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## Top 16 Answers to FAQs about the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative

L.A. City Hall politicians and some of the world's richest developers are in a meltdown over the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative, the first chance in decades for residents citywide to wrest back community power over what Los Angeles should become.

In the rigged City Hall system, developers' cash pours into politicians' pockets, then *hundreds of millions of dollars* in favors get handed back. You get local street gridlock, destruction of neighborhood character, mass demolitions of affordable housing — and tragic human displacement.

City Council members, developers and lobbyists are uttering fantastic fabrications about the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative heading for the March 2017 ballot: That it “stops most development.” Or it “eliminates rent control.”

Clearly, the status quo is feeling threatened. **But this is no threat.** In March, the voters of Los Angeles *will* fix the broken system that is paving over Los Angeles. Arm yourself with the FAQs about the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative:

### 1) What's the most important part of the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative?

90 days after voters approve this measure, the City Council will be forced to do its job, by setting up a public schedule for creating a “General Plan.” The measure requires the City Council to craft, *for the first time in decades*, crucial General Plan “Elements” that account for how L.A.'s roads, sewers, water system, parks and safety services will handle the housing density that the City Council proposes.

### 2) Does the initiative's moratorium 'stop most development' for two years?

Absolutely not. This fabrication is being pushed by some City Council members, many developers and benefactors of a system that lets U.S. and foreign developers dictate L.A.'s future. The moratorium exempts all development that honors L.A. zoning laws — that's about 95% of all development — as well as all 100% affordable housing projects and all “downzoning” such as plans to develop new parks and open space.

### 3) Why do we need a law, before City Hall does fair and intelligent planning?

Because the current system is fueled by campaign contributions and gifts for these elected officials. In 2005, in a quiet City Hall vote that went unnoticed by the media, the City Council passed a law *relieving itself of ever having to write another “General Plan,” a core city duty.*

### 4) Because if the City Council has no Plan to follow ... ?

Lacking a modern General Plan, City Council members continually justify their “need” to bend the rules on land parcels, letting developers ignore existing zoning to build far bigger or more dense than allowed. This broken system gives each Council member fiefdom-like powers over what our communities become. That's why developers shower Council members with cash.

**5) How much developer money has flowed into the Mayor's and City Council's pockets?**

The mayor and City Council have taken \$6 million in campaign funds from the real estate industry since 2000, and accepted *millions of dollars in gifts* for their pet projects. Developers have poured at least \$50 million into lobbyists who get friendly and close with city leaders.

**6) Do L.A. City Council members really hold backroom meetings with lobbyists to approve projects that break the size and height rules that protect our neighborhoods?**

Yes. According to the city's own data, lobbyists were paid an incredible \$14 million in the most recent quarter to influence City Hall officials — largely behind the scenes. An eye-popping percentage of that money was spent on hired guns for big building developers.

**7) Who does the initiative's 2-year moratorium affect?**

The moratorium is aimed directly at the City Council — it forces the Council to take a 2-year timeout from its addiction to “spot zoning,” which is the approval of zone changes, height district changes or General Plan Amendments for developers who want a bigger or more dense project than rules allow. During its time-out, voters will require the City Council to perform its real job — crafting a sensible General Plan for the city's future that doesn't rely on “spot zoning.”

**8) Does the 2-year moratorium stall projects that need a height variance of a few feet, or a fence, or more space for an entryway?**

Absolutely not. Thousands of variances are needed in L.A. to allow normal development. This fabrication about “variances” is being spread by some City Council members, L.A. City Planners and the Chamber of Commerce to scare people. The initiative leaves such variances untouched. Normal development will flourish citywide during the temporary moratorium.

**9) OK, variances are exempted. But what if the City Council gets its act together and gives us our long-promised parks? Or if I want to build affordable housing? Can zone changes be made to do that?**

Yes. All 100% affordable housing projects are exempted from the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative's 2-year time-out. Virtually all other LA affordable housing — planners call it “density bonus” — will continue without interruption as well. Lower-intensity land-uses like new parks or open space are also exempt — the timeout encourages lower-intensity land uses.

**10) It seems like you are trying to change the way the City Council and developers behave. Are you?**

Yes. This measure ends developer addiction to backroom deals with City Council members. The City Council's disrespect for the rules has fueled overbuilding of luxury housing (we now have a glut of vacancies), displaced residents, gridlocked streets and ruined neighborhood character.

**11) Does this citizen initiative allow “spot zoning” to resume after the moratorium ends?**

Zone changes and “height district” changes can resume. But the most drastic “spot zoning,” known as General Plan Amendments, will be severely restricted. The City Council will be banned from handing out “General Plan Amendments” to individual developers for a parcel of land. Only areas with “a significant social, economic or physical identity” comprising at least 15 acres, such as an entire Historic District, could qualify to Amend the city's General Plan.

**12) What's the most popular part of this measure, out in the communities?**

Besides the limited moratorium on City Council backroom mischief, it forever bans developers from choosing the consultants who write the "Environmental Impact" reports — a glaring conflict of interest. The greatest lies told in EIRs involve developers who vastly underreport the traffic congestion their projects will cause on Los Angeles streets.

**13) What's the least-known part of this measure?**

This measure curtails an abuse by "small lot subdivisions" and condos that get big City Hall breaks on their required parking spaces. These highly profitable subdivisions take away street parking and crowd the existing residents. Under the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative, such subdivision developers will no longer be able to obtain massive parking breaks from City Hall.

**14) How else does the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative empower communities?**

It requires the City Council to update L.A.'s 35 community plans, and the Airport District Plan and Harbor District Plan. These plans contain the detailed dreams of what communities envision for the future. But many Community Plans were gamed by developers in meetings dominated by lobbyists. Under this initiative, all hearings must be held in the community, and only at night and on weekends, creating fuller public access and a lever of power for communities.

**15) Does this measure stop L.A. City Planners from encouraging the outrageous demolition of 1,500 to 2,000 affordable apartment units annually?**

Because this initiative bans "spot zoning," and forces the City Council to pivot back to its real job of creating a General Plan and 35 Community Plans, City Hall will be forced to address its reckless demolition approvals and condo-conversion approvals. Those actions have wiped out 22,000 rent-stabilized apartments since 2000, a clear cause of L.A.'s growth in homelessness.

**16) Is it true that luxury housing in L.A. sits empty, and is largely an investment tool for U.S. and foreign financiers — not a way to create middle-class housing?**

True. City Housing officials warned in a November report to Mayor Garcetti that all housing built in the past 10 years in L.A. — the majority of it luxury housing aimed at households earning an average of \$105,000 — has a huge vacancy rate of 12 percent. Yet the citywide vacancy rate is a tight 3 percent. The luxury housing craze in L.A. is **not** trickling down to the middle-class or poor.

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