



# Housing, Land Use and Development Lectureship & White Paper

December 1, 2016

## WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS TOPIC

Housing in California is unaffordable to most households. Limited construction relative to robust job growth is one of the main causes.

## WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS

This study describes how local opposition to new housing construction suppresses new housing supply, and does so in an unequal way across metropolitan areas. I show that the concerns associated with new construction are widespread, but that our planning system grants unequal opportunities to act on these motivations. I also highlight the fact that wealthy neighborhoods have prevented new development within their communities, while benefiting from metropolitan growth in general. The study outlines strong support and general guidance for increased state intervention in local planning decisions, along with suggestions for specific changes to California's planning system.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE & POLICY

This white paper should motivate and guide action on the part of the state government to address one cause of the housing crisis.

## Understanding and Challenging Opposition to Housing Construction in California's Urban Areas

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Housing affordability is one of the most pressing issues facing California. In the intense public debate over how to make housing affordable, the role of new supply is a key point of contention despite evidence demonstrating that supply constraints—low-density zoning chief among them—are a core cause of increasing housing costs. Many California residents resist new housing development, especially in their own neighborhoods. This white paper provides background on this opposition and a set of policy recommendations for the state government to address it. I first describe how limiting new construction makes all housing less affordable, exacerbates spatial inequalities, and harms the state's economic productivity and environment. I then discuss the motivations for opposing more intensive land use, and clarify the way the role of new housing supply in shaping rents is misunderstood in public debates. I also list the various tactics used to block housing projects, demonstrating just how many veto points present in our current system. I conclude with several proposals for reform that have potential to reduce the power of local opposition to new housing construction. The state should take action by enforcing and enhancing existing laws, pushing local planning agencies to represent more people more equally, providing information for public discussion, and developing ways to make planning decisions at a metropolitan, not neighborhood scale.

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# **Understanding and Challenging Opposition to Housing Construction in California's Urban Areas**

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## **Abstract**

Housing affordability is one of the most pressing issues facing California today. In the intense public debate over how to make housing affordable, the role of new supply is a key point of contention. This debate continues despite robust empirical evidence demonstrating that supply constraints—low-density zoning chief among them—are a core cause of increasing housing costs. Many California residents resist new housing development, especially in their own neighborhoods. This white paper provides background on the opposition to new housing construction and a set of policy recommendations for the state government to address this resistance. I first describe how limiting new construction makes all housing less affordable, exacerbates spatial inequalities, and harms the state’s economic productivity and environment. I then discuss the varied motivations for opposing more intensive land use, and highlight the way the complexity of the housing market confuses public debates over this topic. In the fourth section, I list various tactics used to block housing projects and demonstrate just how many veto points there are in our current system. I conclude by presenting several proposals for reform that have potential to reduce the power of local opposition to new housing. The state government should take action in at least four areas – enforcing and enhancing existing laws, pushing local planning agencies to represent more people more equally, providing information for public discussion, and developing ways to make planning decisions at a metropolitan, not neighborhood scale.

## 1. Introduction

Housing affordability is one of the most pressing issues facing California's families today. Renters need to make almost four times the state minimum wage to afford an average rent (California Housing Partnership Coalition, 2016). The problem is especially acute in the major metropolitan areas. For example, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area has the highest share of housing-burdened households in the United States (Kolko, 2016). The California Legislative Analyst's Office 2015 report on the high cost of housing highlighted the dearth of residential construction as a primary factor in the high housing costs and rents (Taylor, 2015). This report is supported by a body of evidence that increasing housing density in high-opportunity neighborhoods – places near jobs, good schools, and urban amenities – is a crucial way to improve affordability. President Barack Obama recently brought this issue to national attention, calling for zoning reform and for greater efforts by state governments to support building housing in places that have resisted it in the past (The White House, 2016).

Yet supply-focused solutions to the housing crisis are controversial. The opposition is vigorous, especially in expensive, high-opportunity neighborhoods. Recently, representatives of low-income neighborhoods have begun to resist projects designed for high-income households and want only affordable housing<sup>1</sup> built in their neighborhoods, if any. In some cases, they have joined traditional slow-growth groups and preservations to oppose increases in density at a larger scale. These interest groups respond to efforts to build new housing with a multitude of social, legal and political tactics. As skyrocketing housing costs transform the socioeconomic makeup of neighborhoods, opponents to increased housing unit density rally around the cry of preserving neighborhood character, a nebulous term that often masks motives of social exclusion.

Nowadays, the most public opposition to new development is in already dense parts of cities like Hollywood in Los Angeles or the Mission District of San Francisco. This results from the very successful historical opposition to development in neighborhoods dominated by zoning for single family homes (Gabbe, 2016). In Los Angeles, 75% of the residential land area is dedicated to low-density single family housing, and this land houses only half the population (Los Angeles Department of City Planning, 2013; US Census, 2014). Neighborhoods zoned for single-family homes are higher income, have higher homeownership rates, and are much less likely to have their zoned density increase (Gabbe, 2016), which pushes housing development and conflicts to other parts of the city.

Since housing affordability in California depends in part on building more new housing more densely, what can be done to ameliorate the influence of localized opposition to new housing and increased densities? In this white paper, I provide background on three aspects of this question to build a case for state policy and broader social movements on this topic.

First, I outline why the opposition to new housing is an important policy concern. Constraining the supply of housing through low-density zoning makes housing more expensive, and exacerbates inequality by restricting access to many urban opportunities and amenities to those

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<sup>1</sup> The term affordable housing generally refers to housing that is subsidized (e.g., through Low Income Housing Tax Credits) and/or housing that is legally restricted to households earning income below some threshold. Market-rate housing is often used to distinguish non-subsidized or restricted housing.

of greater means. It also stifles regional economic productivity, and has negative environmental consequences.

In the second section, I assess the causes of local opposition to new housing, and group them into three categories; concerns over the built environment, concerns over who lives in your neighborhood, and concerns over the development process. Within each of these categories the vague term neighborhood character is applied in an inconsistent way, and a misunderstanding of the way housing markets work confuses debates. This section was developed through review of research and news reports, minutes from neighborhood council meetings, and interviews with vocal slow-growth or anti-development activists (for more details on methods, see Appendix A).

