

Colter & Co.

2368 Norwalk Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90041

September 19, 2016

To: Members of the City Council
c/o Andrew Westall
via email andrew.westall@lacity.org

Re: Council File CF-14-0057-S8
Letter in Support of Council Action to Comply with State Mandates for Second Dwelling Units

Dear Members of the City Council,

As one of the people whose life and livelihood is in limbo as the full resolution of the second dwelling unit issue continues to be postponed I'm becoming increasingly concerned as I see misinformation presented as truth by those opposing the very sensible existing Second Dwelling Unit regulations as outlined in ZA 120. It is especially upsetting that misinformation seems to be influencing the views of some Councilmembers.

A correspondence from Strumwasser & Woocher LLP, the attorneys representing Los Angeles Neighbors in Action, was made part of the public file on September 15, 2016. In it they write "Councilmembers should be presented with accurate and detailed information about the requirements for a second dwelling unit permit..."

I couldn't agree more, and as an architect who has been involved with the design and permitting process for two entirely sensible second dwelling units I would like to put forth some accurate information.

In their correspondence Strumwasser & Woocher LLP attached as "Exhibit 1" ten plot plans. Of them they write "These 10 applications demonstrate that the submissions that are sufficient for a 'plan check' are not always substantial."

Please be aware that the attached plot plans DO NOT in fact represent even remotely all that is required to submit for plan check. These are small plot plans that the LADBS Plan Check Engineers attach to the final permit paperwork at the very end of a many months long plan check approval process after numerous drawings and support documents have been reviewed in great detail.

The LADBS puts forth a five page information bulletin entitled "Document Submittal Requirements for a New Single-Family Dwelling" that outlines the minimum requirements for the LADBS to accept plans for plan check review. Please find a copy attached as Exhibit 1 for a more accurate representation of the LADBS submittal requirements. I think you will see that would be nearly impossible for anyone to prepare a set suitable for submittal between now and September 30.

While the plot plans that Strumwasser & Woocher LLP are presenting are not what they seem to think they are, I do encourage the Councilmembers to look at them anyway as they will see that each of the SDU's being presented are small buildings discreetly tucked behind the main dwellings.

Important to also note is that each of the second dwelling units shown follow increased side and rear yard setbacks. This is because the LADBS treats SDU's as main structures when it comes to setbacks. This benefits neighbors. If these SDU's were built as recreation rooms they could be built in many cases as close as 5 feet to the rear property line and directly on the side property line. Such a recreation room could even be larger than 1,200 square feet if the lot size would allow it and would only lack the shower or bath and a full kitchen that an SDU can have. If the Council continues to prevent people from receiving permits for SDU's I can very well imagine that people will go back to doing what they did in the past throughout Los Angeles and get a permit for a recreation room and then put in a full bathroom and kitchen after the certificate of occupancy is issued.

Another misrepresentation that is circulating is that ZA 120 categorically allows an SDU of up to 1,200 square feet to be built when that is not the case. For example, the Bel Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council issued an action alert saying "...be aware of the pending action of the LA City Council to legalize Second Dwelling Unit/Granny Units across the City to state standards which allow for SDU's up to 1,200 square feet with no minimum lot size requirement..." That there is no minimum lot size requirement is simply untrue. The zoning code has multiple checks on allowable square footage on a lot and ZA 120 does not override those checks. It is never the case that ZA 120 allows more square footage to be built on a lot than otherwise would be allowed but it is often the case that it limits the amount that can be built on a lot.

If you have a small to medium sized lot and the zoning code dictates that you can only add an additional 600 square feet it means just that. Even if you build a Second Dwelling Unit you can not exceed that 600 square feet.

It works the other way with larger lots. If the provisions of the zoning code dictate that you can add 2,000 additional square feet to your property and you want to build a second dwelling unit you are limited to building 1,200 square feet. While in this example you could build a 2,000 square foot addition or recreation room again, you would be limited to 1,200 square feet if you want to build a second dwelling unit.

I spent the last half year designing an approximately 650 square foot SDU before the issuance of SDU permits was put on hold. To date the property owners have spent over \$20,000 in architecture fees, geologist fees, and structural engineering fees. The design is for a one story building that is discreetly tucked into a hillside. If we have to change course and build this as an attached addition instead of as an SDU we will have to add an additional covered parking space of 200 s.f. (which the owners don't want and will never use) and will need to add a second story of at least another 200 s.f. so that there is an enclosed passageway connecting the new structure to the existing house which is another thing the owners don't want and don't need. The 650 s.f. SDU would become a 1,050 s.f. addition that wouldn't be what the homeowners want and would now be something the neighbors will be looking at instead of looking over.

