

Communication from Public

Name: Jordan Reid Sisson
Date Submitted: 06/06/2023 10:12 AM
Council File No: 18-1242
Comments for Public Posting: Please see attached emailed earlier.

June 6, 2023

VIA EMAIL & ONLINE: (LACouncilComment.com)

PLUM Committee, City of Los Angeles
c/o Candy Rosales, Legislative Assistant (clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org)

**RE: Item 12, PLUM Hearing 6/6/23 (Council File No. 18-1242);
Infinitely Group Hotel Project (DCP Case Nos. CPC-2017-712, ENV-2017-713);
Revised RHNA/Housing Findings Lack Substantial Evidence**

Dear Honorable Planning and Land Use Management Committee Members:

On behalf of appellant UNITE HERE Local 11 ("**Local 11**"), this office submits the following supplemental comments to the City of Los Angeles ("**City**") Planning and Land Use Management ("**PLUM**") Committee and Department of City Planning ("**DCP**") regarding the above-referenced 6-story, 100-room hotel ("**Project**") proposed for a three-lot site located within the Westlake Community Plan Area ("**CPA**"). Among the entitlements sought by the Infinitely Group ("**Applicant**") are a requested General Plan Amendment and Vesting Zone / Height District Change ("**Entitlements**")—which are legislative approvals that the City has the discretion to deny.

In January 2021, former Councilmember Gil Cedillo recommended that PLUM deny the Project's requested Entitlements due to the Project's lack of housing and inconsistency with applicable land use plans. (See Figure 1 below [highlights added].)

Figure 1: Excerpt Councilmember Cedillo's Letter Opposing Entitlements (1/21/21)¹

The City's land-use priorities should be responsive to these unprecedented changes. Indeed, the City Council has the authority to exercise discretion on land-use matters. The Council Member's position is that there is no justification for a hotel use at this site. In contrast, demand for affordable housing continues unabated, exacerbated by the pandemic, and the need to produce housing is compelling.

The Council Member agrees with the key point raised in the appeal filed by UNITE HERE Local 11 – that without a housing component, the proposed Project is inconsistent with the General, Community and Redevelopment Plans. The proposed Project does nothing to advance and conflicts with the affordable housing goals and policies. Hence, a General Plan Amendment should be not granted.

Now, after more than two years since that last PLUM hearing was continued, the Applicant is seeking the same requested Entitlements despite the City's recent adoption of the 2021-2029 "**Housing Element**" that identified the site as being available to provide affordable housing per the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment ("**RHNA**") obligations. Specifically, the Housing Element inventory indicates the site has a base zoning of 36 dwelling units and permitted a maximum of 87 units via bonus zoning incentives for affordable units. (See Fig. 2 below.) For example, as a Tier 3

¹ See First District letter (1/21/21), https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2018/18-1242_misc_01-21-21.pdf.

Transit Orient Communities (“TOC”) site, this could equate to roughly 8 to 20 additional affordable units (depending on the level of affordability).²

Figure 2: Excerpt Housing Element Appendix 4.1 Inventory for the Project Site.³

	A	B	C	D		
1	Appendix 4.1. Inventory of Adequate Sites for Housing					
2	Jurisdiction Name	Site Address/Intersection	5 Digit ZIP Code	Assessor Parcel Number		
170418	LOS ANGELES	2009 W JAMES M. WOOD BLVD	90006	5141020021		
170419	LOS ANGELES	857 S WESTLAKE AVE	90057	5141020021		
170420	LOS ANGELES			5141020021		
* * *						
	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
	Maximum Units Allowed - Base Zoning	Maximum Units Allowed - Bonus Zoning	PIN	Community Plan Area	Rent Stabilization Ordinance	Income Category
7	23	130-5A203 62	Westlake			Lower
19	32	130-5A203 49	Westlake			Lower
10	32	130-5A203 57	Westlake			Lower

To grant the Entitlement to allow a hotel instead of the housing, the City must “make a written finding supported by *substantial evidence* as to whether or not remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to meet the [City’s RHNA] requirements” (Gov. Code § 65863(b)(2), emphasis added.) To this end, DCP staff recently issued “Revised Findings,” citing thousands of units purportedly available throughout the entire City. (See Fig. 3 below.) This City metric is an improper comparison (much less substantial evidence) given that Los Angeles is the nation’s second-largest city (approximately 473 square miles)⁴ and purposefully divided into 35 individual CPAs (each serving as the areas General Plan Land Use Element)⁵—including the approximate 1,900-acre Westlake CPA where this Project is located (i.e., 2.96 square miles).⁶ The fact is that the City routinely misses its RHNA goals and needs to prioritize housing at available sites; proposals like this usurp housing opportunities that cause the City to be out of compliance.

