

Mads Odom

From: Chris Richards [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, September 16, 2023 3:33 PM
To: Scott Davies; Judith Mayer; Matthew Simmons; Dan Tangney; Peter Lehman; Abigail Strickland; Joel Yodowitz
Cc: Sarah Schaefer; Kimberley White; Meredith Matthews; David Loya; Karen Diemer; Stacy Atkins-Salazar; Alex Stillman; Nancy Diamond
Subject: Process Comments- GAP draft and GP2045

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Hello-

I recently viewed the September 12th, 2023 Planning Commission meeting and could easily see the frustration and concerns of the Commissioners. I believe the Community shares your frustration, although dissatisfaction and disheartenment of the planning process among the collective folks, depending on individual opinion, are quite varied. A couple of statements by Commissioners at the 9/12 meeting focused on the desire for use of facts and truth (science), showing concern for folks who use opinion in debate as being disingenuous, confused, or out of touch. Other Commissioners stated that difference of opinion for debate in civic process is great, even if the other person's way of thinking are diverse and varied. I can say that Commissioners, Council, Staff and the Community have all taken generous liberties when it comes to using opinion as fact for debate. It is fortunate that this issue was brought forth at the meeting and I am hopeful we can take pause, think, as well all work harder to listen, learn and understand the collective voice of the Community as a whole. We all have our own experience, vision and ideologies for what we believe is good for the future of Arcata. The common goal of success for Arcata is being voiced by all.

In addition to the above reflection, I would like to offer some additional comments of encouragement and suggestions for consideration.

The Community, Staff, Council and Commission have all shown diligence with a combined effort of the Planning Process for the General Plan 2045 (GP2045). The addition/inclusion of the Gateway Area Plan draft (GAP draft) as an Element of the GP2045 has generated and necessitated a large amount time, energy and effort. The vision set forth with the GAP draft is huge and most certainly commands a complete and Proper Process including the appropriate time and consideration necessary for such an important endeavor. I want to see the fruition of everyone's hard work become a success and fully support and encourage a pathway that will lead the Community to that collective goal.

Therefore I am continuing my previous proposals and suggestions to remove the GAP draft as an Element of the GP2045. The GAP was initially proposed as a stand-alone Specific Plan with good intentions as the vision is grand.

I reason that future Process (procedural hurdles) still need to be completed. Also, the current Issues that are now problematic stumbling blocks will be better understood over Time and some most likely resolved. I remember early in 2021 asking David Loya for a "Roadmap" of this process. What I have seen and experienced is that this process is less static and more dynamic than I would have guessed and that the "Roadmap" for this process has ample opportunity for learning, adjustments, challenges, frustration, and change.

The short list of task I see that should be completed and/or resolved are as follows:

- 1) The Local Coastal Plan (LCP) has yet to be updated to current standards.
- 2) As well, the influence, advice, and logic of the CA Coastal Commission will weigh heavy on the LCP, as well as the problematic Zoning and Development plans within the Gateway Coastal Zone. Three of the Four Gateway Districts straddle the Coastal Zone and broad stroke zoning for these districts should be better thought through (planned better).
- 3) EIR evaluation/reporting for a plan as encompassing as the GAP draft should respectfully stand alone. The enthusiastic GP2045 warrants the same level of scrutiny.
- 4) Phase I of the Wastewater Upgrades is underway. My understanding is that once Phase I is completed (2024) there is a required study and evaluation to be completed before the City can move forward with Phase II and the newly termed Phase III. Uncertainty of the wastewater process and timetable only helps give the city more time to plan and see how growth changes (2024-2027).
- 5) The process for Fire Protection with larger stature buildings will take time. Plenty of uncertainty there, but again, time will most likely iron out questions and safety parameters will become clear.
- 6) There is still the issue of how voting with Council will be handled in respect to the 2 Recused Councilmembers. I have un-answered questions that should be put forth with the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) as to the proper voting process with Folks that have clear Conflict of Interest issues. As we are all seeing, Council voting for an Element that is so important and encompassing as the GAP requires consensus/agreement of a majority (3 out of 5). Logically one would assume that the inclusion of the GAP as an Element within the GP2045 would require a similar required recusal for voting by Council, especially in that there is a single EIR covering both. I have questioned this with Karen Diemer via email in the past and had hoped this would be resolved with the FPPC giving guidance and advice. Perhaps this issue could be reviewed and researched with use of the City's retainment of the new Law Group and a request could be sent for specific policy advice to the FPPC(?).
- 7) Fine tuning the balance of Inclusionary Zoning/State Density Bonus Law/and Community Benefit's Program.
- 8) The Community is engaging. Please continue to listen and show reflection. Find the balance, the point of compromise that brings the Community together.

My suggested request for consideration of removing the GAP draft from the GP2045 does not mean to negate or remove any of the past planning work. I encourage that this change would only help the process and enable everyone to build on the existing work, knowledge and experience, as well as create additional time that would add to the probability of success. The current GAP draft is not a silver bullet that will solve the intricate issues of housing shortage issues. The up-zoning that the Commission is recommending for the GP2045 and the likelihood of adoption by Council will be very helpful for opening realistic opportunities for developers. Please focus on the GP2045. Continue the process, build upon current efforts and complete all the steps that are necessary for the success of the highly complex GAP draft.

Thanks for your work and consideration. Please feel free to respond.

