

Martinez, Ruben

From: Darrell Cozen <mem4321@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2020 4:30 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Cc: Jomsky, Mark
Subject: October 5 City Council agenda Item 16

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RE: Item 16, Surplus Property Declarations

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I have been concerned about the preservation of the grounds around City Hall for several years and have great objections to declaring them surplus properties.

Original Purpose Remains: I cannot understand how properties that were purchased as "grounds and appurtenances" for a new City Hall could have possibly lost their use for their original purpose (PMC requirement for declaration of surplus property) when our glorious City Hall still stands, especially after the \$100 million rehabilitation just 15 years ago.

If the City fathers decided to purchase these properties to provide grand, landscaped approaches for the future City Hall, then they are still needed for the purpose for which they were purchased after a citizen vote in 1923. I believe that the entire 107-foot depth of these open spaces has achieved historic significance over the past 97 years and needs to be preserved. However, even if the Commission takes the word of staff, about half of that depth is shown on the Bennett Plan map of 1923 as the grounds and approaches for City Hall. That 55 feet was to be publicly landscaped in a uniform fashion all the way from Union Street to Walnut Street. If they are sold off to private parties, the glorious, uniform approaches and grounds will be destroyed. Even if parts of these grounds are kept as landscaped setbacks, the landscaping will not be uniform and will be designed, of course, to relate to the private developments on the various sites.

The City is considering serious damage to the original Civic Center concept approved by the voters in 1923 for present financial gain of the City. The picnic areas where I spent lunchtimes gazing in awe at the wonderful details of City Hall will be lost to future generations. Looking straight on at City Hall does not approach the wonders of looking on at these angles, which are the best way to view City Hall.

Environmental Review: I believe that such destruction of character-defining open space needs a full environmental analysis, in spite of the staff report's contentions. It is obvious to any reader of the staff report that the reason for declaring these properties surplus is so that the City can sell or lease them to a developer of some kind of a building (affordable housing, offices, City offices, hotel, etc.) The proposed piece-mealing of the environmental review is not allowed by CEQA.

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General Plan Consistency: It was interesting to note that the staff only believes that "designated open spaces or park land" are protected by the General Plan's policies regarding preservation of open space and parks. For that reason, they have not considered those policies for your consideration in this case. However, this land was designated for open space from the moment it was purchased after the civic vote in 1923, and it has remained as such for 97 years. Certainly, the Council should consider the spirit of a "General" Plan, and not be limited by the staff's technicalities. I recommend that the Council ask for an evaluation from staff of how this proposal affects all policies regarding open space and parks.

In particular, the proposal to declare these lands is NOT consistent with the following General Plan policies:

1. Land Use Policy 5.5. *"Civic Center Open Space. Continue to protect the character of the Civic Center as defined by its landscaped open spaces and tree canopy. Locate and design new civic structures to respect this urban form, character, design, functionality, and concepts in the Bennett Plan."* These properties on the west side of Garfield are undoubtedly within the umbrella of "landscaped open space" and therefore should be protected rather than forsaken.
2. Land Use Policy 8.1. *"Identify and Protect Historic Resources. Identify and protect historic resources that represent significant examples of the City's history."* These open spaces are character-defining features of the Civic Center National Register historic district and should be protected.
3. Land Use Policy 8.7. *"Preservation of Historic Landscapes. Identify, protect, and maintain cultural and natural resources associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values."* The open spaces on the west side of Garfield Avenue are historic landscapes by virtue of their significance to the National Register Civic Center historic district. The National Register nomination for the Civic Center speaks repeatedly about the importance of the grand landscaped frontages along the Civic Center's streets as a character-defining feature of the District. Its significance will be harmed if this open space is not protected. Therefor the proposal is not consistent with this policy.
4. Land Use Policy 10.12. *"Urban Open Spaces. Preserve and develop urban open spaces such as landscaped parklets, paseos, courtyards, and community gardens. Ensure adequate public access to these open spaces."* The words, "Preserve...landscaped parklets" definitely seem to relate to this proposal. I am not sure if the City has an adopted definition of "parklets"; but these civic gardens would certainly seem to be excellent examples. They serve as marvelous grassy parcels for picnicking.
5. Green Space, Parks, and Recreation Element Policy 6.8. *"Pocket Parks: Identify and acquire land for the establishment of small urban green spaces (pocket parks) in strategic locations within the City. The spaces may be available for all types of uses, depending on the unique qualities of the space, the neighborhood location, and the desires of surrounding residents."* The proposal does not comply with the spirit of this policy. We have possessed something akin to pocket parks across the street from City Hall for over 90 years. Let's preserve them, not call them surplus land and abandon them.

