



Aug 6, 2024

**City of Los Angeles
City Council
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012**

**Re: Proposed Housing Development Project at 3601 - 3615 Mission Road;
CPC-2022-6189-CU-DB-ZAA-SPR-HCA-1A**

By email: clerk.cps@lacity.org; candy.rosales@lacity.org; daniel.luna@lacity.org

Cc: trevor.martin@lacity.org; cityatty.help@lacity.org

Dear Los Angeles City Council,

The California Housing Defense Fund (“CalHDF”) submits this letter to remind the Council of its obligation to abide by all relevant state laws when evaluating the appeal against the proposed 184-unit housing development project at 3601 - 3615 Mission Road and 2010-2036 North Lincoln Park Avenue, which includes 47 units for very low-income households. Such laws include the Housing Accountability Act (Gov. Code, § 65589.5; the “HAA”), California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) Guidelines, and the Density Bonus Law (Gov. Code, § 65915; the “DBL”).

The HAA provides the project legal protections. It requires approval of zoning and general plan compliant housing development projects unless findings can be made regarding specific, objective, written health and safety hazards. (Gov. Code, § 65589.5, subd. (j).) The HAA also bars cities from imposing conditions on the approval of such projects that would reduce the project’s density unless, again, such written findings are made. (*Ibid.*) As a development with at least two-thirds of its area devoted to residential uses, the project falls within the HAA’s ambit, and it complies with local zoning code and the City’s general plan. Of note, increased density, concessions, and waivers that a project is entitled to under the DBL do not render the project noncompliant with the zoning code or general plan, for purposes of the HAA. (Gov. Code, § 65589.5, subd. (j)(3).) The HAA’s protections therefore apply, and the City must not reject the project, except based on health and safety standards, as outlined above.

**360 Grand Ave #323, Oakland 94610
www.calhdf.org**

CalHDF also writes to emphasize that the DBL offers the proposed development certain protections. The Council must respect these protections. In addition to granting the increase in residential units allowed by the DBL, the Council must not deny the project the proposed concessions and waivers with respect to floor area ratio, the use of dedicated land for density calculations, parking, side yard setbacks, height, and open space, unless it makes written findings as required by Gov. Code, § 65915, subd. (e)(1) that the waivers would have a specific, adverse impact upon health or safety, and for which there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific adverse impact. Of note, the DBL specifically allows for a reduction in required accessory parking in addition to the allowable waivers and concessions. (*Id.* at subd. (p).) In addition, the California Court of Appeal has ruled that when an applicant has requested one or more waivers and/or concessions pursuant to the DBL, the City “may not apply any development standard that would physically preclude construction of that project as designed, even if the building includes ‘amenities’ beyond the bare minimum of building components.” (*Bankers Hill 150 v. City of San Diego* (2022) 74 Cal.App.5th 755, 775.)

Additionally, the project is exempt from state environmental review under the Class 32 CEQA categorical exemption (In-Fill Development Projects) pursuant to § 15332 of the CEQA Guidelines, as the project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as the applicable zoning designation and regulations; the proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses; the project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species; approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; and the site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. And recent caselaw from the California Court of Appeal affirms that local governments err, and may be sued, when they improperly refuse to grant a project a CEQA exemption or streamlined CEQA review to which it is entitled. (*Hilltop Group, Inc. v. County of San Diego* (2024) 99 Cal.App.5th 890, 911.)

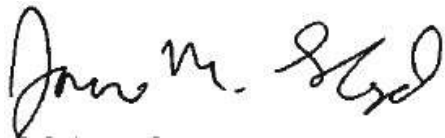
As you are well aware, California remains in the throes of a statewide crisis-level housing shortage. New housing such as this is a public benefit: by providing affordable housing, it will mitigate the state’s homelessness crisis; it will bring new customers to local businesses; it will grow the City’s tax base; and it will reduce displacement of existing residents by reducing competition for existing housing. It will also help cut down on transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by providing housing in denser, more urban areas, as opposed to farther-flung regions in the state (and out of state). While no one project will solve the statewide housing crisis, the proposed development is a step in the right direction. CalHDF urges the Council to approve it, consistent with its obligations under state law.

CalHDF is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation whose mission includes advocating for increased access to housing for Californians at all income levels, including low-income households. You may learn more about CalHDF at www.calhdf.org.

Sincerely,



Dylan Casey
CalHDF Executive Director



James M. Lloyd
CalHDF Director of Planning and Investigations