Respectfully with Regards- Chris Richards

Mads Odom

From: Fred [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, September 19, 2023 8:48 PM
To: Sarah Schaefer; Meredith Matthews; Stacy Atkins-Salazar; Alex Stillman; Kimberley White; Scott Davies; Dan Tangney; Judith Mayer; Matthew Simmons; Peter Lehman; Joel Yodowitz; Abigail Strickland; David Loya; Delo Freitas; Jennifer Dart; Karen Diemer
Subject: Three new articles on Arcata1.com: A high-density example, the State Density Bonus Housing Law, and reducing regulatory costs

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To: Planning Commissioners, City Councilmembers, David, Jen, Delo, Karen
From: Fred Weis
Subject: Three new articles on [Arcata1.com](https://arcata1.com):
A high-density example, the State Density Bonus Housing Law, and
reducing regulatory costs

Good evening. The Gateway Housing open house meeting on Monday, September 25th, is being actively promoted on [Arcata1.com](https://arcata1.com) (on the home page), the Mad River Union, the North Coast Journal, Facebook, Nextdoor, and more.

There are **three new articles** on [Arcata1.com](https://arcata1.com) that I wish to bring to your attention. These and more are on your City Council / Planning Commission portal page at: arcata1.com/council or arcata1.com/pc

- [“Mio” apartments in Seattle](#) — Density of 205 units per acre
Reading and viewing time: **5 minutes**

This is a 4-story building with 41 studio and one-bedroom apartments, built on a 0.20 acre lot -- about 8700 square feet. I present it here not as something we can copy for Arcata, but as an example of what can be done. It is built to the north side of existing single-family homes, so it does not substantially shade them. To put the parcel size in perspective, the St. Vinnie's parcel at 5th & K Streets is 0.43 acres. The previous Patriot Gas Station parcel at 11th & K is 0.21 acres. So if you want to imagine a 4-story building with 41 apartments at the old gas station site, this is how it could be.

This article is an expansion to [Visualizing Compatible Density](#) which shows townhouses in Seattle with 36 units per acre and 44, 59, 162, and the 205 units per acre apartments.

- [State Density Bonus Housing Law — How it affects us here in Arcata](#)
Reading time: **12 minutes**, plus more to read the source material

To me, this is the single most important issue facing the Planning

Commission with regard to the success of the Gateway Plan. As David Loya has told us, "Project proponents will be driven by the Density Bonus provisions. **And our design standards and Community Benefits programs are unlikely to be implemented** due to waivers and concessions."

Commissioners, perhaps you would wish to devote an hour or a full meeting to a discussion about this. To put it bluntly, why craft a code that could have its important aspects be ignored? By utilizing the State Density Bonus Law, a developer can effectively negate much of the work that the Planning Commission has done over these many months. There are solutions. Doing nothing is too passive.

The companion article is the **15-1/2 minute** video from David Loya. On Arcata1.com with a full transcription and the video, if you want to watch the video and read at the same time. [State Density Bonus Laws / Inclusionary Zoning / Community Benefits — David Loya presentation](#)

Other articles on Feasibility of creating housing in Arcata, Density, Cost, Site considerations, and more are [here](#).

- [The cost of Regulations when constructing new housing: How much, and how can it be reduced?](#)

Reading time, estimated: **14 minutes**. Can be skimmed.

Commissioner Yodowitz read a passage from a US Congressional Research report on housing trends at the September 12 PC meeting. His research prompted me to put up that article and four other Congressional Research reports, [see here](#). The report he read stated that in 2021 the average **cost of regulation** for a single-family home **amounted to \$93,870**.

That figure seemed fishy to me. I am not at all faulting Commissioner Yodowitz -- that's what was in the Congressional Research report. But spending close to \$94,000 on regulation costs for a house with a selling price of \$394,000 seems suspicious.

I tracked down the source of that \$93,780 figure, and I do not believe it is anywhere close to being correct. It is a figure assembled in a fairly small survey by a national industry group. An August, 2022, report from the Turner Center looks at hard and soft costs of housing. While regulatory costs are higher than ever before, it is the costs of materials, labor, and interest that have gone up even more, and are the large costs contributing to housing costs.

The Turner Center report does outline local costs that can be reduced. The largest of this group are: Reducing parking requirements and reducing the time it takes for permit approvals by streamlining the process -- both of which our Community Development Director and the Planning Commission are promoting.

The Turner Report conclusion (**3 paragraphs**) is [here](#).

- Among what is ahead for the Commission over these next months is to establish in

the Form-Based Code (the Gateway Code) that 5, 6, and 7-story buildings cannot be constructed directly alongside the designated L Street Corridor full-width linear park.

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- I am assembling photos of woonerfs where the use of deep step-backs on the 2nd or 3rd story are used to create a patio for those apartment residents, and creating a frontage that is one-story and two-stories along park or woonerf, for a very human-scale feel.

Thank you for your work.

-- Fred Weis

The URL addresses:

<https://arcata1.com/council/>

<https://arcata1.com/mio-seattle-density-205-units/>

<https://arcata1.com/visualizing-compatible-density/>

<https://arcata1.com/density-bonus-law-affects-us-in-arcata/>

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<https://arcata1.com/us-congress-research-reports-housing-issues-report-july-14-2023/>

<https://arcata1.com/cost-of-regulations-when-constructing-housing/#turner-conclusion>