6. Green Space, Parks, and Recreation Element Policy 7.1. "*Urban Open Space Amenities: Encourage the incorporation of publicly accessible urban open spaces, including parks, courtyards, boulevards, water features, gardens, passageways and plazas, into public improvements and private projects.*" How can these properties be "surplus" to the City when they are accessible grassy, passive, useful open spaces in the heart of our city? Even if they were not important "grounds and approaches" for City Hall, they would be highly useful in these locations.

7. Open Space Element "issues that need to be addressed" • "*Establish more open space in Pasadena.*" • "*Create more parks in the Central District.*" Rather than specify policies, this element starts with issues that need to be addressed, and the first two issues are worsened, not improved, by the surplus property proposal. If the Central District is singled-out as the place that needs more parks, how can the City say these parklets are surplus property?

8. Guiding Principle 2: "*Change Will Be Harmonized to Preserve Pasadena's Historic Character and Environment.*" Last, but not least, certainly the sale of surplus property should be consistent with the Guiding Principles of the General Plan. These spaces are part of the historic character of our nationally significant Civic Center district and designed to be part of the environment of City Hall (i.e. grounds and approaches.)

Prior to the Planning Commission meeting, I and others submitted objections that the proposal fails to comply with many General Plan policies. Staff pointed out, and I agree, that there are so many policies that each project does not have to be consistent with every policy, just the most relevant policies. Please look again at the **policies listed in the staff report for consistency** and then consider whether I list the more important policies relevant to the sale of this land, or does staff. I am sure that you will find that I am quoting the more relevant policies.

I was concerned that saving the open space might ruin the proposals for redevelopment that you are now considering. Thus, I asked two of the developers what would be the impact when I had the opportunity to ask questions at the recent public forum on September 22. They both answered that they could still build a viable project without the open space. We can do both. Thank you for considering the concerns that I have addressed.

Sincerely,

Darrell Cozen,
Pasadena resident for over 40 years (until 2018)

Martinez, Ruben

From: Rick Cole
Sent: Saturday, October 03, 2020 10:53 AM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Cc: Jill Shook; Anthony Manousos
Subject: Public Comment for item 16, October 5 Special Meeting

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October 1, 2020

RE: *Item 16 – Public hearing on Declarations of Surplus Property, 78 N. Marengo, 255 E. Union, 95 N. Garfield & 280 Ramona*

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

I am writing to ask your support for the staff recommendation that the Ramona property be declared surplus land, exempt from CEQA, so it can be used for affordable housing.

The Bennett Plan that spawned Pasadena's magnificent Civic Center was a product of the City Beautiful movement. Drawing its inspiration from the Columbian Exposition of 1893, the movement sought to bring the elegance and beauty of European capitals to America's new industrialized cities. Pasadena's City Hall, Library, Post Office and Civic Auditorium anchored the original public uses, while the courthouse, Permit Center and Police building have strengthened that identity. Complimentary uses like the YMCA, YWCA and All Saints Church reinforced the civic core.

Not all subsequent development respected the original principles of the Bennett Plan, but projects like Plaza Las Fuentes gracefully integrated new vitality into the heart of our city. The Ramona site and the YWCA parking lot are key opportunities to do the same.

I strongly support the development of affordable housing on the Ramona property.

While the City Beautiful movement emphasized monumentality and architectural beauty, it underestimated the contributions that street life make to a genuinely public place. Unlike the dynamic plazas and piazzas from which it derives inspiration, the great square in front of City Hall stands cold and empty most of the year. Adding additional residents to the Civic Center and compatibly modest ground floor retail/dining uses will help animate our civic heart.