The third section of the paper briefly outlines the many ways in which groups block development. This short section is revealing. It highlights the vast array of veto points that individuals and groups take advantage of to block development under our current system.

The fourth and final section outlines some new and old ways in which the state can challenge and reorient resistance to new housing and increased density. First, state policymakers should enforce and enhance existing laws established to prevent local resistance to new housing. The central pillars of the state law are the Housing Element and the Regional Housing Needs Assessments, which at present perform a symbolic function. Cities must be held accountable if they do not meet their housing production goals and currently they are not. I also identify other ways to enhance the Housing Element, such as calculating housing needs based on affordability metrics, vacancy rates, or jobs, rather than population estimates.

Second, the state must take steps to democratize and expand public participation in the planning process. Our current planning system is structurally biased in favor of wealthy homeowners, particularly those with the leisure time to attend frequent public hearings and lobby local politicians. In connection to this goal, the state can continue also provide more and better public information about these issues, as it has through the Legislative Analyst's office.

Third, I propose that we seek new ways to shift control over land use to the metropolitan and state level because housing markets operate at the metropolitan scale. Renters in Boyle Heights are affected by zoning restrictions in Bel Air, but currently have limited input into the regional forces driving up rents. I identify some "carrots," such as the allocation of infrastructure investment that the state can employ to incentivize dense development, as well as potential sticks other than the Housing Element.

Housing affordability is measured by the ratio of incomes to housing costs. This paper focuses exclusively on housing costs, but I recognize that policies that shape incomes and employment are equally important. Moreover, this paper focuses specifically on ways to reduce barriers to new supply in already developed parts of cities, and does not purport to address the housing affordability challenge in its entirety. Households on the low end of the income spectrum need more assistance with housing expenditures in the United States. Of the 28 million households that are eligible for assistance based on low-incomes, only 6 million receive any support. Moreover, the largest federal housing subsidy, the Mortgage Interest Deduction, is grossly regressive and does not benefit renters (Schwartz, 2006).

## **2. Background: Why is the opposition to new and affordable housing an important policy concern?**

The opposition to building new housing, and building affordable housing specifically, is an important policy concern for two major reasons. First, constraining the supply of housing increases rents. Second, the way in which opposition to new housing occurs in metropolitan areas exacerbates spatial inequalities, excluding low-income households from places with economic opportunities and urban amenities. Additionally, restricting the supply of housing in cities reduces economic productivity and has negative environmental consequences.

In most urban areas of the United States, land accounts for the majority of the cost of a house (Albouy and Ehrlich, 2016). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, David Ricardo (1809) pointed out that the value of land depended on its fertility and agricultural yield. The primary determinant of the value of urban land in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not so different: land is valuable in fertile economic regions. As a result, housing is also often expensive, though a more elastic supply of housing makes it more affordable (Glaeser et al., 2012), as does allowing more houses per acre to be built.

Academic studies from the 1970s (Ohls et al., 1974) and 1980s (Rose, 1986) find a significant impact of restrictive zoning on housing prices, and more recent research has tested this hypothesis in a more sophisticated manner. Saiz (2010), for example, uses the presence of natural, geographic constraints to urban expansion such as water bodies to assess the effects of man-made constraints like low-density zoning, and finds the latter to be significant and large. Within regions, studies of Boston (Glaeser and Ward, 2009), New York (Been et al., 2014), California (Quigley and Raphael, 2005), and the San Francisco Bay Area (Kok et al., 2016), also show that regulations such as historic preservation ordinances, low-density zoning, and multiple independent reviews increase prices.

Low-density zoning and other regulatory constraints exacerbate spatial inequality by pricing middle- and low-income households out of neighborhoods with high-quality public services like schools (Rothwell, 2011; Lens and Monkkonen, 2016). The spatial exclusion wrought by exclusionary land-use controls like low-density zoning exacerbates economic inequality by reducing social mobility (Furman, 2015). Some neighborhoods enable more social mobility than others, and research shows that when children move from a low-opportunity neighborhood to a high-opportunity neighborhood they reap benefits their entire life (Chetty et al., 2014; 2015).

Higher housing prices help homeowners through increased equity, but hurt renters and would-be homeowners, two groups that tend to have lower incomes than existing homeowners. Rognlie (2015) argues that the role of housing wealth is fundamental in increasing global inequality, as it is the biggest source of rising wealth and disproportionately benefits the already wealthy.

Low-density zoning also hurts the regional economy. By limiting population growth, such zoning restricts the labor pool and pushes people and firms out, thereby reducing the productivity-enhancing economies of scale generated in urban areas. In California, Toyota's recent move from Torrance to Texas was at least in part due to high housing costs (Hirsch, 2014). More recently, housing costs are argued to be driving the exodus of tech start-ups from the Bay Area to cities like Phoenix, Boise, and Salt Lake (Dougherty, 2016).

In fact, low-density zoning in productive cities hurts the entire country's economy. Hsieh and Moretti (2015) identify a dramatic increase in wage dispersion across cities in the United States from 1964 to 2009, and find that restrictions on movement to highly productive metropolitan areas have reduced national economic productivity by about ten percent. Buntin (2016) finds smaller but still substantial gains after accounting for the increased congestion that could follow from more urban development. Moreover, the gains created in highly productive sectors accrue to landowners in highly productive metros rather than being used to build new housing. Preventing newcomers from moving to the San Francisco Bay Area can be seen as a way for existing landowners to capture the productivity gains of the booming technology sector (DeLong, 2016).

Low-density zoning and other land use regulations can also have negative environmental consequences (Chapple, 2016). Restricting density forces cities to expand horizontally. Individuals consume more land than they would otherwise, travel greater distances, and generate more greenhouse gases (Kahn, 2005; Mangum, 2015).