If we are allowed to build the SDU that we want to build we will be improving everyone's situation by building a discreet structure 12 feet lower and set further in from the side property line than the existing pool house that will be demolished to make room for the SDU. The lot is large enough to build a 3,000 square foot addition if the owners wanted to, but an approximately 650 square foot SDU with a bedroom, a bathroom, and a kitchenette for their aging parents to be able stay in for extended visits is all they want to build.

It is grossly unfair to those people who have been planning projects in accordance to the ZA 120 guidelines, aren't far enough along in the process to be able to submit for permits right away, and are also racing against the ticking clock of the pending Baseline Hillside and Baseline Mansionization Ordinance changes for the Council to not finally and fully clear things up and resume issuing new SDU permits right away. People have made major life decisions and financial outlays based on the ZA 120 guidelines. I fear that there is likely a whole other category of people who are not aware of the current uncertainty surrounding the SDU guidelines and are continuing to be misled by the City as even the August 2016 update to the City of Los Angeles "Zoning Code Manual and Commentary" puts forth ZA 120 as part of the City of LA zoning code with no warning or retraction.

The vast majority of the houses in Los Angeles were built in previous eras when people lived different lives and when there wasn't such a crushing housing crisis. Second Dwelling Units are good for Los Angeles. They allow people to modify their existing homes to work for how they live today, allow people to prepare for their future, and offer some relief in a city that is becoming more and more difficult for people with modest incomes. We need as many tools available to tackle today's problems and the SDU ordinance is one of many needed tools that should not be taken away.

Please allow people the continued use of the SDU regulations in accordance with Zoning Memorandum 120 by following your previous course of action and repeal Subsections 12.12.W.43 and 12.24.W.44 of Chapter 1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

Thank you.

John Colter, Architect
Colter and Co.
2368 Norwalk Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90041

cc via email:

Councilmember Jose Huizar
Kevin Ocubillo, Transportation & Planning Deputy Office of Councilmember Huizar
Matthew Glesne, Housing Planner
Sharon Dickinson, Legislative Assistant, Planning and Land Use Committee

EXHIBIT 1



INFORMATION BULLETIN / GENERAL INFORMATION

REFERENCE NO.:
DOCUMENT NO.: **P/GI 2014-009**
Previously Issued As: P/GI 2011-009

Effective: 01-01-2014
Revised :

**DOCUMENT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS
FOR
A NEW SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING**

This Information Bulletin contains the suggested minimum document submittal requirements, including architectural and structural plans, calculations, and other miscellaneous information, for a **“NEW SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING”**.

The lists contained in this Information Bulletin are only suggested minimum document submittal requirements and some projects may not require all of these documents while others may require additional documents and information.

For additional information regarding specific document submittal requirements, please contact:

Metro
201 N. Figueroa St.
4th Floor
311(within LA City)

Van Nuys
6262 Van Nuys Blvd.
Room 251
311(within LA City)

West Los Angeles
1828 Sawtelle Blvd.
2nd Floor
311(within LA City)

For telephone inquiries originating from outside of the Los Angeles County, call (213) 473-3231.

One and two family dwellings that are 3 stories or less in height shall comply with the 2014 Los Angeles Residential Code.

One and two family dwellings that are over 3 stories in height shall comply with the 2014 Los Angeles Building Code.

I. DOCUMENT SUBMITTAL LIST

A. Plans

- 1. Architectural Plans
 - Plot plan
 - Floor plan
 - Roof plan
 - Exterior elevations and cross-sections
- 2. Structural Plans
 - Foundation plan

As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability and, upon request, will provide reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to its programs, services and activities. For efficient handling of information internally and in the internet, conversion to this new format of code related and administrative information bulletins including MGD and RGA that were previously issued will also allow flexibility and timely distribution of information to the public.

