

30% rule goes to commission

By Kyle Teal kteal@keynoter.com
Posted-Friday, August 31, 2007 6:20 PM EDT

[Email this story](#)
[Print this story](#)

Several units about to lose deed restrictions

The Key West City Commission, set to meet Wednesday, can float or sink an initiative that would mandate developers designate 30 percent of redevelopment projects greater than four units as affordable housing.

Under the proposed ordinance, applicants for such projects would have the opportunity to waive that requirement in exchange for a fee of \$200,000 per unit that would go to the city affordable-housing trust fund. The money would have to be paid prior to building permits being issued.

A third option is also available to developers: construct or preserve the required 30 percent of affordable housing at a location separate from the site first proposed for the market-rate units.

Monroe County and Marathon already have similar laws on the books.

The Key West City Commission has already OK'd a similar ordinance regarding new development, but many residents and members of the Key West Community Housing Committee say new development is uncommon when it comes to recent projects, and that most construction is redevelopment.

The committee conceived the proposal at its July 9 meeting and brought it before an agreeable Planning Board.

Firefighter Omar Garcia, soon to be chairman of the committee, is a strong supporter of the initiative.

Outgoing Chairman Richard Grusin has declared he's ready to pass the position to Garcia, who coined the title "Saving a 1,000 Families in 1,000 days," an effort of the Alliance for Community Housing to preserve or create 1,000 low-income units - not likely under state growth-management rules.

"We're addressing the people," he said. "That's why I'm behind this."

Like many advocates behind the issue, Garcia promotes preservation.

"Government is always reactive," he said. "We're trying to be proactive."

On July 16, a list was posted on the city's Web site, www.keywestcity.com, revealing a list of deed-restricted affordable units facing expiration, thus risking a hike up to market rates.

The committee and alliance are focused on that list like treasure to protect. Too many affordable units have been snatched from underneath their noses and sold as market rate, they say.

Some units on the list include 400 Truman Ave., 507 South St., 623 Duval St. and 508 Southard St.

Garcia expressed concern over potential developers' resistance to the 30 percent proposal and hopes supporters show up in numbers Wednesday. The commission meeting is at 6 p.m. at Old City Hall.

"People say that things aren't getting accomplished," he said. "This is where it has to start,"

He praised City Manager Jim Scholl for recently involving the Housing Committee with the decision-

making of the city Development Review Committee.

"Keep it as grassroots as possible," Garcia said. "I feel that we represent the community and the people. And with me being a fireman, I think I represent the blue-collar community."