



For Immediate Release

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South of Laurel rezoning proposal does not incorporate City Council goals

Our Downtown, Our Future (ODOF) has submitted comments on the Draft EIR for the Downtown Plan Expansion. We point out that the proposed amendments to the Downtown Plan are not consistent with City Council goals for the South of Laurel area. At their meeting of January 10, 2023, the City Council unanimously adopted the following motion:

- Revise the building height provisions in the draft Downtown Expansion Area Plan Amendment to provide for a maximum of 1,600 dwelling units, with a 20% affordability requirement on the total number of units and with no single building being more than 12 stories, inclusive of any density bonus incentive.

None of those goals are included in the Project Objectives described by the Draft EIR. Instead, City staff have proposed a Downtown Density Bonus. While this density bonus has the intent of including 20% below market rate units, it could result in fewer affordable units being built because it would allow developers to pay into a fund in lieu of actually building units. The in-lieu fee would be \$60 per square foot of living space of the units actually built. Collection of this fee amount would not come close to the cost of providing the number of affordable units required under State density bonus law.

The ODOF comments express skepticism that developers will choose the City's height limits over the State density bonus, which now offers developers a 100% increase in density if required percentages of below-market units are met.

Representatives of Our Downtown Our Future have met with Mayor Keeley and City Council members. As a result of these meetings, we are hopeful that the City Council will take action to fulfill their goals of a 1600-unit cap and 20% net affordable units. The Council's height goal will be harder to achieve if developers choose the State density bonus. Under that legislation, not only can density be doubled, but height limits can be waived. Shortly after the AB 1287 density bonus legislation went into effect in January 2024, a developer proposed an 18-story building across from the Town Clock in an area with a height limit of 50 feet. The best way to avoid 20-story or higher buildings South of Laurel is for the Council to eliminate the proposed Downtown Plan Expansion height increase, which would change maximum building height from 48 feet under existing zoning to 85 feet.