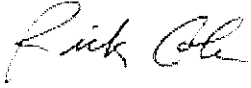
Much has been made of preserving "open space." In terms of urban life, this is a meaningless phrase. Welcoming gardens and courtyards are part of great urban places, but empty voids are not. I hope the Council will not be fixated on an arbitrary setback formula. Valid arguments can be made for the staff recommended 45 feet (from the Olin study) or the 107 feet advocated by those in litigation with the City to preserve greenery. A reasonable alternative is the 52.5 feet advocated by a majority of your Civic Center Task Force members which balances the historic legacy with the original intent of the Bennett Plan for structures on the Garfield frontage.

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I know how long the City has struggled with the usage of these sites. My hope is that the City can act promptly on the recommended action and choose from the three excellent proposals for affordable housing development and see their completion as soon as possible. This is an overdue opportunity to provide much-needed affordable housing, add to the vitality of the urban core and architecturally enhance the Civic Center with a well-designed new building.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Cole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rick Cole

Martinez, Ruben

From: Anthony Manousos <interfaithquaker@aol.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 03, 2020 4:06 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Declare Ramona site surplus land so it can be used for affordable housing (#16)

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Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council members,

I want to thank the City Council for prioritizing affordable housing on the Ramona site. You acted wisely and in the best interests of our City. Now it is time to take the next step and approve declaring the Romona site surplus land so it can actually be used for affordable housing. As a person of faith, I believe that housing those who are low income and homeless not only benefits our city, it is also a blessing. We know from experience that affordable housing transforms lives. People like Dorothy Edwards, Shawn Morrissey, and Cynthia Kirby all lived for many years on the streets of our city. Since becoming housed, they have found not only jobs but a sacred calling by becoming advocates for affordable housing. To hear Cynthia Kirby's story on youtube, check out our blog:

<https://makinghousinghappen.net/2020/10/03/cynthia-kirby-shares-her-moving-story-about-the-transforming-power-of-affordable-housing-and-how-advocacy-makes-a-difference/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bj0q5cUD51E>

Thanks to supportive housing, our homeless neighbors are now useful and valued members of our community. They are "paying forward" the blessing that they received by helping others. The words of Psalm 41 seem especially relevant during our challenging times: **"Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble."**

Yours in friendship and peace,

Anthony Manousos

"Common folk, not statesmen, nor generals, nor great men of affairs, but just simple men and women, if they devote themselves ... can do something to build a better peaceful world."--Henry Cadbury, 1947"

The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask, they will know one another, though the liveries they wear here make them strangers."--William Penn.

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October 5, 2020

Via email: correspondence@cityofpasadena.net; cityclerk@cityofpasadena.net

City of Pasadena
City Council
100 N. Garfield Avenue, Room S249
Pasadena, CA 91101


RECEIVED
2020 OCT -5 PM 11:45
CITY OF PASADENA

Re: Declaration of Surplus Property and Determination of General Plan
Consistency for Properties at 280 Ramona Street, 78 N. Marengo Avenue,
255 E. Union Street and 95 N. Garfield Avenue; **Agenda Item 16**

Honorable Councilmembers:

Enclosed please find comments from the Pasadena Civic Center Coalition (CCC) regarding the above-referenced agenda item. These comments raise significant issues relevant to the Council's consideration of this item including: improper reliance on a categorical exemption to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act; lack of General Plan consistency; and failure make proper and supported findings to make a surplus land declaration under the City's Municipal Code. A number of these issues are also currently before the Los Angeles Superior Court in litigation we have brought on behalf of CCC.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Amy Minter

Enclosure

10/05/2020
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TO: CITY OF PASADENA CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PASADENA CIVIC CENTER COALITION (CCC)

DATE: OCTOBER 5, 2020

RE: CITY COUNCIL MEETING SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

**AGENDA ITEM: 16. – DECLARATION OF SURPLUS PROPERTY AND
GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY: CIVIC CENTER/YWCA**

Mayor Tornek, Vice Mayor Hampton and Councilmembers:

The Pasadena Civic Center Coalition (CCC) submits the following comments on the above-referenced Agenda item for your review and consideration, and for inclusion in the Administrative Record. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

1. Ongoing Litigation.

The CCC reminds you that the current Environmental Impact Report is the subject of ongoing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) litigation. The issue of whether the subject property is surplus land, and if the City is in compliance with state and municipal law regarding disposition of surplus land, currently is before the Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No. BS164664.

