

Citizens Preserving Venice

March 15, 2022

Ira Brown
City Planning Associate
Los Angeles Department of City Planning
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street, Suite 525
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re. 1217 Ocean Front Walk/Waldorf
ZA-2021-7223-CUB-CU-CDP
ZA-2020-1541-CUB-CU-CDP

Dear Ira,

Citizens Preserving Venice is a 501(c)3 organization with the goals of preserving the character and scale of Venice as a Special Coastal Community, including its history and its social, cultural, racial and economic diversity, and of stabilizing affordable housing in Venice.

We request that you deny the above two applications for the following reasons:

- As per a February 6, 2020 letter from Mike Bonin, short-term rentals in multi-family buildings, especially buildings subject to the City's Rent Stabilization Ordinance, continue to contribute to the affordable and rental housing crisis, especially on the Westside. (See attached.)
- The Environmental Justice sections of the Coastal Act and the Coastal Commission's Environmental Justice Policy have not been considered with respect to RSO units being rented as hotel rooms.
- It is not clear to the public which application is under review for approval. The two outstanding applications are similar but different and should not be outstanding at the same time. The 2020 application is signed and notarized whereas the 2021 application is not, thus it appears the 2020 application is the one that is effective. Also, the 2021 application does not mention the lobby bar or penthouse patio service floor area in the project description whereas the 2020 application does. (It should be noted that a lobby bar and a roof deck dining area are not included in the certificates of occupancy.) The 2020 application also consistently refers to the property as a hotel and requests a CUB for in-room minibars in addition to a CUB for the restaurant. It is a violation of the Coastal Act to have two concurrent CDP applications for the same property and one must be withdrawn before any determination is made.
- Neither application addresses what the CDP and CU entitlements entail. It is widely advertised and common knowledge that the building has been converted to a hotel. This was done without the required permits. Any CDP must cover the unpermitted change of use from apartment hotel to hotel, including whether the hotel is in conformance with the

lower cost visitor-serving accommodations Coastal Act sections. The property cannot be bifurcated to only look at an application for a restaurant and theater and ignore the change of use to hotel and related violations. Uses within a building cannot be piecemealed for purposes of a CDP. In addition, parking may be required to establish/re-establish the requested uses.

- The application requires a Mello Act Compliance Determination to analyze the conversion of the residential structure to a commercial hotel use. The Mello Act states: "The conversion or demolition of any residential structure for purposes of a nonresidential use which is not "coastal dependent", as defined in Section 30101 of the Public Resources Code, shall not be authorized unless the local government has first determined that a residential use is no longer feasible in that location." A coastal dependent use is a narrow exception, which does not include hotel use. Also, the law does not allow for a partial conversion to commercial use. If it did, it would allow for the absurd result of the conversion of a residential structure to a mixed-use project with a very high percentage commercial use.
- The property is in violation of the City's Home Sharing Ordinance (HSO) as not only are apartment hotels prohibited from being converted to short-term rentals, but RSO buildings are not allowed to do short-term rentals. Also, the applicant cannot simply start operating as a hotel (without permits) in order to attempt to evade the RSO.

November 4, 2015, Coastal Commission hearing on 2 Brooks, former Chair Steve Kinsey remarks:
"We're being inundated with short-term rentals. We're losing the souls of our villages. It makes no sense to think we're serving the public by creating more visitor-serving opportunities if we are undermining the very spirit of coastal communities up and down California. The Commission should think about this idea that visitor serving trumps all other uses. I think it's undermining the quality of life for most of our coastal communities."

The City of Los Angeles claims that it is doing everything it can to preserve and create affordable housing. If that was true, why isn't the City preserving the rent-stabilized apartments at the Waldorf? The City's actions do not match its words and policies. It makes no sense to move forward with a CDP, CU and CUB on a project that would be likely stopped due to outstanding HSO violations. We do not believe that a CDP for a conversion to hotel could ever be issued and that long-term housing use must be reinstated.

Please enforce the law and stop the illegal conversion of RSO apartments into hotel rooms at the Waldorf.

Sincerely,

Robin Rudisill

Robin Rudisill
On behalf of Citizens Preserving Venice

CC:
Coastal Staff
City Planning Staff
Venice Neighborhood Council Board