

# Council approves two affordable housing developments

Asheville City Council approved zoning requests for two housing developments at its Dec. 12 meeting, including a 279-unit apartment complex on Lake Julian in Arden and a 281-unit development on Fairview Road in South Asheville.

Georgia-based Flournoy Development Group, lead developer for the Arden development, requested to have 8.25 acres that front Long Shoals Road and Plott Place rezoned from Community Business II to Residential Expansion – Conditional Zone. The developer also sought a modification to allow 32 units per acre instead of 20 units per acre and reduce the width of internal sidewalks from 10 feet to 5 feet.

The parcel is between Bojangles and the State Employees' Credit Union near Lake Julian. The complex would replace several vacant single-family homes and a small mobile home park.

The project had come before the Council on Nov. 14, when Council members voiced a desire for more family-sized units and a commitment to some form of renewable energy, especially since the parcel qualifies for an energy community tax credit bonus because of its proximity to the retired Duke Energy coal plant on Lake Julian.

In the second presentation Dec. 12, the plan now will include at least 30 total solar panels and at least 14 units would have three bedrooms.

"I was able to sit down with the applicant, and we talked extensively about what it takes to get solar panels, and I am pleased to see that [the developer] is doing that," said Council member **Maggie Ullman**, following the presentation. "I think adding the 14 three-bedroom units was also real-



**AFFORDABLE OR NOT:** Affordable housing officer Sasha Vrtunski discussed the affordability of a proposed 281-unit development in South Asheville. Photo by Chase Davis

ly responsive to our conversation last time. I feel like they listened, and I am really appreciative of that."

The project would include one- to three-bedroom units, as well as a pool, a fitness center, a carwash and a dog spa. Plans include roughly 358 surface parking lot spaces, 24 garage spaces and 40 bicycle spaces.

The complex will have five residential buildings, with 10% of the units deemed affordable for those earning at or below 80% of the area median income. Up to half of the affordable units also would accept housing choice vouchers.

Following Ullman's remarks, the zoning request passed in a 5-1 vote, with Council member **Sage Turner** opposing. Turner did not comment regarding her vote.

Mayor **Esther Manheimer** recused herself from the vote and discussion because the applicant is represented by **Craig Justus**, who practices at the Van Winkle Law Firm, where Manheimer is an attorney.

## Council approves South Asheville development

Council voted to approve the zoning request for a 281-unit development at

request, staff recommended a \$4.56 million grant allocation over 18 years.

While the LUIG request was approved in a 4-3 vote, with Council members **Sheneika Smith**, **Kim Roney** and **Antanette Mosley** opposing, concerns remained regarding the policy itself, with several Council members arguing that it does not adequately address affordability. In a Nov. 9 presentation to Council, local nonprofit Thrive Asheville data showed that the median income for Black and Latino families of four is below 50% AMI.

"When we are talking about 80% AMI, we are talking about households earning around \$68,000 per year, which is still not affordable for many minority families," said Mosley. "The current policy hinders our ability to leverage tax dollars for more deeply affordable units."

"We say that equitable, affordable housing is our priority," said Roney. "I want to support Land Use Incentive Grants as a voluntary rent control because I think our community needs that, but if it is not getting us to racial equity, then it is not helping me be responsible for our goals."

Ullman, who voted in support of the grant funding, acknowledged the issues regarding the current LUIG policies but expressed concern about delaying a much-needed housing development.

"This is the last step in a long process for the project and the applicant, and if our current policies are causing concerns, we should have that policy conversation to tell the community to stop pitching these proposals to us," said Ullman. "That conversation is really important for us to have. Otherwise, I feel a lot of discomfort having a project go through exhaustive work to get to us to then say, 'Well we don't like our rules and we want our incentive to be better.'"

Vrtunski said in the presentation that the city is working with national nonprofit Enterprise Community Partners to review its Affordable Housing Plan and expects to have recommendations on affordable housing incentives, including LUIG and the Housing Trust Fund, back from Enterprise by May.

Following the discussion and vote regarding the development's request for LUIG funding, the council passed the rezoning request, 5-2, with Smith and Roney opposed over the project's affordability.

— Chase Davis 

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