### *The importance of supply-oriented solutions to the housing crisis, with major caveats*

Because newly built housing is usually more expensive than existing housing, it may seem that building more new housing cannot make housing more affordable. This is inaccurate. The process known as filtering means that even expensive new housing units can improve overall housing affordability at the metropolitan level. As higher-income households move into new units, they free up existing units, which can then be rented or purchased by households with lower incomes (Rosenthal, 2014). Moreover, if no new housing stock is available in desirable locations; high-income residents will renovate and occupy older housing that might otherwise be inhabited by lower-income residents. The prevention of new construction cannot guarantee that older housing will remain affordable.

The notion that building high-end housing units will benefit consumers at the moderate and low end of the housing market may seem counterintuitive, and is frequently dismissed as a form of debunked trickle-down economics. The filtering process or lack thereof is a crucial element to stave off increases in housing rents, and does not imply giving tax breaks to the wealthy. In fact, it seems that upzoning low-density neighborhoods would be against the interests of the wealthy given their opposition to it. Moreover, housing markets with more responsive supply mechanisms experience less price growth (Glaeser et al., 2008; Saiz, 2010) and are able to capture the economic benefits of a booming economy (Saks, 2008; Buntin, 2016). This is not – as many imply – parallel to the idea that cutting tax rates would stimulate economic growth.

The comparison to the markets for cars is useful (Cortright, 2016). Expensive new cars eventually become inexpensive old cars, just as today's Class A buildings eventually become tomorrow's Class B or C buildings. Improving housing affordability by building more homes is not as straightforward as making cars more affordable by manufacturing more cars, however, and three important caveats should be acknowledged when considering the role of new supply in housing markets.

First, housing is heterogeneous, durable, and usually fixed in space. New supply can simultaneously have downward rent impacts at the metropolitan scale while apparently contributing to higher rents at the neighborhood level. This is especially true because zoning strictly regulates where different sizes of housing units can and cannot be built, preventing, for example, small apartments from being built in neighborhoods with large houses.

New stock in one quality segment, such as luxury housing, can take time to filter down-market or never directly filter down. Yet it will still affect rents in other segments of the market at the metropolitan scale (Coulson and McMillen, 2007). In the short run, new housing ameliorates the market pressure on renovated middle- and low-cost housing in neighborhoods and metropolitan areas, and subsidized housing construction does even more. Zuk and Chapple (2016) find that increasing the supply of market-rate housing actually reduces displacement, though it does so at only half the rate as the supply of subsidized housing.

Second, redevelopment changes neighborhoods, and new construction has the potential to change a place in a way that attracts more people with higher incomes (though it does not always do this). New housing is generally more expensive than old housing, and increasing housing supply may involve the destruction or redevelopment of existing buildings that contain housing units that are affordable because they are old, not because they are subsidized or restricted to households of a certain income. Relatedly, new construction is argued by some to spur more new construction, a kind of snowball effect that is concurrent with gentrification. Whether or not this signaling effect occurs, lower-income neighborhoods are generally less successful at preventing increases in density, and often their political representatives are often unable to extract as many concessions from developers as in wealthier neighborhoods.

A final caveat about the emphasis on supply-oriented solutions to the present housing affordability crisis in California is that it should be seen as a necessary but not sufficient policy approach. United States housing policy has long acknowledged that housing subsidies are necessary for low-income households to access safe and decent housing. In practice, however, high-income homeowners get disproportionately more subsidies for housing from the federal government (Fischer and Sard, 2016) – the lost revenue from the Mortgage Interest Deduction dwarfs all other housing expenditures. Meanwhile, federal resources for low-income rental housing continue to decline (Schwartz, 2006; Lens and Reina, 2016). The insufficiency of federal support for low-income housing is especially stark in cities with high housing costs.

These caveats are limitations to a supply-focused strategy for making housing affordable yet do not obviate the need for such a strategy. At the metropolitan level, increasing housing supply makes housing more affordable in spite of what some believe. Moreover, blocking development does not stop neighborhood change as much as some would hope. Rising rents also change neighborhoods, excluding young families and displacing residents that cannot afford keep up. Not building housing in some parts of the city pushes the pressure for development, along with any negative impacts, to neighborhoods with fewer resources to resist. This exacerbates inequities, as well as increasing traffic congestion and reducing economic productivity.

### 3. Understanding Opposition to New Housing and Higher Density: Motivations

The motivations for opposing new housing construction are numerous and complex, and cannot be placed neatly along a left-right spectrum. I summarize the arguments into three kinds of concerns: concerns about the built environment, concerns about who lives near you, and concerns about the development process. Within all three categories, the term “neighborhood character” emerges as an amorphous way of expressing opposition to new housing. Additionally, a misunderstanding of housing market dynamics also appears to exacerbate these concerns.

#### *Concerns over the built environment and local services*

Among concerns about the built environment, traffic and parking are far and away the most commonly cited concerns. In a study of opposition to affordable housing development<sup>2</sup> in the San Francisco Bay Area (Pendall, 1999), the vast majority of complaints about proposed projects were about traffic. Site design leading to problems with congestion and parking are also well understood by planners as a major concern about new developments. Interviews with neighborhood groups opposing new housing strongly reinforced this message. A commonly cited fear about new market-rate housing is that the tenants (i.e. those who can afford new apartments) tend to own cars at a higher rate than the rest of the population.

Beyond the challenge of traffic and parking, people do not want new developments to strain local amenities such as parks and schools, to obstruct their views, or cast shade on their homes and backyards (Rothwell, 2015). In interviews, residents of low-density neighborhoods often expressed fear that increased density would cause the area to exceed some fundamental carrying capacity. They expressed worry about the limits of their sewer systems, the power grid, and the availability of water resources as reasons to oppose new housing.

A smaller segment of built environment opposition is based around architectural concerns. In interviews, some community members expressed distaste for modernist glass structures and other current architectural styles. Some neighborhood associations work proactively with developers on everything from massing (shape and size) and proportions to the location of bedrooms. In the city of Santa Monica, all buildings other than single family homes must have their design approved by an architectural review board. Such extensive engagement on the design process typically extends the development process by several months and can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. In interviews, developers and neighborhood associations sometimes agreed that the process results in a superior finished product<sup>3</sup>; but most did not mention the tradeoff in higher costs.

