



Fighting To Preserve Economic Diversity

By Michael Soloff, SMRR Steering Committee member

SMRR always has led the fight to preserve Santa Monica's economic diversity. SMRR successfully campaigned for rent control. SMRR elected Councilmembers who committed public land and funds to the non-profit development of affordable and supportive housing. And SMRR championed the Affordable Housing Production Program, which requires market-rate housing developments to contribute either affordable housing units or funds for affordable housing.

But Santa Monica's economic diversity now is in grave danger. Because State law allows rent controlled units to be rented at market rate when the existing tenant leaves (Vacancy Decontrol/Recontrol), over 14,000 Santa Monica rent controlled units that just 15 years ago were affordable to households making the median income (currently \$64,800 for a family of four) no longer are affordable. And because Santa Monica created less than 2,000 new affordable housing units during this same 15 year period, the City's overall supply of affordable units is about half of what it was in 1999 (just 32% of the overall

supply). The City's ability to retain even this level of affordable housing is in serious jeopardy as more than half of the remaining supply is made up of rent controlled units that will become unaffordable to households in the bottom half of the economic ladder as soon as the current tenant leaves, and as our principal source of funding to preserve existing and/or build new affordable housing (Redevelopment funds) was eliminated by the State in 2012.

Some in our community say it is time to throw in the towel on economic diversity. Some others see the current crisis as an opportunity to push for out-of-scale development by promising to create some affordable housing as well. It is up to SMRR's leaders – and all of us as SMRR members – to safeguard *both* our economic diversity *and* our community's character by standing up for the creation of new affordable housing funding sources, and for the approval of new development *only* when it *both* stands on its own merits as an improvement to our City *and also* provides deep contributions to affordable housing.

Upcoming City Council Agenda Items:

Citywide minimum wage

San Vicente Courtyard Apartment Historic District

Design of expanded Airport Park

Civic Center Working Group report

Lincoln Neighborhood Corridor Plan report

For dates and more information visit:

<http://www.smgov.net/departments/clerk/agendas.aspx>

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