

Restricting group homes may risk federal funding

By [Dakota Smith, Staff Writer](#) Posted: 03/20/2012 11:22:35 PM PDT

Throwing a wrench into the debate over the city's proposed group home ordinance, housing advocates warned Tuesday that a new law regulating group homes could result in the loss of federal housing funds.

About a dozen housing experts voiced concerns at the Planning and Land Use Committee meeting that passage of the Community Care Facilities Ordinance could impact thousands of low-income and disabled residents.

"This represents a threat to the city's fair housing goals," said Peter Lynn, director of the Section 8 program at the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.

"It doesn't help the objective of housing low-income Angelenos," he added. "This would foreclose on huge swaths of Los Angeles by not allowing them to lease in residential areas."

Tentatively approved last year, the Community Care Facilities Ordinance seeks to regulate licensed facilities - a broad definition for sober living homes, elderly homes, homes for the disabled, or other types of group homes.

It would also set parameters for boarding houses.

Nearly four years in the planning, city officials expected the draft ordinance to be approved this spring.

But last minute amendments - and attention from the housing community - is renewing the debate over the ordinance.

David Garfinkle, president of the Tarzana Property Owners Association, testified in support of the ordinance, but questioned the recommended removal of a clause about regulating parolees. Under the revised ordinance, a facility would have to apply for a permit to operate if three or more paroles or persons on probation reside in the facility.

"The parole issue has to be addressed," he said.

Other critics charged the city is trying to tackle social issues - such as homelessness and drug addiction - through the zoning process.

Michael Arnold, executive director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority warned the committee the ordinance would increase homelessness.

Under the proposal, any housing units where two or more units are leased out would be considered boarding houses.

Since boarding houses would be banned in R1 areas - defined as strictly residential areas - it could push the poorest residents out of residential areas.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that Los Angeles make fair housing affordable, and the federal agency could view the ordinance as contrary to its goals, advocates said.

Additionally, certain federal funds to the poor or disabled, for instance, require them to have their own leases.

"(The ordinance) could jeopardize HUD funding for the city of Los Angeles," Arnold said. "I hope this City Council entity reconsiders the proposed ordinance."

City Councilman Ed Reyes, who chairs the PLUM Committee, said the city was consulting with its own lawyers to understand the Fair Housing Act, the federal law protecting renters' rights.

He said it was too soon to comment whether final passage of the ordinance would be delayed.

Housing advocates are asking city leaders to wait another three months before passing the ordinance.

"What we need to get," he said, "is legal perspective."