Pendall’s research also identified concerns about property values as a common source of opposition to new affordable housing. The classic theory of opposition to new housing supply, referred to as the “homevoter hypothesis” (Fischel, 2001), posits that local politicians limit new housing supply because homeowners vote more than renters and are highly motivated to

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<sup>2</sup> NB: This study is about affordable housing not all housing.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with Patrick Kennedy (Panoramic Interests), Eve Stewart (SAHA), Lee Wallach (Motor Ave Improvement Association), and Jay Handal (West LA Neighborhood Council).

maintain property values. In Los Angeles, homeowners are twice as likely to vote as renters (Sonenshein et al., 2014).

Environmental concerns about new and higher density housing are also mentioned as a built environment issue. The preservationist approach to environmentalism is exemplified by groups like the Sierra Club, who seek to minimize development in order to minimize environmental damage on a small geographic scale. This is actually counterproductive because high-density urban areas are the least environmentally harmful habitat for humans (Kahn, 2005). Thus, the efforts by the Sierra Club and other environmental groups to block the recent “by-right” legislation of Governor Jerry Brown<sup>4</sup> can be framed in a larger pattern of working against high-density urban development that actually benefits the global environment (Islas, 2014).

Environmental concerns have also become a common pretext for blocking developments that are actually opposed for non-environmental reasons. In this regard, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has become a crucial tool in efforts to block or reduce the size of developments. A city planner in Los Angeles<sup>5</sup> points out that most of the 48 CEQA suits currently underway in Los Angeles are against residential projects. Most CEQA lawsuits are filed by groups that do not have an environmental mission and are meant to block environmentally-friendly dense infill development (Hernandez et al., 2015). A review of neighborhood association materials identifies environmental concerns about new development that are misinformed at best or disingenuous at worst. One San Francisco organization opposes Accessory Dwelling Units because backyards are an important form of carbon sequestration<sup>6</sup>.

### *Concerns over new and different kinds of people*

The central role of racism and exclusion in residential land use regulations has been well-documented since the advent of modern zoning (Freund, 2007). *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917) made residential segregation by race illegal. Yet at all levels of government in the United States, individuals devised non-statutory legal strategies— such as redlining, racial covenants on deeds, public housing, urban renewal, and the exclusion of housing types that would be affordable to low-income households – to segregate the nation’s cities by race (Nightingale, 2012).

These strategies were common in communities across California. As urban planner Charles H. Cheney described the deed restrictions of the Palos Verdes Estates, “The type of protective restrictions and the high class scheme of layout which we have provided tends to guide and automatically regulate the class of citizens who are settling here. The restrictions prohibit occupation of land by Negroes or Asiatics. The minimum cost of house restrictions tends to group the people of more or less like income together as far as it is reasonable and advisable to do so” (Fogelson 1967: 324).

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<sup>4</sup> See June 1, 2016, letter by from Sierra Club, Coalition for Clean Water, Surfrider Foundation, Clean Water Action California, and California League of Conservation Voters opposing Trailer Bill 707 “By-Right” Housing Proposal.

<sup>5</sup> Correspondence with Los Angeles City Planner.

<sup>6</sup> For more, see: <http://www.westoftwinpeaks.org/documents/2013-11-25%20-%20WTPCC%20Policy%20Statement%20on%20RH-1%20Subdivision.pdf> (last accessed 10/20/2016).

Recently, low-density zoning has been shown to strongly correlate with segregation not only by race (Rothwell and Massey, 2009), but also by income (Lens and Monkkonen, 2016). Racism and anti-poor notions continue to intertwine with ideas about “urban areas” and density (Manville, 2012). By preventing the construction of smaller units, or multifamily housing, through minimum lot sizes and single family zoning, cities can effectively prevent those without means from entering. Racism and classism intertwine when people express concerns about affordable or subsidized housing in coded language. Of the 182 projects studied by Pendall (1999), protesters voiced explicit objections to affordable housing because of class in only one case. Yet, housing developers working in the Bay Area suggest that fears of black residents are framed as “will people from Oakland”—a city with a large black population—“be moving into this development?”<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, the desire to exclude wealthy residents has recently emerged as a reason for opposing new housing in many low-income neighborhoods. Community activists and elected officials worry about the signaling effects of new construction, as successful market-rate developments demonstrate the feasibility of further redevelopment in low-income neighborhoods. Community groups fear that new luxury apartments will create greater clarity on the part of landlords about the ability to lease units at market rates, which will in turn incentivize evictions and other forms of tenant harassment. In some cases they also fear the loss of an ethnic enclave; communities that were created out of necessity because of redlining and housing discrimination have become communities of choice. Pushing for 100% affordable housing and opposing market-rate housing is seen as a means of preserving the racial and economic demographic of the neighborhood.

### *Concerns about the development process*

In interviews, several representatives of neighborhood groups expressed that they are not opposed to increased housing density per se, but have objections to the planning and approval process for new developments. In some cases, these objections are specific to interactions with particular developers. Residents frequently take umbrage to developers who do not introduce themselves to the neighborhood before proceeding with entitlement and construction plans. Even when developers do conduct outreach in a community, residents sometimes complain that they do so in a perfunctory manner. Sophisticated and experienced developers typically engage in door-knocking campaigns and other kinds of extensive outreach very early in the process. While not compromising on new housing units added, this allow neighbors to give input into the layout, unit mix, massing, materials, and other elements of the building’s design.<sup>8</sup>

Some neighborhood groups also expressed objections to the development process on a citywide or metropolitan scale. Neighborhood groups in Los Angeles are especially vocal about this problem. Los Angeles’s zoning code was originally written in 1946, and has been inconsistently amended and modified to reflect the city’s evolution into the nation’s second-largest municipality.<sup>9</sup> As a result, earning entitlement approvals in Los Angeles is an unwieldy process that more often than not involves variances. Many neighborhood associations expressed a belief

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Eve Stewart.

