Tammy Cloud-McMinn

From: Council Internet Email
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 8:47 AM
To: City Clerk
Subject: FW: Concerns Regarding Affordable Housing Proposal (Item 6)

From: Bradford Robbins <bradfordrobbins@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 5:15 PM
To: Council Internet Email <council@carlsbadca.gov>
Cc: Scott Chadwick <scott.chadwick@carlsbadca.gov>
Subject: Concerns Regarding Affordable Housing Proposal (Item 6)

Dear Council members,

I am Brad Robbins, a Carlsbad resident with a strong interest in ensuring our city offers successful affordable housing options.

The City Council on Tuesday May 21st will be asked to approve Item 6 on the agenda. There are several problems with the proposal, and I believe Council should not approve this recommendation.

The affordable housing at 945 Chestnut has been run by a company, Solutions for Change, since 2014, when Council provided them a $3.1M loan to buy the property. The 15 affordable units appear to be well run and have not generated community issues.

The primary reason for item 6 is Solutions for Change has been unable to meet their commitment to increase the housing density at the site. They have been unable to raise the capital needed because Solutions for Change is unwilling to adopt "housing first" principles, so they cannot get State or County funding. Solutions for Change believes the 'housing first' approach does not treat the residents well nor is it compatible with the surrounding community.

In Carlsbad, the Windsor Pointe situation has highlighted the challenges of implementing 'housing first' principles without proper onsite services and compatible tenant selection.

However, the City needs the site density increased to achieve the important affordable housing goals, the item 6 proposal has the City take back the property in exchange for forgiving the loan and then the City will find a new developer.

This proposal has several problems.

First, the city should not be bailing out businesses that get in trouble. Solutions for Change is struggling but the city should not become the interim owner/operators of yet another affordable housing unit. Why would we spend money on building up city staffing to run affordable housing?

Second, if the only sources of funding for a developer require adopting 'housing first' principles, how do we avoid creating another Windsor Pointe?

Third, the proposal has the land declared 'surplus'. This means that a streamlined bidding process without public involvement can be used to sell the land. After what has happened with Windsor Pointe, why exclude the public from involvement in these important affordable housing decisions?

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We can do better; Carlsbad needs affordable housing. Let's find a path to success not another problem.

Perhaps Carlsbad could fund more of the capital required for higher density. That would give us more control over our own destiny.

Perhaps an alternative source of funding could be found that does not require housing first principles. Or perhaps the density could be increased in stages lowering the initial capital outlay.

Item 6 as it written today, moves the problems of the site from the current owner to the city. This will increase spending. Any math that shows we are getting the land at a bargain price is ignoring the incentives we will need to give a new developer and the interim operating costs.

Item 6 as written today, short cuts important bidding and public reviews. That will generate negative public sentiment.

Item 6 as written today, proposes selling the property to 'a yet to be picked' developer, who will likely need 'housing first' funding, so we very likely end up with another Windsor Pointe.

I urge the Council to direct Staff to work with Solutions for Change on alternative funding options and community engagement strategies that ensure a successful outcome for this important affordable housing project.

Sincerely,

Brad Robbins