

Mads Odom

From: Lisa Pelletier [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2024 9:34 AM
To: Meredith Matthews; Sarah Schaefer; Kimberley White; Alex Stillman; Stacy Atkins-Salazar
Cc: Karen Diemer; David Loya
Subject: Please change language in Gen'l Plan to preserve/protect open space

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Dear Mayor Mathews and City Councilmembers,

I'd like to direct your attention to the public comments made by Lisa B, who previously served on the Open Space Committee, at the January 3 city council meeting. She said that she had sent you a letter regarding OS-IE of the General Plan with the original language of this policy on the "diversity of resources within their management, including interpretation and recreational use." She further remarked that "the following language has been added to the end of this policy: 'allows for development of open space lands contrary to the original policy.' The added language reads 'Allow for the development of existing vacant and underutilized properties with low natural resource value as a strategy to permanently protect high resource value open space and provide high quality open space.' In my opinion, this is a lot of mumbo jumbo to obscure the fact that open space is being (or will be) taken away to serve the interests of developers to the detriment of the community.

As Lisa B said, "I am strongly opposed to this policy addition. This is a departure from the past and current directives and policies to preserve and protect our open space lands by utilizing infill development as opposed to resource land development. We do not have to look too hard to see where the City is taking underutilized and damaged resource lands and transformed them into the treasured jewels of our community that they are: the Arcata Community Forest (sustainable forest management), the Arcata marsh, etc."

"One important purpose of the Gateway policies and proposed General Plan 2045 is to continue to protect Arcata's resource lands. If we begin to pit our natural resource lands against each other for their presumed value, at any given moment in time, we depart radically from the community's strong commitment to protect our natural and open space lands both inside and outside of our city limits."

I couldn't agree more with Lisa B's comments. I'd just like to add that it's our open spaces that make Arcata a beautiful place to live in. And it's why many of chose to move here. Please, if you care about this as a "community benefit," don't destroy the natural resources that we already have to make way for development (i.e. housing or other uses)! **Please change the language in OS-IE of the General Plan to reflect that.**

Also, we've had an abundance of rain recently, accompanied by flooding in many neighborhoods in Arcata. We can expect to have even more flooding if we develop the remaining open spaces that help to absorb the runoff. Preserving our open spaces, especially wet lands, also has a huge impact in stemming climate change, as I wrote to you in a previous letter.

Please do your utmost to preserve and protect our open spaces by changing the language in the General Plan to reflect that.

And please agendize this discussion for a future meeting. Thank you.

Lisa Pelletier
Arcata resident

Mads Odom

From: Colin Fiske [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2024 9:42 AM
To: Meredith Matthews; Sarah Schaefer; Stacy Atkins-Salazar; Alex Stillman; Kimberley White
Cc: David Loya
Subject: Gateway Plan Overlay Zones

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Councilmembers,

In the coming weeks, CRTP will be submitting more detailed comments on the current drafts of the Gateway Plan, General Plan, and the corresponding Draft Environmental Impact Report.

In the meantime, as you consider another aspect of the Gateway Plan at your meeting tomorrow, we wish to reiterate our strong support for the Gateway Plan, and for the recent reorganization of policies between the Gateway Plan and the General Plan. The choice to move many of the policies developed for the draft Gateway Plan into the broader General Plan will enhance the city's efforts to provide safe, sustainable transportation and affordable housing citywide. The Planning Commission made a logical and effective recommendation to accomplish this reorganization in part by applying the Commercial-Mixed Use designation with overlay zones in the Gateway Area, and we support this decision.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Colin Fiske (he/him)
Executive Director
Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities
www.transportationpriorities.org

Mads Odom

From: Lisa Pelletier [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2024 9:36 AM
To: Meredith Matthews; Sarah Schaefer; Kimberley White; Alex Stillman; Stacy Atkins-Salazar
Cc: Karen Diemer; David Loya
Subject: Please get input from the neighborhoods before you vote to impose GAP policies everywhere!

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Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

At the Jan. 3 council meeting, Arcata resident Dave Meserve expressed a concern that his neighborhood has been rezoned from low-density residential to high-density residential, and that this was done without anyone from the City notifying the neighbors in his area, and without their input or consent.

He further surmised, "The plan seems to be to make the city as a whole into high density residential." Apparently, the mayor was shaking her head at this point (I couldn't see her). Mr Meserve responded to her, saying, "You're shaking your head Meredith. I hope you're right, but that's the trend that I see. I've looked at the maps and I see a lot of high density residential. I think it's really important before zoning changes are made in neighborhoods to let the neighborhoods speak out."

