The City of Los Angeles has a higher rate of housing unit overcrowding than any other major city in the United States. Many families and individuals find themselves forced to live in crowded conditions due to the mismatch between housing costs and incomes. According to the Census, 17% of all renter-occupied households were overcrowded or severely overcrowded. This includes about 80,000 renter households living in severely overcrowded conditions.

This overcrowding is a direct result of an insufficient number of housing units for the population in general and particularly the lack of three and four bedroom units for larger families and multi-generational households. Large family households in the City of Los Angeles have higher rates of housing insecurity and overcrowding.

The Los Angeles General Plan prioritizes the need for a mix of housing types across the City, including rental and homeownership opportunities for singles, families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and multi-generational families. Fully a third of the households in the City of Los Angeles are comprised of four or more people, yet only 14% of the renter-occupied housing stock encompasses three or four bedroom units. Newly constructed rental units tend to be much smaller, and a majority are studios or one bedroom units. The lack of three and four bedroom rental units makes it difficult for larger households to find appropriate and affordable rental housing.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread adoption of remote work and school, the need for additional space has increased demand for larger units. With more individuals spending extended periods at home due to telecommuting arrangements, there is a growing demand for living spaces that accommodate educational, professional, and personal activities, especially in multi-generational households. As such, the availability of larger housing units is essential to meet the evolving needs of households adapting to new work-from-home and educational realities.

In addition, the needs of older adults must be prioritized as the City updates land use policies and requirements. Allowing more housing for multi-generational families will provide our seniors the ability to age in place with those who can provide them with care in the communities they call home.

Current zoning regulations inadvertently discourage the development of apartments with three or more bedrooms due to density and height restrictions, creating market conditions that have pushed developers to smaller single and one bedroom units. Providing incentives in multi-family buildings for the inclusion of larger units will help balance market conditions and alleviate the housing pressures on larger family units. This will promote diverse, family friendly communities throughout the city.
I THEREFORE MOVE that the Department of City Planning (DCP) prepare and present an ordinance that would establish a new density bonus for large family units in multi-family buildings, with the following provisions:

1. Exemption of the square footage of the third, fourth, and fifth bedrooms and third and fourth restrooms from the floor area calculations of large family units.
2. Allow for an additional story of height beyond existing zoning restrictions and bonuses for developments consisting primarily of large family units. The square footage of the additional story shall be limited to the total exempt square feet in the project.
3. Requirement for a 99 year covenant ensuring that the units will maintain the same unit mix of large family units and be available to households at 120% of the Area Median Income.
4. This bonus will be additive to existing bonuses and TOC provisions.

I FURTHER MOVE that DCP incorporate the above actions and incentives into the City’s Housing Element of the General Plan, which is currently being updated.

Presented by: Paul Krekorian

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Katy Grassley