



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Adjourned Regular Meeting held
April 29, 2003

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:01 p.m. by Mayor Esquivel in the Executive Board Room at the Civic Center, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Joseph Esquivel
Vice Mayor Todd Rogers
Council Member Wayne Piercy
Council Member Larry Van Nostran
Council Member Robert Wagner

PRESENTATION OF 2003 LAKEWOOD HOUSING STRATEGY

Community Development Director Chuck Ebner stated the purpose of the session was to present an overview of the different programs that made up the City's Housing Strategy. He noted that the report was a draft which was being presented to the City Council for their comments and that feedback would be incorporated into the final housing strategy document. He also advised that there may be a need to change administrative procedures or adopt new ordinances in order to implement our housing goals.

Steve Copenhaver, GRC Associates, displayed slides and presented the draft Housing Strategy. He stated that the completed document would be a five-year strategy plan which would summarize legal requirements, analyze housing and economic conditions, and formulate housing programs. He noted that due to recent changes in County redevelopment policy and the looming State budget deficit, it was not feasible at this time to consider the adoption of an additional redevelopment project area, but it could be re-addressed at a later time. He reviewed the number of units assigned to the City by the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). He noted that since they must be spent within three years, redevelopment set-aside funds could not be collected or stored in order to accumulate funds for a large project. He referenced a Population Growth Characteristics chart contained in the Strategy document and noted that growth was occurring much more slowly than predicted by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), who had prepared the RHNA.

Responding to a question from Council Member Piercy, Mr. Ebner confirmed that the data for age, race, ethnicity and other statistics had been taken from the 2000 census material.

Referencing a diagram showing four Focus Areas in the City, Mr. Copenhaver stated that each of the Focus Areas had a high concentration of multi-family units.

Mr. Copenhaver confirmed for Council Member Piercy that the Parcel Survey had been based solely on evaluations of the properties' exteriors.

2003 LAKEWOOD HOUSING STRATEGY - Continued

Mr. Copenhaver reviewed the three categories of potential programs which included maintenance, preservation and production. He stated that the Neighborhood Maintenance Program called for concentrated code enforcement in the focus areas and for new ordinances to close existing loopholes. He advised the adoption of an ordinance that would authorize code enforcement officers to issue citations rather than force every code enforcement problem to automatically go into the court system. Another optional program would be to require rental properties to be licensed and inspected every three years.

Responding to a question from Vice Mayor Rogers, Mr. Copenhaver stated that one existing loophole in Lakewood's Municipal Code allowed certain residents to store trash cans in the front yard area.

Mr. Copenhaver reviewed the Housing Preservation Programs such as the Fix-up/Paint-up Program, Single Family and Rental Rehabilitation Loan Programs and suggested a pilot program for properties in need of extensive rehabilitation. He advised that by modifying the Single Family Rehabilitation Loan Program to use redevelopment qualification standards rather than the current Community Development Block Grant standards, more residents could qualify for assistance. He also presented a concept for an extensive rehabilitation program which would provide for the City to purchase one of the lower quality construction homes in the tract known as the Krist/Hunny tract, and then retain an architect to prepare rehabilitation plans that could be used to rehabilitate other houses in the tract.

Mr. Copenhaver continued by reviewing the Housing Production Programs such as Land Acquisition and Development, Housing Development Incentive, Inclusionary Housing Fee and Mixed-use Development. He noted that owner participation agreements may be necessary to encourage the construction of affordable housing units. The Inclusionary Housing Fee would put into place a development fee levied on new market rate housing construction which could be used to generate revenue for a trust fund for affordable housing. A developer could avoid the fee by including affordable units in his development.

Council Member Van Nostran inquired about the definitions for low and moderate-income. Mr. Copenhaver responded by stating the formula was based on the median income for the County of Los Angeles. Council Member Van Nostran asked about options for acquisition of property in order to create opportunities for development. Mr. Ebner stated that although such acquisitions were a goal of the overall Housing Strategy, acquisition was not always possible since a property owner could be more interested in a steady income from a rental property than a profit from the sale of the property.

Council Member Piercy questioned whether there was pressure to use the housing set-aside monies quickly. Assistant City Manager Michael Stover responded by stating that there was always the possibility that the State could be looking to sweep away those types of funds in order to shore up the State budget. Finance Director Larry Schroeder responded that although it did not pose an immediate problem, it could well develop into one.

2003 LAKEWOOD HOUSING STRATEGY - Continued

Vice Mayor Rogers asked about citations and right-of-way clean up programs. Mr. Ebner responded by stating that currently, code enforcement officers were not authorized to issue citations and must get a Sheriff's Deputy in order to issue one. He also advised that to prevent a right-of-way clean up program from encouraging more dumping, citations could be used to provide a deterrent.

Council Member Van Nostran inquired about the specifics of a proposed rental licensing program. Mr. Copenhaver responded by stating that a program charging \$25 per unit could yield over \$180,000 per year to fund housing inspections and should not impact the Lakewood rental market too severely.

Council Member Piercy expressed support for moving ahead with the ordinances necessary to improve the housing programs and prevent deterioration of the City's housing stock.

Council Members Van Nostran and Wagner urged that care be used in crafting any changes involving an inspection program, based on the City Council's past experience with a home inspection program.

Redevelopment Agency Attorney Tom Parrington advised that many cities had a licensing program in place for rental properties, especially in areas where there were many out-of-town owners. He also noted that a new ordinance would be directed only toward rental properties.

Mr. Copenhaver noted that an inspection program could be limited to the exterior of properties only.

Council Member Van Nostran stated that it would be important to know how many properties considered to be substandard were rental properties. He also expressed concern about establishing costs for owners that might just be passed through to tenants.

Vice Mayor Rogers stated that it would also be helpful to have a clear picture of the owners that controlled multiple rental properties. He also suggested any citation provisions be drafted in such a manner to direct the penalties at the owner, rather than at property tenants.

City Manager Howard Chambers stated that the presentation of the Housing Strategy document was intended to determine any areas where refinement was needed before the report was finalized and to determine areas that the City Council had a particular interest.

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ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Esquivel adjourned the meeting at 7:02 p.m. to Tuesday, May 13, 2003, at 6 p.m. in the Executive Board Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise R. Hayward, CMC
City Clerk