2. No CEQA Exemption.

The proposed action is not exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In fact, the proposed activity will result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and is a project for purposes of CEQA.

As noted in the Staff Report, a "project" for purposes of CEQA is the whole of an action which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

Staff argues that the proposed action is merely a required step in the process that will allow for the potential future disposition and development of the subject properties, and then argues that the City has not committed to a particular project nor does the proposed action bind the City to pursue any project.

In fact, the City has committed to extensive review of five apparently final proposed projects for the subject properties after detailed review of submitted proposed projects. All these final projects have received substantial and detailed staff and

Council review and, most recently, detailed public review. The proposed action is not being considered in a vacuum; the proposed action is being proposed in the specific context of these final projects, each of which will result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and, therefore, the proposed action also is a project under CEQA. Clearly, the City is committed to one or some combination of these final projects.

Further, and importantly, it appears that all the final projects propose some level of construction on all the current open space/civic gardens that constitute the approaches and historic setting of City Hall. Designating this land as surplus land is an essential step to the development on the existing open space. Environmental review must be completed before the City commits to allowing development on this public land. The approaches include the open space/civic gardens on the YWCA site and on the north site across Holly St. Such construction will result in a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment.

Therefore, the proposed action is subject to environmental review, including, but not limited to, review of the current EIR and probable supplemental environmental review.

3. No General Plan Consistency.

Staff asserts that since the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St. are not designated or zoned as open space or parks, General Plan policies related to preservation of open space or parks do not apply to these sites. CCC disagrees with and objects to this analysis.

The open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St. constitute often used public greenspace that has remained such for nearly 100 years and is of great importance because they form the setting for the National Register-listed Pasadena Civic Center Historic District and are a visual approach for the iconic City Hall, and, constitute a character-defining element of the National Register District. The Historic District is a grouping of civic buildings with City Hall as the central focal point, linked together by public greenspace and tree-lined streets and sidewalks, dating to the 1920s and exemplifying Beaux Arts principles of grandeur, symmetry, hierarchy, and unity.

A correct General Plan analysis of the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St. would involve full consideration and analysis of policies related to publicly used open space as opposed to private construction and development. Of particular importance is General Plan Land Use Element Policy 5.5: *Civic Center Open Space. Continue to protect the character of the Civic Center as defined by its landscaped open spaces and tree canopy. Locate and design new civic structures to respect this urban form, character, design, functionality, . . .*

General Plan Land Use Element Policy 8.1 is also relevant: *Identify and protect historic resources that represent significant examples of the City's history.*

The proposed action is also inconsistent with the General Plan Green Space , Recreation and Parks Element and its implementation plan (jointly the Green Space Element) and the Central District Specific Plan which includes objectives, policies and implementation measures for the Central District. According to the Green Space Element and the Specific Plan, there is a critical shortage of open space in the City's Central District including the Civic Center. Both plans include policies, goals, and objectives to protect existing open space.

The Specific Plan also identifies the importance of the tree lined civic promenade along Holly and Garfield and acknowledges the importance of the Civic Center's historic setting, providing the City should maintain historic landscape elements.

Since staff has not addressed and analyzed consistency with numerous General Plan policies that apply to the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St., the proposed action is not consistent with the General Plan.

4. Bennett Plan is Not Definitive.

While the Bennett Plan is illustrative and instructive as to Beaux Arts principles, staff's focus, just like the focus in the current EIR, on which version of the Bennett Plan is applicable and how details apply to the proposed action and the open space/civic gardens so as to undermine their historic importance, is misplaced. The Bennett Plan is a series of conceptual drawings with a complex history. On the other hand, the format of the District as it is listed in the National Register is the relevant consideration, not any Bennett Plan version contained in an unrealized addition or plan. Removal of the character-defining features of the open space/civic gardens would destroy the planning, execution, and historic designation of the Civic Center, including the open space approaches and landscaping that should not be removed for new construction. The Bennett Plan does not provide any definitive support for significantly impacting, if not destroying, the grand approaches and gardenlike setting of the subject sites that have existed for so long.