² See ZIMAS (indicated site is within Tier 3 TOC incentive area), <http://zimas.lacity.org/?loc=MTMwLTVMjAzICA2Mgo1MTQxMDIwMDIxClwMDkgMS05IFcgSkFNRVMgTS4gV09PRCBCTFZECgo2NDc0MzgwLjU1NTA5NDYyMSwxODQwOTcwLjk0NTAxODAxMzIsNjQ4MDI5My4wNTUwOTQ2MjEsMTg0Mzg3MC45NDUwMTgwMTMyCjEzMC01QTlwMyAgNjI%3D>; see also TOC Guidelines (2/26/18), p. 7 (indicating Tier 3 incentives for residential projects with 10-23% affordable units), <https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/39fae0ef-f41d-49cc-9bd2-4e7a2eb528dd/TOCGuidelines.pdf>.

³ See also Housing Element, Chapter 4, Appendix 4.1 (Table A, Excel lines 170418 – 420 corresponding to APN 5141020021), [https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/f8e2050f-2b3b-4ca3-b793-d9ffcd2fc8d4/Appendix_4.1_-_Housing_Element_Sites_Inventory_\(Table_A\).xlsx](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/f8e2050f-2b3b-4ca3-b793-d9ffcd2fc8d4/Appendix_4.1_-_Housing_Element_Sites_Inventory_(Table_A).xlsx).

⁴ See <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/general-plan-updates>.

⁵ See <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/community-plans>.

⁶ See Westlake CPA, p. I-1, https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/b189be15-6f71-43db-8a04-491fdd188729/Westlake_Community_Plan.pdf.

Figure 3: Excerpt Revised Findings on Available RHNA Site (Revised Findings,⁷ p. P-4)

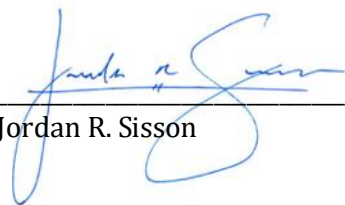
Pursuant to Government Code (GC) Section 65863(b)(2), the City finds that while the proposed project would result in fewer units by income category than those identified in the Inventory of Sites prepared for the 2021-2029 Housing Element, the remaining sites identified in the Housing Element of the General Plan are adequate to meet the requirements of GC Section 65583.2 and to accommodate the jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need pursuant to GC Section 65584. As of April 1, 2023, the City's remaining RHNA Allocation for the 2021-2029 Planning period is as follows: 112,281 Very Low Income Units, 67,086 Low Income Units, 74,964 Moderate Income Units, and 168,892 Above-Moderate Income Units. As of April 1, 2023, the City has a remaining capacity of 330,056 Very Low Income Units, 332,096 Low Income Units, 63,107 Moderate Income Units, and 907,466 Above-Moderate Income Units. Therefore, the City finds that there are adequate remaining sites in the Housing Element to accommodate the remaining RHNA Allocation for the planning period.

In reality, by granting the Entitlements to permit a hotel instead of housing, the City forgoes 87 much-needed housing units (including 8-20 affordable units), which is significant for the Westlake CPA given that the CPA is relatively overcrowded and has a low potential for producing lower-income units.⁸ The Revised Findings cannot downplay this acute localized impact by relying on purportedly available sites elsewhere in the City far away from this site and the Westlake community.

The City's Revised Findings lack substantial evidence to justify granting the Entitlements. So too, the need for housing in this area of the City has not changed since the former First District unequivocally recommended that PLUM deny the Project's Entitlements. This part of the City needs housing, not more hotels. *The City has the legislative discretion to deny the Entitlements—please use that discretion to reject this Project that provides not a single housing unit on a site that the City has identified for much-needed housing.*

Sincerely,

LAW OFFICE OF GIDEON KRACOV


Jordan R. Sisson

⁷ See https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2018/18-1242_misc_2-5-23-23.pdf.

⁸ See Housing Element, pp. 97 (Map 1.6), 59 (Map 4.2), [https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/55fdecf6-e185-4910-b690-2df603093d76/2021-2029_Housing_Element_Book_\(Adopted\)_-_Low_Res..pdf](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/55fdecf6-e185-4910-b690-2df603093d76/2021-2029_Housing_Element_Book_(Adopted)_-_Low_Res..pdf).

