



August 30, 2022

RE: Comstock Apartment Development with Amendments to the Uptown Specific Plan

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

We write today to reiterate our concerns over the proposed, comprehensive amendments to the Uptown Specific Plan that aren't limited to the current housing development on Comstock, but that will apply to most of the core parcels within historic Uptown Whittier.

It was clear at last week's public hearing that the majority of the Council was unaware of the global implications of these amendments. As our testimony last week revealed, implications of these amendments on large portions of the USP will have profound effects on many properties. We still maintain that the identification, description, and boundaries of the "project," as expounded upon in the accompanying environmental documents, is convoluted, misleading, and incomplete.

In some places the documents refer to the "project" as the apartment complex; in other areas the *amendments* are referenced. This results in an inadequate project description for purposes of CEQA, despite the recent response by the "project's" consultant. Consequently, while the MND *mentions* the amendments in various places and says they are needed to facilitate the "project," **it fails to address the actual impacts of the proposed amendments on the entire area, including the trove of historic properties in the USP.**

We believe that there is a fair argument to be made that the vast application of these amendments to large portions of Uptown, particularly the city-owned sites currently selected and in discussions for sale and re-development---like the Alpha Beta site---would have profound and significant adverse effects by:

- changing development requirements to allow surface, visible parking in residential projects
- reducing parking requirements to allow for fewer spaces that may affect circulation patterns and introducing tandem parking for 50% of spaces and reducing stall width to 9 feet
- changing height requirements that may affect aesthetics with regard to adjoining properties
- changing development requirements that eliminate store-fronts in trade for residential use
- allowing new uses, types of housing, definitions, and alterations in allocation of site usage
- changing lot depth requirements for parking location via individual, subjective approvals
- enhancing allowable height due to a 50% increase in multiplying factor of footprint area

We believe that permitting new development under these proposed amendments could leave historic resources within the Specific Plan vulnerable to incompatible, aesthetically detrimental adjacent structures. **None of these impacts have been addressed in the Initial Study or within the Mitigated Negative Declaration attached to the “project.”** This is particularly true in the areas closest to the Central Park Historic District.

Attachment “N” in your packet explicitly states that the “justification” for the amendments-- as they relate solely to the apartment complex proposal—is to “reflect market conditions,” and “needed to “achieve the required density.” Additionally, it states that, “units on the ground floor will serve to activate sidewalk frontage.” What does that mean? Where are the achievable, quantifiable effects of the impacts on which these statements rely? How is this justification a reliable rationale that satisfies environmental review? **We don’t agree that the proposed amendments to the USP can be justified by simple comments made without quantifiable analysis of actual data to support the potential effects of such claims.** The unfortunate linking of the Comstock Project to substantial amendments to the Uptown Specific Plan was the catalyst that brought us to this place.

For all of these reasons, it is our hope that you will send the Comstock Project back to staff to make it compliant with USP requirements. The only alternative is to approve the amendments to the USP, the results of which will have significant impacts on a vast area of historic Uptown and put the City in an untenable position. We maintain that the original description of the “project” was both incorrect and incomplete and that this error led to inadequate analysis of the impacts of corresponding amendments.

As currently configured, **the apartment project cannot be approved without the amendments; and the amendments apply to much more than the “project.”** That circular dilemma has led us to tonight’s problem and the public must rely on the Council for a solution

Commented [JR1]:

We wish you well in your deliberations and hope you see, as we do, that robust discussion has not taken place and needs to precede any alteration in the USP that is bound to have a profound effect on the environment of Uptown.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Gorman-Sullens

President