

October 18, 2021

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Ave. Room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

CITYCOUNCIL Meeting for Monday, October 18, 2021 – agenda item 7.a. Urgency Ordinance regarding ADUs

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members:

We urge you to adopt the Urgency Ordinance regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as presented to you tonight. While we recognize that the creation of ADUs provides an opportunity to provide affordable housing for our residents, we also recognize that existing development patterns on winding, narrow hillside roads where summer cabins were originally built in the early 1900s cannot easily accommodate fire emergency vehicles to fight today's more intense fires.

Not only can road blockages and limited evacuation options result in death traps for hillside residents but fire fighters are threatened as well. When vehicles block the road and fire apparatus is going uphill and evacuating residents are driving downhill on roads only wide enough for one vehicle, you have a recipe for disaster, as we witnessed with the road blockages and gridlock amid flying embers during the fire in the Oakland hills in 1991.

In addition, many hillside roads do not have sidewalks, further limiting evacuation capacity. In 2016, due to access problems, firefighters carried heavy equipment by foot up Fremont Road about 800 feet uphill to a fire on Upper Fremont. Fires have grown in size and frequency with dry vegetation and water shortages adding to increased risks. The summer months this year were the State's driest months on record since the Palmer drought index began in 1895. This has become a serious situation and needs your serious attention.

We appreciate Alicia Giudice's direction and Jacob Noonan's efforts to bring this important issue to the City Council for your immediate adoption. We encourage you to adopt this ordinance tonight and with thoughtful and careful consideration, we hope to see a permanent ADU ordinance adopted by the City that thoroughly addresses public safety issues.

Thank you for seriously considering the adoption of this important urgency ADU ordinance tonight.

Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt
Elizabeth Ryan
Tim Bowen
Susan Bradford
Jonathan Kramer
Jasmin Thompson

Tom Heinz
Denise Van Horn
Emese Wood
Anne Bowen
Steve Thompson