

# Let's Go LA

Transportation, Land Use, and Economics in the Southland

## How Downzoning Kills Affordability & Drives Gentrification: Sunset Junction Edition

We often talk about zoning in the abstract, making it hard to understand just how restrictive zoning destroys affordability. We looked once at how [downzoning in Venice](#) is resulting in multi-family buildings being converted into single-family homes, causing a decrease in the housing supply and evictions of current residents. Here's another example, this time near Sunset Junction.

The [project in question](#) is a small lot subdivision. While these projects can be a good way to increase the housing supply, this is an example of the policy going wrong. The project would replace 10 existing units (one single-family home, one fourplex, one duplex, and one triplex) with 14 small lot houses. This is a net increase in housing supply, but all of the existing buildings were constructed before 1978, so 9 of the existing units are rent-stabilized. Though it is much less common than people think, this is a pretty clear case where new development is destroying rent-stabilized units and replacing it with new housing that the current residents won't be able to afford.

So where does zoning come in to this? The property is currently zoned RD2-1VL, having been downzoned from R4-2 in the first wave of NIMBY downzonings that swept LA in the late 60s and early 70s. This is an **80% downzoning** in dwelling units (DU) allowed. The property totals just over 30,000 square feet (SF); here's what could have been built under each zoning designation, along with what would be possible under R4-2 with a density bonus.

	RD2-1VL	R4-2	R4-2 w/ Density Bonus
Number of Units Allowed	15	75	102
Affordable Units	0	0	9
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	3:1	6:1	8.1:1
Height Limit	45'	None	None
Parking Spaces	34 (30 for residents, 4 guest spots)	113 (even split of studio, 1 BR, 2 BR)	133 (even split of studio, 1 BR, 2 BR)
Parking Spaces per Unit	2.27	1.50	1.30

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affordable units at their current rents. **The loss of rent-stabilized units and displacement are not an accident, they are exactly what we have stated we want to happen with our current zoning policies.** Note also that the project that will be constructed is much more auto-oriented than what would have been built under R4 zoning.

To see how upzoning can help, consider that this property is also in the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Tier 1 area. Here's a comparison of what's possible under the current zoning and the previous zoning using a TOC bonus.

	<b>RD2-1VL w/ TOC Tier 1 Bonus</b>	<b>R4-2 w/ TOC Tier 1 Bonus</b>
<b>Number of Units Allowed</b>	21	113
<b>Affordable Units</b>	3	12
<b>Floor Area Ratio (FAR)</b>	4.2:1	8.4:1
<b>Height Limit</b>	56'	None
<b>Parking Spaces</b>	21 (assumes 2 BR units)	76 (even split of studio, 1 BR, 2 BR)
<b>Parking Spaces per Unit</b>	1.00	0.67

Using a TOC bonus, even in the lowest tier, would result in enough affordable units to more than replace the existing rent-stabilized units, resulting in an increase in the affordable housing supply.

The people who downzoned LA in the past, and are trying to downzone it again, got what they wanted. They got a city that is more auto-oriented with fewer apartment buildings. They didn't care about affordability 40 years ago and despite any claims otherwise, they don't care about it today. No matter who is going to build the housing, overturning the zoning restrictions that the opponents of new housing put in place is a critical first step.

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