

Elmhurst Neighborhood Association

P.O. 191613, Sacramento, CA 95189-7613

enboard@ena.com – ElmhurstNeighborhoodAssocSac@gmail.com

May 1, 2020

Councilmember Eric Guerra
eguerra@cityofsacramento.org

Re: Ad Hoc Ordinance Streamlining the Planning Entitlement Process (M-19-004) File ID: 2020-00490

Dear Councilmember Guerra:

Elmhurst neighbors, including several of our board members, made public comments expressing our concerns about notice and public input with regard to the effects of this proposal, and we would like to expand on our concerns as a neighborhood association.

We oppose the proposed requirements for stated Conditional Use Permits to be downgraded to use of a property “by right.” This proposal totally eliminates notice and the ability for the public to give input before a particular use is permitted. This does not allow the public to have input as to what is allowed in our neighborhoods, or adjacent to our neighborhoods, that may affect us as well. By way of example, allowing alcohol sales by right will have a spillover effect into nearby neighborhoods, as will the creation of dormitories, and homeless services. There is a reason why various uses of a property are not allowed absent the permitting process. We do not believe that this need has gone away merely because the city wants to speed up and streamline the process.

Streamlining can often streamline the public right out of the process. Thus we have a general concern as to downgrading the level of review and approval. Of particular concern is that review at a lower level will fly under the radar, and lack the ability for notice and public participation at the current level. We request that review that is downgraded to the Planning Director or Zoning Director have the same requirements as Planning Commission hearings with regard to access, such as broadcasting and making material available at least 3 days before hearings. This is just one example. All access requirements - such as Brown Act compliance, availability of materials, ability to comment, view and attend hearings - should be the same, even if review of a designated matter has been downgraded to a lower level. This should be true for each tier down to staff review.

Due to the downgrading of certain matters, we also request a provision wherein a City Councilmember could have any item deemed controversial in his/her District to be elevated to Planning Commission review, appealable to the City Council.

Elmhurst is an important source of both owner occupied and rental housing, mostly single family. Property investors have already attempted to commercialize some of our housing by rezoning and by trying to convert some units to so-called “Inns”. There are ample hotel rooms located and projected nearby, so there is no need to make Elmhurst’s permanent housing into short term rentals, particularly given the current housing situation.

There is much development that will happen near Elmhurst. Although Elmhurst is residential and we hope to keep it as such, it is near three light rail stations and is a narrow residential strip close to the Stockton Boulevard, Broadway and Folsom Boulevard commercial corridors, as well as the UC Davis Medical Center campus. Aggie Square and related projects will be developed, including the planned UC Hospital expansion. The plans include housing for 600 on campus, and many more staff, students, patients and clients coming to and from the hospital campus and Aggie Square. In addition, a 213-unit building (the Gio) was recently opened at Stockton and T, and 41 townhomes on the north side of S Street between 37th and 39th are approved but yet to be built. Although the main Aggie Square campus will be built on state land and will not have to go through planning, there will be development of housing and commerce on Broadway and Stockton to support the hospital expansion and Aggie Square that will go through some phase of the planning process. There will be an impact on our neighborhood due to the sheer number of people passing through, parking concerns, and large trucks to supply workplaces and businesses. It is important that we have a voice.

In short, we oppose this proposal as written, for the reasons stated above.

Elmhurst Neighborhood Association Board of Directors

Cc publiccomment@cityofsacramento.org, KSaeteurn@cityofsacramento.org, gnorman@cityofsacramento.org, scosgrove@cityofsacramento.org