<sup>8</sup> Interviews with Eve Stewart, Amy Bayley, Patrick Kennedy.

<sup>9</sup> For more, see: <http://recode.la/about> (Last accessed 10/2/2016).

that the variances are granted on the basis of political connections rather than merit.<sup>10</sup> The sponsors of the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative claim that concern about the process of development, rather than development itself was the inspiration for their initiative.

*What is neighborhood character?*

The concept of neighborhood character is an overarching element of many publically expressed concerns about new construction. Yet it is a vague term, and groups with widely different concerns use it to express frustration about change. In order to obtain some empirical evidence on these concerns, I reviewed the publically available minutes from Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils meetings in 2015. I focus mostly on those neighborhoods near existing or proposed metro rail lines and potential for higher-than-average development.

Table 1 below summarizes the reasons for opposition given by board members or resident stakeholders to proposed multi-unit housing developments in Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils. The analysis reveals that in wealthier neighborhoods the inconsistency with “neighborhood character” of proposed development is routinely cited, especially from board members. A lack of engagement on the part of the developer with the community in articulating plans is frequently cited as a reason for public complaint, but this often arises from developers’ lack of understanding of residents’ concerns about neighborhood character.

**Table 1. Opposition to Housing Projects in Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils**

<b>Neighborhood Council<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>Reasons for Opposition to Housing Projects</b>
Boyle Heights	Loss of tax revenue, higher costs associated with density, lack of engagement with the community, too much density already
Downtown Los Angeles	Blocked views, health and well-being, neighborhood character, historic preservation, lack of public/green space, higher rents,
East Hollywood	Lack of engagement with the community
Empowerment Congress North	Lack of engagement with the community, influx of low-income residents
Greater Wilshire	Neighborhood character, aesthetics, scale, privacy, traffic congestion, pedestrian safety

<sup>10</sup> Interviews with Jack Humphreville, Jay Handal, and Lee Wallach.

<sup>11</sup> The following neighborhood councils did not post minutes on their website, did not face opposition to new housing developments, or did not review new housing developments in 2015: Arroyo Seco, Central Hollywood, Historic Cultural, Koreatown, MacArthur Park, Palms, South Central, West Adams

Historic Highland Park	Neighborhood character, lack of engagement with the community, displacement / gentrification, environmental impact, too much density
United Neighborhoods	Neighborhood character
Westwood	Neighborhood character, historic preservation, legal precedent, environmental impact

Source: Minutes of neighborhood council meetings, available online, see Appendix C for URLs.

Two contemporary cases of ballot-box opposition to new housing construction are helpful to understanding the range of meanings ascribed to neighborhood character (for more on these two initiatives, see Appendix B). Although one already failed and the other is not expected to pass, these demonstrate the public concern about new construction in a very direct manner. The differences between them are also revealing.

San Francisco’s Proposition I, which was voted down in 2015, sought to place a temporary moratorium on new market-rate development in the Mission district to prevent gentrification and preserve housing affordability. In contrast, the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative, which will be put to Los Angeles voters in March 2017, will place a temporary moratorium on developments that require General Plan amendments or zone or height-district changes--a majority of new developments because of the overlapping, conflicting, and strict regulations on the books. The ostensible goal of the initiative is to fix the planning system in Los Angeles, which many agree needs reform, but the rhetoric and reason for this are the perceived negative impacts of large projects, framed as luxury mega-projects<sup>12</sup>.

One of the most frequently cited reasons for opposing new, higher density development is that it will change the character of the neighborhood. In fact, the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative is being advocated by the so-called Coalition to Preserve LA. This group takes a more traditional slow-growth perspective on the idea of neighborhood character, using it to refer primarily to the built environment. Opposition from low-income neighborhoods is more open about their concerns about who lives in the neighborhood. Tenant activists have expressed concerns about new residents with higher incomes will displace existing commercial activities and that these new residents will push for fee-based funding of parks and other public spaces.

*Misunderstanding the way housing markets work*

Housing is a uniquely complicated good, performing multiple functions in the United States. Affordability often comes into conflict with other roles of housing, such as equity building. Because a home is typically the largest asset a household owns, homeowners are passionately concerned about the value of their house, willing to devote great efforts to preserve or increase it, and risk-averse to neighborhood changes even with potential upsides (Fischel, 2001). Those advocating for housing affordability are thus often working at cross-purposes with existing

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<sup>12</sup> For more see the website of the initiative’s sponsor, the Coalition to Preserve LA: <http://2preservela.org/>

homeowners, who tend to have disproportionate political power (Sonenshein et al., 2014). Thus, a large segment of voters have no personal interest in increasing affordability, which would only dilute the value of their largest investment. California's property tax system under Proposition 13 further insulates homeowners from concerns around affordability, since property taxes are locked in based on a home's value at time of purchase (Taylor, 2016).

The complexity of the housing market confuses debates around affordability, especially vis-à-vis the impact of new supply on prices. Almost two-thirds of San Franciscans think increasing housing supply will not improve affordability (Building Industry Association, 2016). Many community organizations most concerned about affordability are also in favor of tight restrictions on new development, a seemingly contradictory position. CCHO, a San Francisco organization representing affordable housing developers, has disseminated literature explicitly rejecting the notion that increased supply might improve affordability in San Francisco<sup>13</sup>.

A final complication is the way in which the spatial fixity of housing leads to conflicts over redevelopment as urban areas grow. The pressure for redevelopment at higher densities inevitably builds in older neighborhoods of growing urban areas. Building low-density housing makes economic sense at a city's edge. In growing urban areas, however, neighborhoods that were once at the edge of a city become inner-suburbs after a few decades. Their new, more central position in the metropolitan area means that the fundamental value of the land has changed. Central land has a shorter commute time relative to the fringe and so is a more attractive candidate to develop to a higher density. Building more in more central places benefits metropolitan affordability and the environment. At the same time, however, a constituency of residents now exists, and they will be inclined to oppose changes for reasons described previously. This creates a conflict between neighborhood and metropolitan priorities.

