

MOTION

HOUSE LA: Site Plan Review Modifications

The current shortage in housing in Los Angeles can be attributed to a serious lack of supply combined with a high level of demand. Rising rents is evidence to signal that more households would like to live in the area than there is housing to accommodate them. As the City's population grows, the shortfall in housing availability will have far-reaching and devastating effects on the Los Angeles region if City policymakers and community stakeholders fail to make a positive commitment to change.

The number of new residents in Los Angeles County grew by 1,382,520 between 1990 and 2006. During the same time period, there were only 201,440 new housing units produced. That means that only one housing unit was constructed for every 6.86 new people that needed housing. And numbers throughout the rest of the region say much the same thing -- demand continues to rise and the number of people per household has increased as the result of inadequate housing stock.

Key strategies to increase the housing stock include updating the City's Zoning Code to encourage responsible development, streamlining the approval of building permits, and expediting housing production when appropriate.

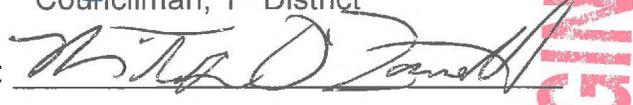
In 1990, the City enacted an ordinance that mandates a site plan review process for any proposed project that results in an increase of 50 or more residential units or guest rooms, or 50,000 non-residential square feet or more of non-residential floor area, or a change of use resulting in an increase of 500 or more daily vehicle trips. Since its enactment, the City has imposed a common set of mitigation measures on most housing developments. These common measures could be built into the Building and Zoning Codes as standard requirements imposed on new housing developments of 50 units or more.

The City should consider increasing the site plan review threshold from 50 units to a higher threshold so that only the largest projects are subject to the review while the development of in-fill housing consistent with the Zoning Code in already urbanized areas are permitted to be built. Projects that comply with the underlying zoning, meet design guidelines, and reach local affordability goals could be exempted from site plan review and allowed to proceed through the building permit approval process.

The current housing crisis merits an evaluation of the City's planning policies in relation to the ability to entitle, construct and deliver much-needed housing units to market. It is timely to evaluate the City's site plan review ordinance, given its 25-year history and the need to build certainty into the City's entitlement and permitting processes.

I THEREFORE MOVE the City Council instruct the Department of City Planning to prepare and present a report with recommendations to amend the site plan review ordinance, increasing the threshold from 50 residential units and establishing an administrative zoning clearance process for projects below this threshold as a strategy to increase the City's affordable housing production.

PRESENTED BY: 
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SECONDED BY: 


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