In the context of the Bennett Plan, it is important to note that the approaches, i.e. the open space/civic gardens, should be understood to ensure visibility of the approach to City Hall. The current EIR's historic resources technical report, in an EIR appendix, acknowledges that park-like areas are an important feature of the City Beautiful movement, and that the current configuration of the civic gardens bears a striking resemblance to the 1923 Bennett Plan.

5. Failure to Analyze Required Other Public Purposes Under Applicable Surplus Land Law.

The CCC asserts that the City continues, just as in the current EIR, to violate the requirements of the State Surplus Land Act and applicable local law by failing to offer any of the project site parcels for sale or lease through a public bidding process for other public uses, as opposed to private development.

First, the CCC objects to Staff's assertion that the land at 95 Garfield Ave. remains surplus as declared by the Council even though the prior Kimpton project failed. To the contrary, the prior declaration related directly to the withdrawn Kimpton project, and, therefore, is no longer valid. The City must "start over" under applicable state and local Surplus Land law.

Second, as discussed above, the proposed Surplus Land action with respect to the open space/civic gardens is not consistent with Pasadena's General Plan, and, therefore, the open space/civic gardens land on the YWCA site and on the northern site across Holly St. cannot be declared surplus because these lands are necessary for the City's use to preserve the historic approaches to and setting of City Hall consistent with the National Register Civic Center Historic District. Therefore, the proposed action violates the State Surplus Land Act as to the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St.

Third, the City continues to fail to comply with the Pasadena Municipal Code provisions governing the sale of surplus City-owned real property. The City can only sell property that meets the definition of surplus property: "real property of the city not needed for the purpose for which it was acquired *or for any other public purpose*" (emphasis added). The Municipal Code also requires that the disposition of the property shall be accomplished through a publicly noticed, competitive process. The City can only deviate from this process if the City makes special findings after a public hearing that an extraordinary and overriding public benefit will be achieved. Staff asserts that the properties are exempt from competitive bidding because a project will create a new active use in the Civic Center, resulting in improved economic and public well-being for all properties in the immediate vicinity which is part of the Municipal Code. Destruction of the essential approaches and setting of the City Hall provided by the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St., which constitute a character-defining feature of the National Register District, will NOT result in economic and public well-being for all properties in the immediate vicinity which are in the National Register District, and, in fact, will undermine and significantly impact public well-being by ignoring and destroying historic resources essential to the Civic Center National Register Historic District. There is no extraordinary and overriding public benefit to the destruction of such valuable and essential historic resources as the public Civic Center open space/civic gardens in favor of private development.

Since the sale of the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly is not exempt, a full analysis and discussion of "any other public purpose" for the land is required under the Municipal Code. The Staff Report, just like the current EIR, fails to provide such a required analysis. The obvious place to start this analysis is that the open space/civic gardens on both sides of Holly St. comprise the historic approaches to and historic setting of City Hall and are essential National Register District character-defining features. This "other public purpose" analysis must be included as part of the Surplus Land process.

6. Planning Commission Recommendation

After commissioner questions to staff and extensive discussion, a motion to approve staff recommendation did not receive a second, and instead each staff recommendation was considered separately. As staff notes, a key concern by commissioners was loss of open space. More specifically, Commissioners' expressed deep concern regarding lack of evaluation of, and inconsistency with, a number of policies of the General Plan. With respect to the existing City Hall approaches and open space, and Jackie Robinson Memorial, commissioners expressed particular concern with potential inconsistency with Section 8.7 of the Land Use Element: **Preservation of Historic Landscapes**: (...maintain cultural and natural resources ...); Section 5.5 of the Land Use Element: **Civic Center Open Space** (...as defined by its landscaped open spaces and tree canopy..); and Section 10.12 of the Land Use Element: **Urban Open Spaces** (Preserve and develop urban open spaces...Ensure adequate public access to these open spaces).