#### **4. Understanding Opposition to Housing Construction and Density: How does it work?**

In an idealized version of the planning and development process in the United States, municipalities adopt neighborhood and citywide plans that guide growth, and zoning is used to implement these plans. In the real world, we have a much more piecemeal system with multiple veto points and opportunities for community input. Plans are not updated frequently, and we give formal representation to concerns of community members through multiple channels at many times throughout the process, years after agreed upon plans are being implemented.

In addition to the planning system itself, our legal and political systems give opportunities for neighborhood groups and concerned citizens to express their preferences about development, not to mention the tactics groups use outside of these three formal systems. The following list highlights the ways in which opponents to new housing construction and density can shape what can and cannot get built in California's cities.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.sfccho.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Filtering-Fallacy-Infographic-Final-Web.pdf> (last accessed 10/22/2016).

### *Planning system*

1. Communicate concern by commenting in public fora, writing letters, using social media, and circulating petitions<sup>14</sup>
2. Appeal specific projects
3. Design review
4. File historic designation petitions for properties or districts<sup>15</sup>
5. In new specific plans, advocate for requirements beyond the baseline zoning standards<sup>16</sup>
6. Make methodology for assessing housing needs inadequate<sup>17</sup>
7. Influence community planning process<sup>18</sup>
8. Regulatory capture of regional planning agencies such as ABAG

### *Legal system*

1. Sue projects under CEQA
2. Sue plans under CEQA<sup>19</sup>
3. Threaten to sue, or “Greenmail”<sup>20</sup> developers, based on CEQA lawsuits in order to get payoffs or concessions from developers for non-environmental community benefits
4. Sue for developers not meeting a discretionary condition
5. Sue to invalidate permit or policy<sup>21</sup>

### *Political system*

1. Run ballot initiatives to place a moratorium on development<sup>22</sup>
2. Lobby City Council members individually (blocking discretionary permits)
3. Recall council members (Westwood case)
4. Run for office and elect anti-development council members
5. Lobby for state laws that affect specific cities rules

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<sup>14</sup> Pendall (1999) found that of 182 projects studied, 62% saw protest from local residents using these means. Public comments and letters were the most common, with over 50 of 182 projects inciting them. Petitions were circulated against 36 of the 182 projects.

<sup>15</sup> In Los Angeles, the Westwood HPOZ and the United Neighborhoods character residential district.

<sup>16</sup> An extreme example from Vermont/Western requires project containing 40,000 square feet or more of retail commercial floor to provide free delivery of purchases made at the site to local residents.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the RHNA uses 2010 jobs numbers in projections, thus underestimates housing needs near rapidly growing job centers.

<sup>18</sup> For example, encouraging downzoning and discouraging upzoning, and setting conditions on properties or uses.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the Hollywood community plan, mobility element.

<sup>20</sup> For example: <http://la.curbed.com/2013/1/3/10295162/leaked-settlement-shows-how-nimbys-greenmail-developers-1>

<sup>21</sup> For example, the lawsuit against Accessory Dwelling Unit in the city of Los Angeles

<sup>22</sup> Though not a new phenomenon (Orman, 1984), examples of ballot-box planning continue with San Francisco’s Proposition I, the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative in Los Angeles, and Encinitas’ Proposition A, which requires zoning amendments be approved by voters

<http://www.laweekly.com/news/should-we-build-more-housing-in-la-7056107>

6. Lobby against state laws that make it easier to develop housing<sup>23</sup>

*Other avenues for expressing preferences*

1. Influence developers before they submit proposals informally float development concepts with their council member and the local neighborhood association.
2. Influencing public opinion about development by creating negative labels for certain types of housing, such as McMansions or “mega developments”, by accusing developers and politicians of corruption, and by building a coalition with shared ideology of crusading against corruption, destruction, and growth
3. Influence new or potential residents in a neighborhood to deter change.<sup>24</sup>

Evidently, there are multiple veto points for any project and those with the motivation, time and resources, can use many of these strategies to block development completely or at least reduce the number of housing units being built.

## **5. What should be done to challenge the opposition to new housing construction?**

Housing and land-use policy in the United States and California has long made opposing new housing construction a rational choice. Many of these policies have such widespread public support there is little chance for reform in the near term. Nevertheless, they are noted here to frame the environment that incentivizes opposition to infill development. For example, tax policies, such as the Mortgage Interest Deduction, promote the use of housing as an investment and in turn incentivize homeowners to rationally oppose changes that might negatively impact the value of their homes.

Property taxes shape land use incentives. California’s property tax system is regulated by Proposition 13, under which property values are reassessed when the property changes hands. For longtime owners, this means assessed values are generally far below the current market value. Not only does this system shield homeowners from the fiscal consequences of increased home values, it increases pressure to make strong demands on contributions from new development. The approval process for new construction has become a central moment for land value recapture and new construction is asked to shoulder the burden of funding infrastructure, affordable housing, and other community benefits, while existing structures (and residents) face no such obligation. This has a restrictive impact on development, making projects with large profit margins the only ones feasible (Andrews, 1988). The policy is also inequitable.

At the local level, many cities in California have rent control or rent stabilization ordinances in place. Rent increases under these ordinances are capped or tied to the Consumer Price Index, which has lagged far below increases in housing prices. As a result, longtime renters are shielded

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<sup>23</sup> For example, <http://www.tenantstogether.org/updates/joint-letter-concerning-%E2%80%98-right%E2%80%99-development-budget-trailer-707>

<sup>24</sup> Most recently, activists in Boyle Heights have been pressuring art galleries to leave the neighborhood using mild tactics of intimidation compared to the aggressive violence used by white neighborhoods against minorities throughout much of the history of US cities and to this day (Loewen, 2006).

from the current market cost of housing. These renter protections can certainly be justified from a social equity standpoint; however, they may also have the unintended consequence of creating a constituency that is more concerned with tenant protections than widespread affordability. Interviews reinforced this notion; renters and their advocates in political office were often more focused on strengthening tenant protections than increasing the overall supply of housing.<sup>25</sup>

Infrastructure finance has also tended to promote suburban expansion over infill development in the United States, and California. One example is the state's system of allocating natural resources. Water rights are governed in a way that discourages existing cities from expanding in population size, even when they employ conservationist development standards (Dremann, 2016). Moreover, Proposition 218, passed in 1996, denies government the ability to charge more for water and other resources than it costs to acquire and distribute it (Simon, 1998). This precludes the possibility of tiered pricing and other financial incentives that might encourage compact development and conservation of resources.

