

Katherine Hall

From: Katherine Hall
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 12:40 PM
To: Katherine Hall
Subject: FW: Comments on Accessory Dwelling Units Proposal

-----Original Message-----

From: Lou Saviano [REDACTED]
 Sent: Saturday, September 09, 2017 3:39 PM
 To: PlanningCommission AP <PlanningCommission@sunnyvale.ca.gov>
 Cc: Shila Behzadiaria <SBehzadiaria@sunnyvale.ca.gov>
 Subject: Comments on Accessory Dwelling Units Proposal

Dear Members of the Sunnyvale Planning Commission,

I'm writing to you about the contemplated changes to the city ordinance regarding Accessory Dwelling Units. I'm alarmed by the proposed changes, as I understand them, and urge you to seriously consider the likely negative consequences to our neighborhoods if they are adopted.

My wife and I have lived in our single family home for 34 years. We love our neighborhood near Ortega Park, and have no plans to move anytime soon. Our lot size is approximately 7,400 sq. feet. I believe we are an R-O Zoned property. From my understanding of the proposal, our lot might be permitted to accommodate an "ADU." We would never think of building such a structure on our property, and we can only imagine the reaction from our six adjoining neighbors if we did. But when we sell our home someday, the new buyer presumably could build an ADU. That possibility would probably increase the value of our property when we sell it, but I expect it would clearly decrease the value of the surrounding homes. I can't imagine someone would want to live next to a home with a 700 square foot ADU crammed up against their back yard fences? The impact on privacy, noise and street parking would be striking. The new owner of our home probably wouldn't care about that if he or she were not required to live in one of the units. I believe this policy would substantially change the character of our neighborhoods. This is not what anyone contemplated when they bought single family homes such as ours, zoned as they are today. The online survey conducted by the city had about 192 replies by my count, a tiny fraction of the city population. I expect most residents are not even aware of this proposal. I'm surprised it is actually being seriously considered.

Yes, there is a housing crisis in our region. This proposal is not the solution. I fear that policy adopted years ago to allow "granny units," in which a homeowner could keep a family member housed nearby and care for them, is simply devolving into a tactic to help some existing homeowners maximize income from their property, or to help investors who want to buy homes for their anticipated appreciation and rental income. Expanding the potential for ADUs would give such investors a "twofer" — buy one home and get the green light to build another, creating two rental revenue streams for them, without having to live in either unit or deal with the consequences to the neighborhood. It's unthinkable! I simply ask you: If one (or more) of your adjoining neighbors built an ADU in their back yard, would the value of your property, or quality of your living space, be enhanced?

The housing crisis is serious and complicated, but in the end it exists because demand for housing exceeds supply. Policy makers rightly search for ways to increase the "supply" of housing, but I see little effort to address the "demand" side of the equation. Some portion of this demand comes not from people looking for a place to live but from investors searching for better return on their money than they can get on other asset classes. They want to profit not only from increasing property values, but from the sky-high rents they can charge. You will never build enough new units to satisfy this demand by investors. We can't simply build our way out of this problem. The changes being contemplated seem to

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From: Katherine Hall
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 12:41 PM
To: Katherine Hall
Subject: FW: POLICY--FW: Granny needs parking (but not on-street!)

From: Thomas Mayer
Sent: Friday, September 08, 2017 12:31 PM
To: Kevin Jackson
Subject: Re: Granny needs parking (but not on-street!)

I am OK with reduced parking requirements. We don't need to pave over the whole city for steel boxes.

However, it needs to be made very clear to anyone pulling a building permit that on street parking may be removed. All of the parking needs of a parcel needs to be met on that parcel.

Sent from Thom's iPad

On Sep 7, 2017, at 11:33 PM, Kevin Jackson wrote:

Hi, folks-

You may be aware that Sunnyvale is studying changes to allow more ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units, a.k.a. Granny Flats), which are additional living units built on the same lot as a single-family residence. These have many appealing aspects from a housing standpoint, but one entry in the on-line survey raised a red flag in my mind. It proposes "Reduced Parking Requirements" as an incentive to encourage more ADUs.

As background, since 2008 the City municipal code requires all developments to provide sufficient off-street parking to meet demand. Over time this should eliminate the conflict between a purported "need" for street parking at the expense of safe accommodation for cyclists. So will "Reduced Parking Requirements" for ADUs undermine this goal by allowing more dwelling units on a parcel without a corresponding increase in the off-street parking supply?

To find out I contacted the staff person listed on the survey, and the answer was even more disturbing than I expected. She sent me references to the state law establishing the ADU regulations, and one of the provisions is that if the property has reasonable access to transit (which includes virtually all of Sunnyvale, according to the staff person) then approval of the ADU cannot be contingent on provision of additional parking.

In theory this might appear to make some sense, since proximity to transit should lead to a reduction in the perceived need for car ownership. But given our current reality it is a recipe for utter failure. Property owners will eagerly take advantage of this loophole to build ADUs as cheaply as possible. Yet when the City tries to install bike lanes on the street, these same people will complain loudly that we must be heartless bastards for trying to deprive Granny of the parking she so desperately needs. And of course staff and council will fall all over themselves to defend Granny.

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From: Katherine Hall
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 1:17 PM
To: Katherine Hall
Subject: FW: ADU State Bills

-----Original Message-----

From: Kevin Jackson
Sent: Saturday, August 19, 2017 9:39 PM
To: Shila Behzadiaria <SBehzadiaria@sunnyvale.ca.gov>
Subject: Re: ADU State Bills

Hi, Shila-

I appreciate you sending this information. I'll review it in detail as time permits, but a quick reading confirms your assessment that additional parking cannot be required for ADUs with reasonable transit access. I don't have any problem with that, as long as it's not later used as an excuse to demand street parking when we try to install bike lanes.

It appears there are also provisions in the law to encourage alternative off-street parking strategies (e.g., stacked parking). I hope any Sunnyvale ordinance will include strong language to ensure street parking will not be considered until every other possibility to satisfy parking demand (or better yet eliminate it, due to proximity to transit) has been thoroughly examined first.

Thanks,

Kevin