

City of Hesperia

STAFF REPORT



DATE: April 16, 2019

TO: City Council

FROM: Nils Bentsen, City Manager **SECOND READING AND ADOPTION**

BY: Mike Blay, Assistant City Manager
Chris Borchert, Acting Principal Planner

SUBJECT: Apartment Unit Sizes and Building Separation with Possible Code Amendment DCA19-00001 and Specific Plan Amendment SPLA19-00004

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council introduce and place on first reading Ordinance No. 2019-08 approving Development Code Amendment DCA19-00001 and Specific Plan Amendment SPLA19-00004, to amend the apartment unit minimum size requirement and separation distances (Applicant: City of Hesperia; City-wide).

At the May 7, 2019 Council Meeting the City Manager clarified that the Planning Commission did not review and make a recommendation for this item as stated in the recommended action.

BACKGROUND:

At the February 19, 2019 City Council Meeting, Mayor Bird requested an item be put on the agenda to discuss whether lowering apartment sizes for a developer was done in the best interest of the City as a whole.

ISSUES/ANALYSIS:

At the February 19th Council meeting, Mayor Bird requested the Council revisit a previous code amendment which was done in July 2016, at the request of Frontier Communities. This amendment lowered the minimum square footage of apartment units.

The following represent the previous and current apartment size requirements:

PREVIOUS Minimum Floor Area Requirements for Multiple-family Units					
	Studio	1 BDR	2 BDR	3 BDR	4 BDR
Market Rate units:	675	875	1075	1275	1475

CURRENT Minimum Floor Area Requirements for Multiple-family Units					
	Studio	1 BDR	2 BDR/1BA	3 BDR	4 BDR
Market Rate units:	550	650	850*	1150	1300

*Units with two bathrooms shall be nine hundred fifty (950) square feet.

There were no changes to below market rate unit sizes, they remained the same.

Additionally, in 2017, a code amendment lowered the separation distances between apartment units, and the setback distances between the apartment and the property lines. The code previously required 15 feet between buildings, however, it now differentiates between single story and multi-story and looks like:

3. If the development contains multiple buildings, the minimum distance between buildings shall be as follows:

Distance Between Single-Story Buildings		Distance Between Multiple-Story Building and Any Other Building	
No Openings ¹	With Openings	No Direct Line of Sight	Direct Line of Sight
6'	8' ²	10' ²	15'

This favors developers as it could result in the ability to build more units while potentially reducing the livability and aesthetics of a project.

Lastly, the interpretation of the language in the Low Density Residential zone of the Main Street & Freeway Corridor Specific Plan allowed multi-family development based on the language that states: "...this zone also permits small lot subdivisions as well as row houses, duplexes and triplexes at the higher end of the permitted density range." However, multiple family dwellings are not listed as a permitted use in the section.

According to the 2016 staff report, since 1988, 1,110 units had been built, and 619 units were approved but not constructed. Since that time, 18 new projects have been approved allowing for 1,310 units.

The city currently has 562 acres of vacant land designated for multi-family residential. This could result in around 6,600-9,000 new apartment units. If the Low Density Residential allows multi-family, this would potentially add up to 4,900 more apartments.

With the recent decision by the Mojave Water Agency to ramp down the value of water rights it is important to look at the long term impact of high density housing and water consumption. Staff pulled the water usage amounts for both single and multi-family units. With approximately 24,650 single family residences versus 1,200 multi-family units, the multi-family complexes use 2-3 times as much water per unit, than the single family customers.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

ALTERNATIVE(S):

1. Leave the Municipal Code Requirements as they are currently.
2. Provide alternative direction to Staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance 2019-08
2. Exhibit "A"
3. Exhibit "B"