Finally, there are few direct consequences to neighborhoods and cities that simply refuse to produce new housing. Although the state requires cities to produce housing elements that demonstrate how they can meet Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA), the law carries no financial carrots or sticks for actual production of housing. Many residents of wealthy cities, meanwhile, are unconcerned about the potential loss of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds or other funding streams tied to affordable housing.

Despite a regulatory framework that encourages opposition to housing in many ways, there are several promising avenues of reform available to lawmakers. First, I recommend we enforce and enhance existing housing laws, especially the Housing Element. Second, the process of public input and project approvals should be modified to reflect input from a wider cross-section of residents. In some cases, I recommend we consider removing channels of participation if they are only utilized by those with sufficient resources. Third, government agencies can assist growing efforts of pro-housing advocates by producing data and literature to inform public debate. Finally, I encourage the state government to continue and expand efforts to make land use decisions at a metropolitan, not neighborhood or municipal scale.

#### *Enforce and enhance existing housing laws*

California has a statewide framework for housing planning, the Housing Element. The framework has three steps. First, regional housing needs – units affordable to different income groups – are estimated based on population projections. Second, Councils of Governments (COGs) allocate these units to the cities and counties within their purview. Finally, cities are then required to update their local housing element to reflect these regional needs.

At present, however, this system performs an almost symbolic function. Cities that do not meet their housing targets face no consequences, whereas cities that meet them reap no rewards (Lewis, 2003). In fact, local politicians in many cities would likely be punished by voters if they were to push new housing construction in their jurisdictions. A first step is for the state, therefore, is to do everything in its power to force cities to permit housing allocated to them

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<sup>25</sup> Interviews with Hillary Ronen and Isabella Chu.

under the Housing Element framework. The state can and should provide “carrots” - such as infrastructure investment - to incentivize compliance with their Housing Element.

Additionally, various legal “sticks” must be explored to make the Housing Element framework achieve its goals. Can the state’s Attorney General take a more aggressive stance towards cities based on their responsibilities under the housing element, providing checks to cities that do not wish to comply?

The Housing Element framework ought also to be reformed and enhanced. Lewis (2003) argues that the statute is unwieldy because it contains multiple objectives, and uses a process-oriented approach to prod cities into planning for their share of affordable units with the ultimate goal of increasing overall housing production. In addition to giving the law some teeth, he recommends the idea of self-certification (exempting continuously compliant cities from state review), awards based on production of housing not the element process, the ability of jurisdictions to do joint housing allocations, and to cooperate in transfers of their housing allocation.

One example of how the planning process could be usefully reformed as pertains to housing supply, is to improve the methodology<sup>26</sup> through which planners project ‘need’ in housing needs assessments of General Plans and Community Plans. At present, the state’s Regional Housing Needs Assessments (RHNA) allocate housing needs based on population projections from the Department of Finance and regional population forecasts<sup>27</sup>. All projections are somewhat flawed, but using estimates of population to forecast need for housing is bad practice. Population estimates are biased downward by housing costs in previous years, because fewer people move to places where costs are high. If housing is costly in part because not enough is built, populations will grow by less. Moreover, the inaccuracy of these population projections has been used as “proof” by anti-development activists that the need for housing is overestimated, when in fact the opposite is true<sup>28</sup>.

Two preferable alternatives to the method of estimating regional housing needs have been proposed. They are preferable because they are more closely tied to goals of housing affordability, rather than simply accommodating more people. One is to use vacancy rates to set new housing needs (Phillips, 2016) and the other is some affordability metric like the ratio of median incomes to median rents.

Other laws exist in California that can challenge the opposition to new housing, such as the Prohibition of Discrimination against Affordable Housing (Gov. Code Sec. 65008), California and Federal Fair Housing Laws, and the Permit Streamlining Act (Gov Code Sec. 65920 et seq.) (Rawson, 2006). Many of these same laws might benefit from reformed, but at very least should be applied in their current state. Recently, the California Housing Accountability Act, which restricts cities’ abilities to downzone projects, was used by pro-

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<sup>26</sup> At minimum, updated employment numbers should be used in these calculations, as recently numbers from 2010 were used, vastly underestimating the location of current economic activity.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.hcd.ca.gov/housing-policy-development/housing-element/hn\\_phn\\_regional.php](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/housing-policy-development/housing-element/hn_phn_regional.php)

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Jack Humphreville, Interview with Miraloma Park Improvement Club

development activists to sue the City of Lafayette<sup>29</sup>, after the city dramatically downscaled what began as a 315-unit residential project. Again, the state Attorney General might explore supporting these kinds of cases.

*Make the planning process more inclusive*

More inclusive avenues for public participation in the planning process are needed. At present, many of the ways in which individuals can give feedback to planners are time consuming and limited to those with high enough incomes to inform themselves, travel to hearings, and wait hours to speak. One starting point is to collect demographic data about community input. There is consistent anecdotal evidence suggesting that the process is inherently biased towards particular groups, no study could be found regarding the race, age, or income of attendees at public hearings. Such information might bring attention to the need for more democratic avenues of participation.

One approach to democratization would be for planners to solicit input from a representative sample of constituents through non-traditional means such as social media or web forums. Additionally, greater effort should be placed into making discussions and decisions understandable to lay people and people who speak English as a second language. As was made clear by the review of minutes from neighborhood councils, simplified language and clear presentation impacts of decisions are important but often lacking. This imposes substantial information costs on those that would speak on projects, increasing the bias in participation to those with the time and resources to interpret proposals.

