



Niall Huffman
City of Los Angeles Planning Department
Office of Zoning Administration
200 N. Spring Street, Room 720
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Via Email: NeighborhoodConservation@lacity.org

20 October 2016

Re: **Council File 14-0656**

Dear Mr. Huffman,

On October 20, 2016, the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council held a regularly scheduled, Brown Act-noticed, public meeting of the full governing board with a quorum of 00 board members present at which the board approved the following motion and directed that a Community Impact Statement be filed reflecting its position by a vote of 00 yes to 00 no and 00 abstentions.

The South Robertson Neighborhoods Council supports revisions to the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) with important exceptions. Following is a list of those revisions we support and the exceptions.

SUPPORT

1. Eliminate the Residential Floor Area bonus option for green buildings

After the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) became effective in January of 2014, providing incentives to builders or homeowners to be "green" became unnecessary. Also, encouraging larger, more energy-consuming homes to be built runs counter to the goal of incentivizing "green" homes.

2. Eliminate the two Residential Floor Area bonuses (proportional stories and front façade articulation)

The two design-based bonuses result in 20% larger homes, while being ineffective in producing well-designed homes.

3. Require upper-story decks, balconies, and terraces to be set back at least three feet from the minimum side yard

Stepping upper-story decks away from the minimum side yard by three feet minimizes the view angle from the upper deck down into a neighboring home or yard. This minimized view angle gives the neighbor a better opportunity to maintain their privacy with taller planting along their property lines.

EXCEPTIONS

1. Retain the garage square footage exemption

Requiring the square footage of a home's garage to be counted toward the total Residential Floor Area encourages builders to build the smallest garage allowable by code. Smaller garages are quickly overtaken with storage. The unintended consequence will be fewer cars parked in their garages and more cars parked on already-crowded streets.

Doug Fitzsimmons
President

Ken Blaker
Vice-President

Jon Liberman
Treasurer

Beth Hirsch
Secretary

Martin Epstein
Corresponding Secretary

**South Robertson
Neighborhoods Council**

PO Box 35836
Los Angeles, CA 90035

P: (310) 295-9920
F: (310) 295-9906
E: info@soronc.org

soronc.org



2. Retain the over-in-height ceilings exemption

Over-in-height ceilings (or double-height spaces) result in homes with dynamic spatial relationships, instead of two floor plates pancaked on top of one another. Exempting the first 100 square feet of over-in-height ceilings allows designers to design interesting homes without having to count unoccupiable air space as Residential Floor Area.

3. Retain the covered porch exemption

Covered porches, patios, and breezeways are outdoor design features that not only add visual interest to a home, they add to the livability of a home, particularly in our Southern California climate. Counting these features toward the total Residential Floor Area will result in builders not including them in homes in order to maximize occupiable indoor space.

4. Maintain the FAR at 0.50 for lots smaller than 7,500 square feet

The majority of lots in the South Robertson neighborhood are less than 7,500 square feet in size. Many are less than 6,000 square feet in size. An FAR of 0.50 for a 6,000 square foot lot produces a 3,000 max square foot house. R1 lots are meant for a single family. A 3,000 square foot house is not a mansion; it is a home for a family.

Additionally, minimizing the allowable home size in R1 zones could result in a loss of value for those lots and an increase in value for nearby R2 and RD1.5 zones that do not have these restrictions in home size.

5. Do not establish an angled encroachment plane limit for buildings taller than 20 Feet

The angled encroachment plane is an unnecessary and clumsy restriction on a home's building envelope that will, when inevitably maxed out by a builder, result in an awkwardly proportioned home. The intent of this diagram is to reduce the visual impact of a home's mass. However, the result will be to amplify the visual impact of an oddly proportioned upper floor, as this diagram would be applied to both sides of the house. The most effective way to reduce mass is by eliminating the bonuses, as previously mentioned.

6. Do not require articulation of side or front façades

Requiring articulation of the side and front façades, as currently described, is overly restrictive and will be ineffective in producing well-designed homes.



The South Robertson Neighborhoods Council supports the BMO; however, weighing the varied opinions of homeowners with the economic impact of these changes, we feel the amendment as proposed too drastically decreases buildable square footage while not doing enough to mitigate the concerns of some homeowners. We hope Planning staff will take into consideration our suggestions in an effort to pass a revised BMO that strikes a balance between the varied opinions of homeowners and the economic impact of these changes throughout the city.

Sincerely,

Doug Fitzsimmons
President, South Robertson Neighborhoods Council

Cc: Hon. Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles
LA City Council Members
Vince Bertoni, Director of Planning, Department of City Planning
Council Member Paul Koretz, Council District 5
Council President Herb Wesson, Jr., Council District 10
Shawn Bayliss, Director of Planning and Legislation, Council District 5
Faisal Alserri, Senior Planning Deputy, Council District 5
Jordan Beroukhim, Planning Deputy, Council District 10

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