

San Diego Planners Vote Down End to Single-Family Zoning

Plan would have allowed homes to be replaced with 10-unit multifamily buildings.

By Jack Rogers

San Diego's Planning Commission has unanimously voted down the central element of Mayor Todd Gloria's housing plan, a measure that would have eliminated single-family zoning in most of the city.

In May, Gloria proposed a package of incentives and regulatory changes with the goal of spurring new housing construction for middle- and low-income residents, college students and people facing homelessness.

The package also would have made San Diego one of the few cities in California to adopt the state's Senate Bill 10, which allows as many as 10 housing units on a single property if its located in proximity to transit.

Had the Planning Commission approved the inclusion of Senate Bill 10 in the package, it would have permitted single-family homes to be torn down and replaced with multifamily buildings up to three stories with up to 10 units.

The planners included a provision in its vote to allow for a "working group" to evaluate Senate Bill 10 in the future. According to a report in the San Diego Union-Tribune, the Mayor's Office confirmed it will not challenge the recommendation in the City Council.

The Planning Commission approved other elements of the mayor's plan, including converting unused land in San Diego for housing, extending building permit times, eliminating parking requirements in many projects and making it easier to build off-campus housing.

"In my opinion, SB 10 is not the right way to go. I think we are going down a wrong path that we won't be able to retreat from," said William Hofman, the commission chair, at Thursday's meeting. According to the newspaper report, the commission meeting lasted six hours, with hundreds of residents showing up to speak on both sides of the issue.

Opponents of Senate Bill 10 argued that the plan would alter the "community character" of neighborhoods that had existed for decades. Some suggested that permitting development of multifamily buildings without parking in the middle of neighborhoods with single-family homes would lead to an exodus of homeowners.

The opponents to Senate Bill 10 also said the measure would "turn San Diego into Los Angeles."

Approximately 80% of San Diego's residential land is zoned for single-family housing. Supporters of

Senate Bill 10 said the zoning restricts housing opportunities for people of color, the Union-Tribune reported.

“This would integrate high wealth, high resource neighborhoods,” Ricardo Flores, executive director of Local Initiatives Support Corp., a nonprofit that works to create financial opportunities for underserved areas, including subsidized housing.