I not only agree with Mr. Meserve, but I think you have a duty to the residents of this town to consult with each individual neighborhood before imposing GAP policies everywhere (or even just in "Opportunity Zones"). As Dave Meserve pointed out, "What I see happening is, whether or not the policies get transferred to other regions of the city, they're being set up to be the zoning of other areas of the city. ... In the process, we're kind of eliminating the neighborhood quality of zoning." You are also depriving residents of the right to decide what they'd like to see, preserve or change in their neighborhoods, each of which is unique in its own way. We don't care to have cookie cutter approach to planning for how our neighborhoods will look, even if that's David Loya's vision to have high residential (or medium heights) nearly everywhere.

With all due respect, you were elected to represent us, the residents, **not** to just go along whatever David Loya wants or that staff proposes.

I'm sure you're aware that Mr. Meserve is a former councilmember himself. He's very familiar with the planning and politics of the City, etc. So when he says he's looked at the maps and can see what's coming down the pike, many of us are going to take that seriously.

Again, if you'll forgive me, another reason that trust has gone out the window is that you haven't done a very good job of including residents in the decision making process. The fact that Mr. Meserve's neighborhood was incorporated into the Craftsmans Mall, and rezoned high residential, and the Eye Street-area neighbors weren't informed until after the fact, tells us everything we need to know about the City's approach to planning. I hope you realize that, in the process of blindsiding the folks in Mr. Meserve's neighborhood, you've engendered mistrust among all of us, because we know this could hapoen in our neighborhood as well. I think you owe that group of neighbors an apology and a rectification. They deserve another opportunity to be involved in that zoning decision.

Apparently, you've been hearing from other residents who have concerns about this as well, because you alluded to it, and some councilmenbers attempted to mollify the public with the reassurance that "There's nothing to fear." But if this has already to one neighborhood, how can you expect us to trust your assurances that it won't happen to other neighborhoods? In fact, it feels like we're being gaslighted, to be honest.

From hearing you speak about the GAP plan at various council meetings, it's clear that there's so much you can't predict about how the GAP policies will impact our City. You can't predict whether developers will even choose to provide the community benefits you're hoping to see or will go with density bonus law. Some of you have even admitted that you don't know the impact it will have on keeping housing affordable or whether it will have the opposite effect. You don't appear to have too good a grip on inclusionary zoning either, to be frank. (No blame or insult intended...just my impression.)

With so much uncertainty, why would you want to impose the GAP model on all our neighborhoods (or even just the "Opportunity Zones")? As Fred Weis pointed out in recent letters to the Mad River Union, the GAP is an experiment and should be tried first, so we can see how it works. As he says, "Let's complete it. Let's try it. Let's see what new housing is built, and whether there are affordable rents... Let's see if the 'Community Benefits' and the 'Privately-Owned Public-Accessible-Spaces' programs actually create benefits and parklets for people. And in a few years, if we're happy with how the Gateway Area Plan is turning out, we can amend the General Plan as required."

Finally, I'd just like to say that there are some good policies in the GAP that could be imported elsewhere. But you want to bring in 86 policies without much discussion. (That "negative polling" is a joke.)

I know you're hearing from concerned residents who don't want high residential buildings or even medium residential in their neighborhoods. It's a matter of quality of life in our neighborhoods. Please, if you must build high, keep it in the Gateway area!

We also don't want the "overlay zones" that Mr. Loya is so enthusiastic about because that's just another means to the same end of imposing cookie cutter model for neighborhoods all over Arcata. It might be good for developers, but it's not thoughtful planning.

Finally, if you are planning to run for office again, it's so important to listen to your community and to make sure we are involved in these important decisions that will impact our lives for decades to come. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Lisa Pelletier
Arcata resident

Mads Odom

From: Fred [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2024 8:45 AM
To: Meredith Matthews; Stacy Atkins-Salazar; Alex Stillman; Kimberley White; Sarah Schaefer
Cc: David Loya; Scott Davies; Dan Tangney; Judith Mayer; Matthew Simmons; Peter Lehman; Joel Yodowitz; Abigail Strickland
Subject: Thank you for lowering the inclusionary zoning threshold / A question

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To: Mayor Meredith Matthews, Arcata City Council
CC: Planning Commission, Community Development Directory David Loya
From: Fred Weis
Subject: Thank you for lowering the inclusionary zoning threshold
A question on projects that might be approved or built in 14-unit sections

Honorable Mayor, et al:

At the January 17, 2024, City Council meeting the Council took a vote to have the starting threshold for inclusionary zoning be set to 15. The Planning Commission had recommended the figure of 30. The Community Development Director expressed that this starting point was somewhat arbitrary.