Floor framing plan
Roof framing plan
Truss information
Structural framing and connection details

3. Grading Plans when grading is proposed
4. Plans showing relevant information for plumbing, mechanical, and electrical components

B. Calculations

1. A complete set of Structural Calculations (for vertical and lateral loads) signed by a State of California licensed architect or engineer
2. Energy Calculations and Forms (Title 24)

C. Other Documents

1. Soil Report and Geologic Hazard Study if in Geologic Hazard Zone
2. Material specifications
3. Any entitlements

II. EXPANDED INFORMATION ON ABOVE DOCUMENTS

A. General Information

1. Plans prepared with ink or indelible pencil or by a reproduction process, drawn to scale, fully dimensioned, and a minimum size of 18" x 24". Plans shall be of sufficient clarity to indicate the nature and extent of the proposed work and to show in detail that the project will conform to the provisions of all applicable codes and of relevant laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, and orders
2. Signature and stamp on all documents by an architect or engineer (cover sheet of each document to be wet signed and stamped)
3. Name, title, registration (if applicable), address, and telephone number of architect or the engineer on cover sheet
4. Project name and address, as well as project owner's name, address, and telephone number

5. Cover sheet information:

- a. Applicable codes and editions (LABC, LARC, UMC, UPC, NEC, Energy & LAGBC)
- b. Description detailing scope of all work
- c. Occupancy group(s) and type of construction
- d. Gross area per floor and building height
- e. Index of all sheets of plans and attachments

B. Architectural Plans

1. Plot plan including:

- a. Vicinity Map and North Arrow
- b. Lot dimensions, property lines, street, and alley locations
- c. Building footprint showing all projections and dimensions to property lines and adjacent structures
- d. Easements and visible utilities on site
- e. Locations of existing fire hydrants within 500 feet of the project

2. Fully dimensioned floor plans, including room sizes and uses

3. Fully dimensioned roof plans, including roof eaves, overhangs, rakes, and gables, and construction material of roof

4. Exterior elevations detailing all exterior walls and cross sections in each direction

5. Door and window locations, door and window schedules including size and type, and door threshold details

6. Fully dimensioned stair details, including rise and run, handrails, and all member sizes

7. Fireplace details

C. Structural Plans

1. Structural wall sections including connection details at foundation, floor, and roof levels
2. Post and girder connection details
3. Footing, pier, and grade beam details
4. Shear wall and holdown details, including wall construction, nailing, anchor bolts, transfer connections, and holdowns
5. Stairway framing and connections, including handrails, and dimensions of all members
6. Flashing details when flashing is provided
7. Material specifications
8. Where Prefabricated Trusses are used:
 - a. Roof framing plan with a truss I.D. number and manufacturer's name
 - b. Detail of all trusses, including gable bracing and bridging
 - c. Detail of all truss splices, connections, plate sizes, and hangers
 - d. Truss plans to be stamped by a California licensed design engineer or architect stating that he/she has reviewed the plans

D. Grading Plans

1. Existing and proposed grading plans
2. Pad elevations, ground slope drainage pattern, and topographic plans prepared with 1'-0 contours interval
3. Retaining walls and drainage systems

E. Plumbing, Electrical, and Mechanical Components

1. Location and size (BTU/HR output) of HVAC equipment
2. Locations and dimensions of plumbing fixtures

3. Locations of outlets, fixtures, switches, and smoke detectors, and locations and sizes of subpanels, and main panels

F. Energy

1. CF-1R and MF-1R forms completed, including signatures, and attached to plans
2. CF-GR and Insulation Certificate attached to plans
3. Performance Analysis and Back-up forms attached to plans

G. Green

1. Complete and attach Mandatory Requirements Checklist (Form GRN 4) to plans
2. Storm water pollution control (Form GNR 1) and site drainage
3. Location of electric vehicle supply wiring
4. Provide ENERGY STAR appliances information and location of required area reserved for future solar system
5. Provide water flow rate limits (Form GRN 14) and irrigation controller information
6. Show flashing details and methods of construction waste reduction
7. Include fireplace specifications and VOC and formaldehyde limits (Form GRN 11) on plans
8. Provide slab on grade construction details (4" layer of clean aggregate) and location of humidistat controllers

III. MISCELLANEOUS PLANS AND PERMITS

1. Proposed accessory structures, including pools and spas
2. Demolition of structures on site

NOTE:

- (1) This is not a complete list of all document submittal requirements. Additional information may be required after plan review.
- (2) Review and approval from other departments and agencies, such as City Planning, Public Works (etc), may be required.