



Presentation to: Rent Control Board

Date: August 15, 2012

Following the presentation on the housing element process, challenges and emerging issues, commissioners provided the following feedback:

Unit Sizes in Proposed Projects

Board members expressed that the rental community is very alarmed by the many DA proposals for studios, which, if all constructed, would create a “hyper-transient city.” This compounds the effects of vacancy decontrol, which has led to fewer families staying in Santa Monica for a long time, escalating transiency. Units with enough rooms to accommodate families are needed.

Concern was expressed that RHNA requirements for so many very-low income units could result in producing many studio units instead of larger units. It was noted that in the past, this has not been the case, primarily due to the CCSM model for building family housing at low and very low income levels.

Building to Meet the Community’s Needs

Concern was expressed about how projects were determined and whether they were being based on research about the community’s needs. It was explained that the pipeline projects discussed in the presentation are developer-proposed through the development agreement process, which requires consistency with the general plan and, ultimately, approval by the Council. Board members expressed that they are not “happy with the plans” and that the Housing Element needs to get ahead to define the community’s needs and guide development. The issue of constructing ownership vs. rental housing was discussed, and it was stated that it is currently a landlord’s market, and that people with capital are being encouraged to build rental units.

Moderate Level Affordable Housing and Market

At this time, it seems that there is not much difference between moderate and market, and there is interest in a policy that would provide for greater differentiation between moderate and market.

One Board member expressed that affordable housing should not be counted as a community benefit.

Parking

Following up on the presentation regarding the concept of unbundling parking , it was noted that the concept of enabling cost savings through opting out of parking could create more demand for street parking when tenants want to save money even if they do have a car and “want to believe” that they don’t need a garage. The implications must be considered, and staff stated that occupants of projects in a non-residential zoning district do not have rights to permit parking passes for adjacent residential neighborhoods, and most of the projects under discussion, including all of the larger ones, are in commercial zones. Board members were relieved to hear this, and noted that it is a very important



principle to ensure that automobiles from new projects do not overwhelm the surrounding neighborhoods.

The opinion was expressed that there is a bias in planning driven by activists, by people who live in Santa Monica who do not have to travel far (“either retired or lucky”). The tendency toward more costly parking means that “executives” who can afford to have their offices here are fine, but other people who need to go in and out of the City aren’t fine. It is still too early to tell whether significant numbers of people will really be taking the Expo.

Public Comments

Affordable housing is too expensive for someone living on social security, and needs to be subsidized.

In regards to the “Population Trends” slide from the PowerPoint presentation, the numbers may stay the same, but the people are not the same; the people moving in have much higher incomes.