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CITY OF LOS ANGELES
GREATER GRIFFITH PARK
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

GREATER GRIFFITH PARK
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March 20, 2008

City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Ordinance No. 179681
Council File No. 05-1345

Dear Councilmember:

Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council advises you as follows regarding California Government Code Sections 65915-918 and your implementation of those State-mandated density bonuses in Ordinance No. 179681 (the "Ordinance"):

These State-mandated density bonuses result in a

1. LOSS OF LOCAL RULE.
2. LOSS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING.
3. LOSS OF NEIGHBORHOODS.
4. LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN CITY GOVERNMENT.

We urge you to do the following;

1. Urge the State Legislature either to repeal all State-mandated density bonuses or to exempt cities over 1,000,000 residents.
2. Promptly amend the Ordinance to provide that no density bonus will be granted to any applicant unless the applicant can show that such density bonus will directly result in an increase in the number of affordable housing units (without regard to whether the units to be lost are ownership or rental units).
3. Promptly amend the Ordinance to eliminate from the menu of bonuses allowed any increase in height of structure.
4. Promptly amend the Ordinance to provide that no density bonus will be given except after a finding at a public hearing that there is no decrease in affordable housing as a consequence of the requested action and that the hearing officer will also make a finding that granting of a density bonus will not adversely affect the neighborhood in which the property is located.

Our reasons are as follows:

1. The City of Los Angeles is quite capable of providing for affordable housing without direction from the State. Zoning is an historically local function and it should not be taken from local governments by the State, which is not able to consider the peculiar aspects of each of the cities and counties in the State. Government Code sections 65915-918 are only one example of this treatment of the City as irresponsible. Those sections and other examples of removing local control over zoning should be repealed. The modern trend of government is to devolve more power onto the citizens. Keeping power in local governments as to local issues, such as zoning, allows this.
2. Our experience, which is shared by other neighborhood councils, is that the effect of density bonuses is to replace older, rent-controlled housing with new more expensive units for purchase. Without regard to the future of rent control it is obvious that older apartments are more likely to be affordable than new units whether for rent or purchase. The older buildings should be preserved thereby preserving affordable housing.
3. Increasing density and size of buildings, particularly height, is the fastest way to destroy a neighborhood. Height especially adversely affects the character of a neighborhood.
4. Density bonuses are effectively a gift to developers at the expense of the citizens residing in the neighborhood. This leads to a cynical belief that the City is only interested in money provided to the City in fees and in money provided to elected officials by campaign contributors.

Very truly yours,

Charley Mims, President

By Kenneth E. Owen
Chair, Planning, Zoning and Historic Preservation Committee

Cc: The Hon. Antonio R. Villaraigosa
The Hon. Frank Martinez
The Hon. Jack Scott
The Hon. Mike Feuer
The Hon. Paul Krekorian