

Your Community Impact Statement has been successfully submitted to City Council and Committees.

If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at NCsupport@lacity.org.

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Contact Information

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The Board approved this CIS by a vote of: Yea(21) Nay(1) Abstain(3) Ineligible(0) Recusal(0)

Date of NC Board Action: 09/10/2019

Type of NC Board Action: For

Impact Information

Date: 10/04/2019

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 19-0623

Agenda Date:

Item Number:

Summary:



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2019-2021**

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9/23/2019

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Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street, 5th Fl
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2601

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Subject: Council File Number 19-0623

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Renter's Rep. - Vacant

Report on Empty Homes Tax/Vacant and Habitable Housing Units

The Mid City West Community Council, an official Neighborhood Council of the City of Los Angeles, requests that the following Community Impact Statement be attached/added to Council File 19-0623 (a proposed motion calling on City agencies to report on the number of vacant, habitable housing units in Los Angeles, as well as policy options for a potential "Empty Homes Penalty" in 2020) with the following motion:

Los Angeles is in the midst of a long-term housing scarcity crisis. In recent years, the dramatic increase in homelessness has only accentuated the depth of the crisis. While a range of factors are to blame for housing scarcity in Los Angeles, the primary cause is a shortage of housing units. This shortage is the foreseeable result of exclusionary land use policies that make multifamily homebuilding, the most efficient and cost-effective approach to homebuilding, unduly expensive and onerous.

Mid City West Community Council has recommended action on Los Angeles' housing supply crisis before. For example, the problems associated with exclusionary land use policies are even more salient with regards to building new, subsidized affordable housing, where financing is scarce, land is expensive, and development costs are higher. As a result, we have supported efforts to make building Permanent Supportive Housing and temporary housing easier and faster by supporting CF 17-1422 (Permanent Supportive Housing) and CF 17-1432 (Interim Motel Conversions).

We were motivated to support these policies because, while we believe that more material change is needed at the state and local levels to create land use policies that once again make it possible for homes in Los Angeles to be accessible to all, opportunities to chip away at our housing and homelessness crises in an incremental but nonetheless positive way are worthy of pursuing.

For that reason, we recently supported CF-19-0416, which calls for a report on instituting a citywide Inclusionary Zoning ordinance, and we now support CF-19-0623, a motion calling for a report on the number of vacant habitable housing units and policy options for implementing an “Empty Homes Penalty.”

We note that empty homes are not inherently bad. There are legitimate, non-harmful reasons for homes to be unoccupied. In fact, a healthy housing market will always have a certain percentage of vacant housing units as a result of people moving in and out, properties being sold, etc. That said, it does not behoove the City of Los Angeles to allow speculators or landowners to “sit on” empty units to wait for higher-rent paying tenants, to use solely as investment vehicles independent of a unit’s core function as a home, or to use as a pied-à-terres, without compensating Angelenos for the cost associated with that foregone unit of critically needed housing.

Teasing out this distinction, between normal, healthy vacancy (indeed, renters *need* some level of vacancy to regain some semblance of leverage in the market) and undue speculation is what this report calls for. As such, it will provide important information to our City Council to determine whether an Empty Homes Penalty would effectively penalize such counterproductive management of housing units. Our desire would be for any funds raised to go towards affordable housing efforts.

To be sure, an Empty Homes Penalty will not solve the housing crisis on its own. However, the effectiveness of a policy like this as well as a review of the state of vacancies in Los Angeles and the impact that has on our housing shortage should be studied by the City. In the midst of a housing scarcity crisis, solutions that makes more housing units available to Angelenos are always worthy of our strong consideration and support

THEREFORE The Mid City West Community Council supports CF 19-0623, a motion calling on City agencies to report on the number of vacant, habitable housing units in Los Angeles, as well as policy options for a potential “Empty Homes Penalty” in 2020.

This Community Impact Statement was voted on as a properly agendized item during the regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting on September 10, 2019, and passed by a vote of 21 yeas, 1 nay, and 3 abstaining and directed that a Community Impact Statement be filed reflecting its position.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact us via email at sepstein@midcitywest.org, or mberker@midcitywest.org needed.

Sincerely,

Scott Epstein
Chair
Mid City West Community Council

Cc: Councilmember Hon. Marqueece Harris-Dawson (PLUM Committee Chair) via email
Sharon Dickinson, Legislative Assistant “
Councilmember Hon. Bob Blumenfield (PLUM Vice Chair) “
Councilmember Hon. Gil Cedillo “
Councilmember Hon. Curren D. Price, Jr “
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