

Janneth Lujan

From: Janet Davis <jadjadjad@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 21, 2015 2:26 PM
To: Janneth Lujan; Planning-Commission@smcgov.org
Subject: 10/28/15 Study Session on Granny Units/Affordability

Please consider this issue very carefully because it can have the totally opposite effect of that wished for: i.e., higher rents, more parking problems, and more code enforcement issues.

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Janet Davis <jadjadjad@sbcglobal.net>

Sent: Saturday, October 17, 2015 10:25 AM
Subject: AFFORDABLE HOUSING-NFO

GRANNY UNITS & "AFFORDABILITY" AS THIS RELATES TO NFO

I have extensive experience with the issue of Granny units.

BACKGROUND:

Personal Experience:

There are **three** directly abutting my property in Stanford Weekend Acres [SWA]. One is on a lot where *neither* unit is occupied by the owner as required, thus converting the R-1 zoning to R-2, and which lot also has a totally inadequate driveway. The second one is detached, two stories high, and impermissibly in the *front yard* of the main unit without the required 17 ft. setback from the 3-story main unit. This resulted in 4 dwelling units sharing a 11 ft. driveway with no fire turn around, also against regulations. The third one has only on-street parking. Also right up against my fence is a dilapidated accessory unit that was slated for demolition in 1947 and was rented out until abandoned to the elements in 1999. This combination has had the effect of turning an R-1 neighborhood into a Stanford dormitory. All of this was totally mishandled by the County.

Menlo Park Housing Element Process:

I was very much involved with this process because Rural Lane (in SWA, and part MP jurisdiction/part County) was on the MP Agenda as a site for potential development. Andy Cohen was the chief proponent of Granny Units and this topic was discussed at length at virtually all the various meetings. However, in MP the issue was **NOT affordability**, but finding the requisite number of sites for new housing to fulfill the ABAG requirements.

During the many public discussions, and hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council, it was repeatedly pointed out that **below market units and granny units have the effect of actually INCREASING overall rents**. This is because increased density allowances raise the value/cost of the land, and where a developer puts in below-market-density-bonus apartments, he will recoup that cost by charging more for the market rate units. There are also extensive limitations on set backs, size of lot, height, and parking requirements for MP Granny Units..

REDWOOD CITY:

Monday, October 26 at 7 p.m. the RWC City Council will be reviewing amended regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units. That draft ordinance is accessible at <http://www.redwoodcity.org/adu>. The responsible Planner is Michelle Littlefield, at (650) 780-7238 or at mlittlefield@redwoodcity.org. Highlights of the proposed regulations include:

- Increasing max. size for units designed for disabled access and **lots over 10,000 sq. ft.** in the R-1 and RH zoning districts.
- Allowing the **homeowner to live in either** the man house or the accessory dwelling unit
- Parking: allowing the required parking space for the accessory dwelling unit to be located in any required yard, and allowing tandem parking

- Detached units: allowing *one-story* detached units in the rear yard with 6 ft. setbacks in the side and rear and a max. height of 14 ft.
- Water main: exempt accessory units from the requirement to upgrade water mains.

LACK OF RELEVANCE TO NFO:

- Many lots in NFO are barely 2,000 sq. ft.. Apart from “The Avenues” and the Selby Lane area much of NFO is R-3 or multi-unit zoned, therefore, “granny units” as such are inapplicable.
- Many properties already have one, two, three or even four additional and illegal dwelling units. Even if there were to be an amnesty program, many of these units would have to be razed and many would not pass code requirements.
- Many of the properties with existing illegal units are not occupied by a homeowner but by a real estate speculator.
- There are huge profits to be made by renting out illegal accessory units, and a property owner has nothing to gain by legalizing such a unit.
- Parking is a major problem throughout NFO and legitimizing existing illegal units or allowing additional legal ones will only exacerbate the problem.

CONCLUSION:

There is already a surfeit of faux “granny units” in NFO, and all this has done is unjustly enrich real estate speculators, while victimizing vulnerable tenants. These units may be appropriate in other areas of the county where the zoning is R-1 and lots are large, but Granny Units are most definitely *not appropriate* in an R-3/Multi-unit zoned area lacking in homeownership, and populated with vulnerable residents. Even in SWA where homes have been on the market in excess of \$3,000,000, these units have had a negative effect, and they most certainly have done absolutely nothing to contribute to affordability of rentals in the area. Added to all these factors is the abysmal record of competency by the County Planning and Code Enforcement departments, and the fact that the County does not even have a halfway accurate record of what actually exists in NFO. **IN SUM: Granny units in at least the non R-1 areas of NFO are a totally dumb idea if the purpose is to increase rental “affordability.” What is needed is procedures to take the profit margin out of gouging tenants; get some effective code enforcement cracking down on slum lords; getting some control over the auto repair places and commercial vehicle parking situations; and abating problem/tax-defaulted/abandoned properties that could be used for development and management by reliable non-profits.**

10/16/15