RECEIVED

Nina Chomsky

2020 OCT -5 AM 11:45

Pasadena, CA 91103

October 5, 2020

Mayor Tornek and Councilmembers
Pasadena City Council Meeting 10/5/2020
Agenda Item 16: Surplus Property Declaration – YWCA and Civic Center

Mayor Tornek and Councilmembers:

I am writing in my individual capacity with additional information on the open spaces and civic gardens that form the historic approaches to and setting of Pasadena's Beaux Arts City Hall, and which open spaces and gardens are publicly owned land used and enjoyed by the public for nearly 100 years.

These open spaces and gardens are located on both sides of Holly St. and front on Garfield, and are encompassed within Parcel 3 on the YWCA site, and within Parcel 3 on the north side of Holly St. Both of these currently open space and garden Parcels are illustrated on the attached Civic Center Parcel Map. Note: in the tradition of Beaux Arts design, the two Parcel 3s mirror each other forming a symmetrical set of open spaces and gardens that together form the historic approaches, including visual approaches, to and setting of City Hall. These open spaces and gardens on both sides of Holly are character defining features of the Pasadena Civic Center National Register District.

No development or construction should take place on either Parcel 3 in order to preserve these historic open spaces and civic gardens. **To this end, I respectfully urge you not to declare either Parcel 3 as Surplus Land for private development.** Any sort of future development should be limited to the balance of land on the YWCA site and across Holly to the north.

Thank you for you for your attention to my comments.

/s/ Nina Chomsky

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Martinez, Ruben

From: Jill Shook <
Sent: Monday, October 05, 2020 11:51 AM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Agenda item #16

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Please designate the Civic Center properties as "surplus land" so that much needed affordable housing can be allowed. Please consider: are we in a housing crisis or a homeless crisis? We don't believe it's necessary a homeless, but a housing crisis. And we also believe this a deeply spiritual and moral crisis of values. Yes, we want a vibrant beautiful city, but the good news is that we can have both beauty, and do the right thing with outstanding affordable housing developers to chose from. Several pieces of chocolate cake as anthony said. And the good news is that with the 2020 rule, this will not only build sorely needed housing but produce local jobs, local contacts and local business. I love living in a city that believes in the value of affordable housing. Please make sure this happens in the Civic Center.

Jill Shook, ED of MHCH-Making Housing and Community Happen.

Jill Shook, Missions Door, Catalyst <http://www.missionsdoor.org/missionaries/shook-jill>

Doctor of Ministry, Bakke Graduate School

Blog: makinghousinghappen.net Websites: www.makinghousinghappen.org and makinghousinghappen.com

Author/Editor: *Making Housing Happen: Faith Based Affordable Housing Models*

Jill



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Martinez, Ruben

From: ladyartist 2018 · · · · · m>
Sent: Monday, October 05, 2020 12:10 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Overlaying Zone

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I am writing in support of the Planning Department staff recommendation that the Ramona property be declared surplus land, exempt from CEQUA, so it can be used for affordable housing. As you know, the Surplus Land Act requires local agencies—such as cities and transit agencies—to prioritize affordable housing on such land. As the Planning Department Staff noted, using this site for affordable housing is consistent with the General Plan. The City Council already issued an RFP prioritizing affordable housing on this site, for which there is an urgent need. Developers have presented excellent proposals for affordable and supportive housing. I urge you to take the steps necessary so that these proposals can be considered and approved, and construction of much needed affordable housing can begin.

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Martinez, Ruben

From: ladyartist 2018
Sent: Monday, October 05, 2020 12:28 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Affordable Housing

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I am writing to urge you to approve declaring the Ramona site surplus land so that you can consider the excellent proposals that have been submitted by outstanding affordable housing developers. I am very impressed with the three proposals presented during the recent Planning Department's public meeting. Abode, Bridge and National Core all have proven track records in our city. Because of the City's RFP, they have expended considerable time and effort to come up with worthy proposals. Because of the urgent need, I'd like to see affordable family housing along with a component of supportive housing on this site. I also like the idea of a public courtyard that will attract visitors, as does the courtyard of the City Hall. These elements will help to vitalize and activate the Civic Center. The center of our city near City Hall has been idle and empty far too long. Let's help our city to have a brighter future by completing our Civic Center with a project we can all be proud of.

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