



Upper Sugarloaf Residents Association inc.
18954 Acosta Trail
Upper Sugarloaf Key, FL 33042

August 20, 2018

Emily Schemper
Director of Planning and Environmental Resources
Monroe County Growth Management
2798 Overseas Highway, Suite 401
Marathon, FL 33050

RE: Goal 109 Proposal, Upper Sugarloaf Residents Association Comments

Dear Ms. Schemper,

The Upper Sugarloaf Residents Association inc. (USRA) is a community organization which was established to protect and preserve the unique community character of Upper Sugarloaf Key. We offer the following points as our position on post-Irma housing recovery efforts currently proposed as Goal 109 of the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan and concurrent amendments to the Monroe County Land Development Code.

Lower Keys Livable CommuniKeys Plan

Monroe County's Livable CommuniKeys Program is a community-driven planning process that addresses the needs of the island communities in the Florida Keys. The Lower Keys Livable CommuniKeys Plan (LCP) was developed through public input at workshops where community participants identified their perceptions of and desires for the Lower Keys. The Lower Keys LCP is a component of the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan, and as such, any violation of the Lower Keys LCP is a violation of the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan.



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The Lower Keys LCP Vision Statement:

“The Lower Keys will remain a low-density, primarily residential community, with a strong social fabric. We protect, preserve, and enjoy our natural environment, low density, wildlife and open space, and unique recreational opportunities. Our community cherishes conservation and recreation lands and the strict growth management regulations. We seek to renew our commercial areas and provide affordable housing in our community. Our infrastructure and services fully meet the community’s needs. Ultimately, we manage and control growth and preserve the environment and our quality of life.”

Lower Keys LCP Goal # 1:

“Monroe County shall manage future growth to preserve the rural or low-density community character, protect the natural environment of the Lower Keys, and maintain and encourage commercial revitalization along the U.S. 1 corridor. Community character includes the cultural/traditional heritage, physical character, and scale of the businesses that serve the local community in the Lower Keys area.”

Re-construction of Damaged and Destroyed Housing:

USRA fully supports efforts to re-build damaged housing stocks that were eliminated as a direct result of Hurricane Irma, and to provide for housing of displaced residents. We support the replacement of existing housing in-place and support incentives such as tiny home replacements or other incentives and assistance that will expedite the rebuilding process. The recent success of the Florida Keys Land Trust is a good example of how housing stocks can be replaced via private/public partnerships.



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Housing Incentives

USRA supports efforts to enhance affordable housing stocks through new development. However, proposed development must be in appropriate locations and consistent with existing community character and consistent with the Lower Keys Livable CommuniKeys Plan. High density development as proposed in Goal 109 is inconsistent with the Lower Keys LCP.

We support housing incentives such as Monroe County purchasing lots in existing subdivisions as subsidies and incentives to create affordable housing within existing neighborhoods and at an appropriate density. The County readily acknowledges that there are far too many platted lots than can ever be built on, so this would be an effective means of providing affordable housing land and extinguishing development rights at the same time. The County will theoretically have to buy these lots anyway, so why not be proactive and let it serve dual purpose?

We support incentives for Monroe County to generate revenue to purchase and assist in construction of affordable housing. Since businesses and the tourism industry drive much of the need for affordable housing in the Keys, we believe these entities should participate substantially in funding development of affordable housing. For example, new revenues could be generated by additional taxes and fees on businesses that are creating the demand for the housing.

Goal 109 Opposition

We believe that the County should re-evaluate incentives as currently proposed via Goal 109. Goal 109 promotes high-density development inconsistent with the Lower Keys LCP. USRA opposes increasing residential density in the Lower Keys from what currently is allocated. We prefer to see future residential development located on the ample existing platted residential lots in our community.

USRA opposes increases in density within the Lower Keys. There no need to increased housing density for the Lower Keys because the available density is



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adequate to serve the needs of our community. As pointed out above, we already have more platted lots than can be built on already, so increasing residential density makes no sense.

Population and employment centers such as Marathon and Key West are logical locations for more-dense affordable housing. The Lower Keys is a distinct residential community and is not a “bedroom community” to serve Key West and has been suggested.

Nimby-ism

USRA opposes high-density residential developments as allowed under Goal 109 that will degrade the rural character of our community. We have several properties zoned Suburban Commercial (SC) on our island and well removed from US 1. Development of these SC properties as envisioned under Goal 109 would be disruptive and damaging to our island. This is not a NIMBY argument as many would characterize it, but a position intended to maintain and protect our community character and lifestyle as envisioned in the long-standing Lower Keys LCP.

USRA opposes eliminating regulations that protect the character of our community and undermines the goals and objectives of the Lower Keys LCP. We are not NIMBY ... we just do not want to become a densely-developed community in order to support the housing needs of Key West.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important issue. We encourage Monroe County to listen to it’s residents, those that actually live here.

Sincerely,

Vera Vasek

USRA Secretary