

Communication from Public

Name: James Lloyd

Date Submitted: 02/10/2025 02:31 PM

Council File No: 24-1603

Comments for Public Posting: 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 proposed 163-unit housing development project at 638 South Berendo Street, which includes 18 units for extremely low-income households. These laws include the Housing Accountability Act (“HAA”) and California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) Guidelines. 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. (d).) The HAA also bars cities from imposing conditions on the approval of such projects that would render the project infeasible 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. The Council must therefore approve the project unless it makes written findings regarding health and safety as mentioned above – which it cannot do since the preponderance of the evidence in the record does not support such findings. (Ibid.) Additionally, the project is exempt from state environmental review under the Class 32 CEQA categorical exemption (In-Fill Development Projects) pursuant to section 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.



Feb 10, 2025

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

**Re: Proposed Housing Development Project at 638 South Berendo Street;
DIR-2023-4545-TOC-SPR-VHCA-1A / 24-1603**

By email: submitted electronically via Council website

Cc: David Woon, Planning Assistant, david.woon@lacity.org; City Clerk's Office, clerk.cps@lacity.org; City Attorney's Office, cityatty.help@lacity.org

Dear Los Angeles City Council, PLUM Committee,

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

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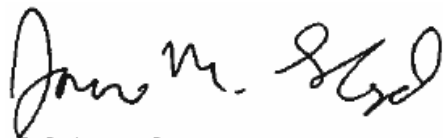
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Sincerely,



Dylan Casey
CalHDF Executive Director



James M. Lloyd
CalHDF Director of Planning and Investigations

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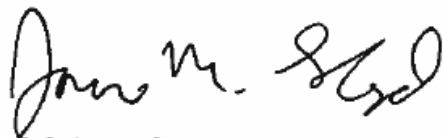
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