Communication from Public

Name: Enrique Velasquez

Date Submitted: 06/06/2023 01:05 PM

Council File No: 18-1242

Comments for Public Posting: June 5th, 2023 Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez 200 N. Spring St, Room 460 Los Angeles, CA 90012 RE: Reject Hotel Upzone, Defend Our Community: Council File 18-1242 Dear Councilmember, We urge you to sustain the appeal and reject the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change (“Entitlements”) for the proposed project at 2005 James Wood Blvd (“Project”). We object to this project for two reasons: 1) there should not be a hotel on this site for the reasons cited by the previous councilmember contained herein and 2) because the proposed rooms will contain kitchenettes, this qualifies them as “dwelling units,” thus triggering the Measure JJJ requirement to provide affordable housing, but the Project includes no affordable housing or in lieu fees. The Project also proposes to displace local businesses, including a panadería and a church, to which we object. This Project should not contain a hotel use. When this Project was previously scheduled to be heard by PLUM, the previous councilmember, Councilman Gil Cedillo, issued the following statement: The City Council has the authority to exercise discretion on land-use matters. The Council Member’s position is that there is no justification for a hotel use at this site. In contrast, demand for affordable housing continues unabated, exacerbated by the pandemic, and the need to produce housing is compelling. The Council Member agrees with the key point raised in the appeal filed by UNITE HERE Local 11 – that without a housing component, the proposed Project is inconsistent with the General, Community and Redevelopment Plans. The proposed Project does nothing to advance and conflicts with the affordable housing goals and policies. Hence, a General Plan Amendment should be not granted.¹ Please uphold the appeal and reject the requested Entitlements for the proposed Project. The proposed project includes habitable rooms with kitchenettes, classifying them as “residential dwelling units,” thus triggering the Measure JJJ requirement to provide affordable housing. Measure JJJ requires projects seeking general plan amendments of over 10 dwelling units to provide affordable housing. This is yet another example of how the city consistently misinterprets its municipal code to benefit hotel developers at the expense of needed housing. For example, in the Venice Place hotel project, the West Los Angeles Area Planning Commission approved a 78-room hotel

project with only 4 apartments on the basis that hotels are residential uses. The Commission said that hotel was “predominately residential,” although the hotel rooms had no kitchens or kitchenettes. So too, the Commission approved several zoning concessions intended for housing projects, not large commercial developments like the Venice Place project.² Here, the developer proposes a 100- unit hotel that will have kitchenettes targeting extended-stay customers. While the City Planning Commission acknowledged the project as a “hybrid” between residential/commercial uses³ and functionally the same as a dwelling unit, it refused to apply Measure JJJ affordable housing requirements for residential dwelling unit projects, with the result that, contrary to the plain requirements of Measure JJJ, no affordable housing units or in lieu fees are included as part of this project. The units in the Project should be classified as “residential dwelling units,” and the Project should therefore provide affordable housing. In sum, we urge you to uphold the appeal and deny the Project for the reasons outlined by the previous councilmember. We need housing and small businesses, not more hotels. Regards, Enrique Velasquez Coalition for an Equitable Westlake Macarthur Park

Coalition for an Equitable Westlake MacArthur Park
1644 W. Wilshire Blvd. Suite 210
Los Angeles, CA 90017

June 5th, 2023

Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez
200 N. Spring St, Room 460
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Reject Hotel Upzone, Defend Our Community: Council File 18-1242

Dear Councilmember,

We urge you to sustain the appeal and reject the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change (“Entitlements”) for the proposed project at 2005 James Wood Blvd (“Project”). We object to this project for two reasons: 1) there should not be a hotel on this site for the reasons cited by the previous councilmember contained herein and 2) because the proposed rooms will contain kitchenettes, this qualifies them as “dwelling units,” thus triggering the Measure JJJ requirement to provide affordable housing, but the Project includes no affordable housing or in lieu fees. The Project also proposes to displace local businesses, including a panadería and a church, to which we object.

This Project should not contain a hotel use. When this Project was previously scheduled to be heard by PLUM, the previous councilmember, Councilman Gil Cedillo, issued the following statement:

The City Council has the authority to exercise discretion on land-use matters. The Council Member’s position is that there is no justification for a hotel use at this site. In contrast, demand for affordable housing continues unabated, exacerbated by the pandemic, and the need to produce housing is compelling.

