

# New law would encourage low-cost housing downtown

By MARY BROWNFIELD

A FLEDGLING ordinance to provide flexibility in Carmel's zoning standards for 100 percent affordable housing projects downtown will likely receive the blessing of the planning commission next month before it's forwarded to the city council for adoption. The idea arose after the Carmel Foundation proposed rebuilding and expanding its senior apartments at Trevett Court on Dolores Street.

"The intent is to provide more design flexibility for projects exclusively devoted to affordable housing," principal planner Brian Roseth told the commission Aug. 9. "Those projects don't come up very often, and when they do, we want to be as accommodating as

possible."

According to the draft, the planning commission could make exceptions for zoning standards on setbacks, height (not to exceed 30 feet or two stories), floor area ratio (up to 150 percent), building coverage, density (not to exceed 88 units per acre) and parking for developments serving low- and very-low-income tenants.

It would only apply to the commercial district bordered by Junipero and Monte Verde streets, and Third and Eighth avenues. Candidate projects would have to comprise at least three units, and those with more than five must provide onsite laundry facilities and a community room at least 250 square

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The Carmel Foundation's Trevett Court provides low-cost homes for nine seniors, but the non-profit hopes to tear down the old buildings and replace them with a 14-unit complex designed by architect Eric Miller. A law under consideration by the city would help make it happen.

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feet in size. Even if the relaxed rules are approved, the city could not approve any application or zoning exceptions "detrimental to adjacent properties or injurious to health, safety or welfare," according to Roseth.

The planning commission discussed the first draft of the ordinance in July and again briefly this month. The proposal elicited no complaints or concerns from the public. "I think it's an excellent piece of short work," commissioner Robin Wilson said July 12. "There's a lot of virtue in that."

An environmental study concluding the new law will have no negative effects is available for public review and comment until Sept. 8. Commissioners decided to vote on the proposed law Sept. 13.

### Foundation proposal

To accommodate more homes for low-income seniors, the Carmel Foundation plans to tear down two buildings containing nine units on Dolores Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues and replace them with a U-shaped structure containing 14 units situated around a courtyard. The apartments would range from 487 square feet to 510 square feet, and the complex, designed by architect Eric Miller, would include laundry and community rooms, as well as a subterranean garage with six parking spaces.

At the July 12 hearing, Miller characterized the block as "transitional" and hoped his design would strike a balance between the businesses, hotels, apartment buildings and single-family homes in the area. "It's important the building be a good neighbor to the houses that are there," he said.

He also said he designed the project so the people living there won't "have the feeling of being in an institution."

Commissioners debated height, window materials and other aspects of the design but generally approved. Senior planner Sean Conroy said commissioners could OK the project, when it comes back to them, contingent upon adoption of the new ordinance, which will likely take longer to navigate the approval process than the housing project will.