



Luxury Hotel Dies a Worthy Death

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Yesterday's surprise decision by the owner of Villa Carlotta to abandon plans to turn this affordable apartment into a luxury hotel is a rare case in which an L.A. City Council member backed a community, halting a project that should never have made it through numerous rule-bending approvals at City Hall.

The Coalition to Preserve LA, which is sponsoring the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative on the March 2014 ballot, applauds L.A. City Councilman David Ryu, the only elected official in City Hall who refuses to take campaign funds from developers. Ryu's actions to halt the luxury hotel plan for this historic building were in response to vociferous neighborhood opposition led by activist Sylvie Shain.

At a time when the City Council has failed to protect 22,000 units of affordable rent-stabilized housing from destruction, Ryu opposed the loss of Villa Carlotta, from which low-income tenants were evicted.

Since 2000, City Hall has allowed the demolition, or conversion to condos, of 22,000 irreplaceable apartments and bungalow units built before 1978 which fell under rent-stabilization laws that maintained their affordability. Many of them stood in the way of luxury housing — developments the city admits are aimed, on average, at households earning \$104,000 a year.

The Coalition to Preserve LA believes this irreplaceable loss — it costs \$300,000 to \$500,000 to replace a single affordable unit — has displaced well over 50,000 L.A. residents and is a cause of homelessness.

Like Venice, Silver Lake and the L.A. River communities, the neighborhood around the Villa Carlotta in Hollywood is under siege by luxury housing or luxury hotel developers. These developers give money to individual City Council members, then cut backroom deals with those same council members to ignore the local zoning rules that protect neighborhoods from inappropriate, wildly overpriced, development.

U.S. Census figures have shown that thousands of working-class and Latino residents in the Hollywood neighborhood around Villa Carlotta have been drummed out. And they have nowhere to go.

The Neighborhood Integrity Initiative says developers should not be deciding what L.A. becomes. Developers have showered the mayor and City Council with more than \$6 million since 2000. Our badly conflicted city leaders have now let developers ignore zoning, destroy neighborhood character, displace people, and vastly worsen street gridlock.

This is wrong. The system is broken. Los Angeles is stuck with a luxury housing glut — the city's own data show that luxury housing built in the past 10 years has a huge vacancy rate of 15%. Yet the City Council continues to bend the rules for these developers, giving lip service to affordable housing.

The thousands of supporters of the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative urge the mayor and City Council to follow David Ryu's lead, and stop developers from turning L.A. into a place its residents cannot afford.

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