The Council Member agrees with the key point raised in the appeal filed by UNITE HERE Local 11 – that without a housing component, the proposed Project is inconsistent with the General, Community and Redevelopment Plans. The proposed Project does nothing to advance and conflicts with the affordable housing goals and policies. Hence, a General Plan Amendment should be not granted.¹

Please uphold the appeal and reject the requested Entitlements for the proposed Project.

The proposed project includes habitable rooms with kitchenettes, classifying them as “residential dwelling units,” thus triggering the Measure JJJ requirement to provide affordable housing. Measure JJJ requires projects seeking general plan amendments of over 10 dwelling units to provide affordable housing. This is yet another example of how the city consistently misinterprets its municipal code to benefit hotel developers at the expense of needed housing. For example, in the Venice Place hotel project, the West Los Angeles Area Planning

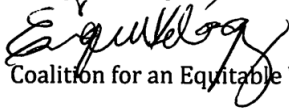
¹ https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2018/18-1242_misc_01-21-21.pdf

Commission approved a 78-room hotel project with only 4 apartments on the basis that hotels are residential uses. The Commission said that hotel was “predominately residential,” although the hotel rooms had no kitchens or kitchenettes. So too, the Commission approved several zoning concessions intended for housing projects, not large commercial developments like the Venice Place project.² Here, the developer proposes a 100-unit hotel that will have kitchenettes targeting extended-stay customers. While the City Planning Commission acknowledged the project as a “hybrid” between residential/commercial uses³ and functionally the same as a dwelling unit, it refused to apply Measure JJJ affordable housing requirements for residential dwelling unit projects, with the result that, contrary to the plain requirements of Measure JJJ, no affordable housing units or in lieu fees are included as part of this project. The units in the Project should be classified as “residential dwelling units,” and the Project should therefore provide affordable housing.

In sum, we urge you to uphold the appeal and deny the Project for the reasons outlined by the previous councilmember. We need housing and small businesses, not more hotels.

Regards,

Enrique Velasquez



Coalition for an Equitable Westlake MacArthur Park

² See Appeal Recommendation Report, page A-18, <http://tinyurl.com/veniceappealreport>

³ See page 16 < https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2018/18-1242_misc_2-5-23-23.pdf >

Communication from Public

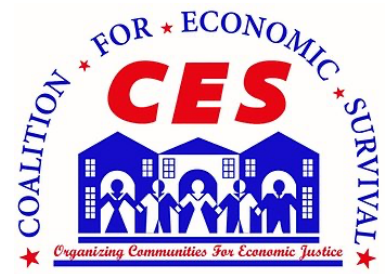
Name: Coalition of Organizations Against the Proposed James M. Wood Hotel Project

Date Submitted: 06/06/2023 01:10 PM

Council File No: 18-1242

Comments for Public Posting: Please see the updated coalition letter. Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED), Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), AFL-CIO, & the Clean Carwash Worker Center have joined the coalition.

**UNITE
HERE!
LOCAL 11**



6 June 2023

Councilwoman Eunisses Hernandez
200 N. Spring St, Room 460
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Reject Hotel Upzone, Defend Our Community (Council File 18-1242)

Dear Councilwoman Hernandez,

We the undersigned organizations and individuals urge you to sustain the appeal and reject the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change ("Entitlements") for the proposed project at 2005 James Wood Blvd ("Project"). We object to this project for two reasons: 1) there should not be a hotel on this site for the reasons cited by the previous Council Member contained herein and 2) because the proposed rooms will contain kitchenettes, this qualifies them as "dwelling units," thus triggering the Measure JJJ requirement to provide affordable housing, but the Project includes no affordable housing or in lieu fees. The Project also proposes to displace local businesses, including a panadería and a church, to which we object.

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In sum, we urge you to sustain the appeal and deny the Project for the reasons outlined by the previous councilmember. We need housing and small businesses, not more hotels.

Regards,

UNITE HERE! Local 11
Youth Climate Strike, Los Angeles
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Coalition for Economic Survival
KIWA (Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance)
SAJE (Strategic Actions for A Just Economy)
Victor Narro, UCLA Labor Center*
Ernesto Hidalgo, Worker Center Network*
Rabbi Susan Goldberg*
Enrique Velasquez, Coalition for An Equitable Westlake / MacArthur Park*
Josh Kamensky, Cypress Park & CD 1 Resident

*Titles for identification purposes only.

¹ https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2018/18-1242_misc_01-21-21.pdf

² See Appeal Recommendation Report, page A-18, <http://tinyurl.com/veniceappealreport>

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