantial policy prerogative. Recent motions introduced in city council, the Housing Element, and internal city communications all recognize that rent-stabilized units, while in high demand, are being lost through Ellis Act evictions, demolition and conversions, and the net effect is a reduction in affordability, as new units built are far out of reach to the average resident, and therefore operate at significantly higher vacancy rates than their rent-stabilized counterparts. Given this, the city has nonetheless, in this case, approved the demolition of 13 RSO units some of which were rented for as low as \$475/month to make way for 26 small lots that will likely cost at minimum \$800k. CEQA screening criteria requires that the city evaluates the loss of any existing housing units affordable to very low- or low-income households (as defined by federal and/or City standards), through demolition, conversion, or other means and offer mitigation measures, such as the increasing the number of housing units affordable to lower income households. I urge you to add mitigation measures to this project that would require a set-aside of a certain number of these fee-simple homes be made available to low income households to replace the loss of affordable units.

3. The property is a habitat for bees and other wildlife and that have not been properly identified in the CEQA review because applicant was not aware or did not disclose that the property was maintained as a sustainable living community fostering bee colonies. Considering the vast amount of literature on the threat to bee populations and the environmental impacts that declining populations have as bees are a critical part of our food supply, by acting as pollinators, this impact has not been identified or mitigated.

We urge you to uphold this appeal. Now more than ever, we need the city's leadership to take a stand to protect our affordable housing stock and the people who live in them. We need that to be more than just words on paper. Please direct city planning to create a protocol for identifying the cumulative impact of each project on the loss of RSO units. To this day, the developer, Urban Blox, has yet to build a single project for which it has sought entitlements. It is outrageous that the city would continue to be party to the displacement of its residents while getting nothing in return. Urban Blox has so far only produced a net loss. Based on the cumulative impacts of just this developer's projects-which all appear to have been approved under MNDs, this would support the position that further CEQA review of this project is necessary before moving forward.

Respectfully,

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