During the course of the meeting, there was a discussion of what sizes of projects have been approved in recent times. I believe that the Director responded to this with slightly incorrect information.

- In October, 2022, the Westwood Garden Apartments project was approved by the Planning Commission and upheld on appeal in January 2023. This was for 102 one-bedroom units. **None** of those units were restricted moderate, low, or very low units.
- In December, 2022, the Valley East Loft apartments, designed by Julian Berg, were approved. 22 units. Again, **no units** were restricted by income.
- In July, 2023, the Boughton project was approved for 22 apartments (coincidentally) and two commercial units. The site is the western area of 11th Street, adjacent to Greenview Market. **No units** were designated as moderate, low, or very low units.
- I'm not seeing any housing projects approved in 2021.

I like to bring up the Valley East Loft project because of how quickly it was approved. From the time of the staff report that introduced the project to the Commission at that meeting... to the architect's presentation... with questions from the Commissioners, public comment... discussion... to the time that all the Aye votes were counted -- this all was done and **approved in 31 minutes**. What happened in a good indication that an approval process based on a single-person decision (the Zoning Administrator's decision, versus planning commission approval) may not be what's needed. If a project is a good project, it is approved quickly.

The point is this: **If the starting threshold were set at 30 units, then a future project the size of the Boughton 11th Street project or the Valley East Lofts project would not meet the threshold.** As it is, if

the 15-unit threshold trigger is part of the General Plan inclusionary housing specifications, then each of these two 22-unit properties would have **three moderate income units** (10% of the total, rounded up) or either 3% (**one very-low-income unit**) or 6% (**two low-income units**).

That is, by the Council setting the threshold at 15 units rather than at the Commission's recommendation of 30 units, the **City would be gaining ten units** (five from each) of restricted housing from projects that might be that size (i.e. under 30 units) in the future -- **versus zero units** from those two hypothetical 22 -unit future buildings if the threshold were set at 30.

In the case of the Boughton project, the developer's proposed project did not utilize the entire size of the parcel. He reserved a portion of the parcel for future use. This situation was objected to by one Planning Commissioner, who felt that the design for the entire build-out should be submitted.

This brings up the following issue:

Suppose a developer envisions a total of 42 units on a particular parcel. Could the developer get approval for a 14-unit building... and then a second 14-unit building... and then a third 14-unit building? And so avoid hitting that 15-unit threshold, and thus incur no inclusionary zoning. Keep in mind that in the future approval of buildings of this size might be a very quick, simple, single-person Zoning Administrator procedure.

And how about this:

The Westwood Garden Apartments project is 102 units, in 11 separate buildings. One of the buildings has 16 apartments, but that quantity could be modified. The other 10 buildings have 14 apartments or fewer.

Let's pretend this project was constructed after the General Plan's inclusionary zoning was enacted. With inclusionary zoning and 102 total units, 10 or 11 would be moderate-income and, say 6 or 7 be low-income units.

Could a project of that size be built in sections, to avoid the inclusionary zoning requirements?

Is there anything in our code to prevent this? I don't believe that there is -- and I believe there should be.

Council, thank you for the 15-unit threshold. It will help.

Thank you.

-- Fred Weis

Community Development Director David Loya
January 17, 2024, City Council meeting

"We have seen **in the last couple of years** a one-hundred unit project, a 142 unit project, a 60 unit project. There are several projects that are, you know, coming in. There's a **40 unit project**, I think, that was just approved."

To the extent that I am aware, the three projects shown above are what we've seen in the past couple of years. The project that was most recently approved was 22 units.

Earlier projects include the Kramer Sunset Terrace Apartments along the mid-section of Foster Avenue, 142 units, from 2018. The Strombeck Twin Parks Apartments, near Alliance on Foster, is 40 units, from 2016. No restricted housing in either.

The 36-unit Yurok Affordable Housing project serves residents earning between 30% and 50% of the area median income. It is on 30th Street east of Alliance, and was completed in 2022.

The Red Roof Inn (78 units) and Days Inn (60 units) motel conversions are an entirely different situation, as we are aware, with the Homekey funding. That was approved in January, 2022.