



## City Certifies Neighborhood Integrity Initiative

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Neighborhood Integrity Initiative is Certified by L.A. City Clerk for March 7, 2017 Ballot

Los Angeles City Clerk Holly Wolcott has informed the Coalition to Preserve LA that its nearly 104,000 signatures, submitted on August 24 to qualify the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative for the March 7, 2017 ballot, have been deemed sufficient and the measure will proceed.

The Los Angeles City Council has 20 calendar days to either approve the entire wording of the measure and adopt it as-is, without placing it on the ballot, or the City Council must vote to place it on the March ballot for voters to decide.

"We would welcome the City Council's adoption within 20 days of all of our extensive reforms — which are directly aimed at the City Council itself," said Coalition Campaign Director Jill Stewart. "That would be a truly historic and amazing act, for a political body in Los Angeles to reform itself. If not, our citywide movement of tens of thousands of supporters will make history of their own next March."

The Neighborhood Integrity Initiative requires the City Council to do its job and stop bending and breaking the rules. City Council practices have left Los Angeles communities suffering from severe local gridlock, destruction of neighborhood character, ill-conceived gentrification that forces out the working class, and wildly inappropriate mega-developments that march through the city's rigged and broken development-approval system.

Former Mayor Richard Riordan, a key funder of the initiative, said, "Los Angeles has the second-worst roads in the U.S., is one of the nation's most park-poor cities due to continued bungling by the City Council, and is displacing tens of thousands of renters as the City Council and planners hand out absurd approvals for endless \$3,000 luxury housing rental units few can afford."

Grace Yoo, Koreatown attorney and co-founder of the Environmental Justice Collaborative, a major supporter of the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative, said, "We now have a great opportunity to put this before the citizens of L.A., so they can vote for something that makes sense. It's a great opportunity for voters in L.A. to speak out by voting."

Damien Goodman, executive director of the Crenshaw Subway Coalition, who has joined the effort to approve the March measure, said, "After decades of a broken building approval process, the people are uniting to demand change - to demand their rightful voice in the future of our city. I expect this to be an epic fight, where the big moneyed forces of the corrupt status quo unite to fight the people. On March 7, we get a chance to tell City Hall that we the people, not the fat-cat mega-developers, should determine the future of our city."

Xochitl Gonzalez, a board member of the West L.A.-Sawtelle Neighborhood Council who is fighting the illegal Martin Cadillac monolithic development at Bundy and Olympic, said, "The Neighborhood Integrity Initiative gives people more of a fighting chance to ensure that development is appropriate for their neighborhood. Right now, the City Hall development process is overwhelming skewed in favor of developers."

Key among the measure's reforms is its requirement that the City Council pivot back to its long-abandoned core job: write a General Plan that spells out how the unmet need for parks, infrastructure, street improvements, open space, housing, and other key elements will be addressed to benefit existing residents over the next five years.

Yet in 2005, the City Council quietly voted to not have to do the hard work of writing a General Plan.

Their unnoticed vote left Los Angeles as a rare major U.S. city in which planning and zoning follow a Wild West approach. The City Council clings to a 20-year-old plan whose infrastructure element dates to the 1960s, and council members continually allow developers to call the shots.

Their approach has created a mess. Last year, the city's Housing Department warned Mayor Eric Garcetti that the city had approved 150% of the demand for luxury rental housing, and had, for the previous ten years, approved housing aimed at an average household income of \$105,000 a year. Since that report, homelessness has spiked and rents have skyrocketed, yet City Hall has doubled down on its approvals of luxury rents that Angelenos cannot afford, creating a growing luxury rental glut. Zillow has warned that L.A. is creating a mismatch between the people who live here and the ghost units nobody can afford.

“Los Angeles City Council members agree in backroom meetings to let globally active developers break the zoning rules to build these looming luxury giants,” said Stewart. “Residents pay dearly, in the form of massive surface street traffic, destruction of neighborhoods, loss of open space and trees, displacement of working people, and hideous glass boxes that are often built right to the sidewalk.”

Stewart added that “Los Angeles has descended to one of the nation's worst-planned cities, with a tiny Planning Department and a pay-to-play system in which developers get special favors to get very rich, during backroom deals made with individual council members.”

The initiative also places about 5% of development on hold for two years. This provision is aimed at “spot zoning,” a practice that has jammed streets and destroyed neighborhoods as land speculators buy lots wholly unsuitable for huge developments — then get around the rules in ex parte meetings with City Council members.

In addition, the measure bans developers from hiring the consultants who write the environmental reports for their projects, an obvious conflict of interest that has resulted in grossly falsified traffic studies. Traffic estimates in Environmental Impact Reports in Los Angeles routinely and significantly underestimate how much traffic big developments will create in neighborhoods.

Stewart added, “We understand that one reform within our measure that's hated by City Hall is that city officials must now hold 'Community Plan' update hearings in the communities themselves, at night and on weekends only, handing a new lever of power to neighborhoods. Right now, if you walk into a Community Plan hearing downtown at 10 a.m., its dominated by 'suits' — the high-paid lobbyists for the developers. They are really the ones running City Hall.”

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