If soliciting input from a representative sample of citizens is too burdensome for planning agencies, they should consider cutting off some existing channels of input, or simply reduce the discretion in the development review process. Cities like Seattle have proposed new and different ways to alter the input they receive on planning decisions, including disbanding existing neighborhood councils in order to create communication channels with historically underrepresented communities (Cohen, 2016). Prohibiting campaign contributions by developers to local politicians might be a way to curb perceived (or actual) corruption and outsized influence.

One way to reduce inequality in the review process is by increasing the ways in which projects can be approved “by-right”. California already has one effective form of by-right approval in its state density bonus law, SB 1818. This law enables by-right approval of density increases for projects that set aside some units as affordable to low-income households. This law should be strengthened and expanded. New efforts to create more opportunities for projects to obtain permits “by-right” should be considered. For example, by-right approval of projects could also be tied to RHNA housing goals. If a city fails to meet its housing target, this could trigger automatic by-right approval of projects. Such a program would ensure that cities that use the discretionary review process in a responsible way are not penalized.

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<sup>29</sup> For more, see: <http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/blog/real-estate/2016/07/sfbarf-housing-project-lawsuit-lafayette-yelp-fb.html?ana=twl>

*Provide public information and non-partisan analysis*

Neighborhood opposition to housing may also be challenged through existing democratic means. In recent years, a number of pro-housing advocacy organizations have emerged throughout the state to counter neighborhood opposition to new housing. Some of these organizations, such as Redwood City Forward and Imagine Menlo Park, focus on hyper-local issues. Others, such as Abundant Housing LA, focus on housing at a metropolitan level. Still others, such as Tech for Housing, direct their efforts toward members of a particular industry. The majority of these organizations are only a few years old and have yet to build strong coalitions or achieve significant legislative victories. Nonetheless, they are growing. In interviews, members of both so-called “YIMBY” (“yes in my backyard”) organizations and traditional neighborhood groups reinforced the notion that there is a generational divide in attitudes about housing. Older residents were more concerned with preserving a suburban, car-oriented model of urban development, whereas younger residents were more concerned about affordability.

Policymakers and government agencies can assist in informing public debates in this area by producing nonpartisan literature about housing-related issues. For example, many neighborhood associations expressed fear about the fundamental carrying capacity of urban areas. Agencies can produce reports regarding the ability of power companies, water agencies, sewage lines, and other utilities to handle increased density in the urban core. This may help put to rest misinformation or unwarranted fears about density. California’s Legislative Analyst’s Office has released reports that can serve as a model in this regard. Its report about housing affordability in the state created a significant amount of public discussion on the topic (Taylor, 2015); its recent report analyzing the impacts of Proposition 13 has similarly energized debates around property taxes (Taylor, 2016).

*Shift the scale of land use decisions to the regional or state level*

Most state constitutions place decisions about land use regulation in the hands of municipalities, which are often numerous in a metropolitan area and can be quite small<sup>30</sup>. Yet the collective benefits of urbanization (and many of the problems in cities) occur at the metropolitan scale. For example, labor and housing markets operate at the metropolitan scale. This governance arrangement means that most voters in metropolitan areas are denied political representation in policy decisions that affect them, and it creates incentives for every neighborhood and small city to restrict housing supply within their boundaries.

The State of California should move some aspects of land use decisions to higher levels of government, such as regional planning bodies or the state itself. There is evidence that when higher levels of government control land use decisions, rules are less exclusionary and reduce socioeconomic segregation (Lens and Monkkonen, 2016). An extreme example of this is Japan, where the nationalization of planning appears to have made Tokyo a highly affordable megacity by enabling housing supply increases commensurate with population growth even at the neighborhood level (Harding, 2016).

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<sup>30</sup> Los Angeles County has 88 cities, many of which have a population under 50,000.

Increasing the geographic scale of political action on land-use decisions means that all those affected can be represented. Combined with a more inclusive planning process, it will allow local housing policy to reflect a region's overall needs rather than the interests of each neighborhood on its own. As Lewis and Neiman (2002) argue, by taking a more active role in land use decisions state policymakers can assist local politicians interested in accommodating development in their jurisdictions. They can alter the political calculus by giving local politicians someone to blame, someone with a larger constituency not concerned about local development issues in a different neighborhood. Checks and balances are needed, of course, in the effort to prevent exclusion (Ritzdorf, 1997) without enabling a tyranny of the majority and abuse of minority neighborhoods as occurred through much of United States' urban history (Anderson, 1964).

The most straightforward way to do this in California is through existing systems like the aforementioned Housing Element. Additionally, the state should put greater effort into promoting more intensive land use near transit under SB375, which is the Sustainable Community Strategies component of regional transportation plans. The coordination between transportation investments and land use are especially important in cities like Los Angeles. Unless land use rules near stations are changed, public funds pouring into a metro system are partially wasted. New metro stations surrounded by single family homes benefit very few people, and are ideal places to increase permitted density.

Similarly, the recent state legislative activity around Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) is welcome. In 2003, AB 1866 allowed homeowners to build ADUs by right, and SB 1069, passed this year, further streamlines the approval process for such units (Wong, 2016). Backyard cottages and garage conversions are relatively inexpensive and unobtrusive ways to add new housing units to low-density neighborhoods. By supporting those that want to add ADUs in their backyards, they are creating housing, improving affordability, and helping the environment.

## **6. Conclusion**

Opposition to new housing and increasing densities in urban neighborhoods of California is one of the state's major policy challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because of the negative social, economic, and environmental of a lack of housing supply near productive employment centers. This paper provides background on the economics of housing markets, highlighting the strong empirical evidence that a responsive housing supply does, in fact, improve housing affordability. I also draw attention to important caveats about the impact of redevelopment on neighborhoods, and the insufficiency of supply-based housing policies on their own to provide safe and decent housing for low-income households.

People oppose increases in the intensity of land use in their neighborhood for many reasons. Categorizing the reasons is useful as it allows us to identify the most salient concerns and think of strategies to assuage them. Analyzing these motivations also exposes the vague nature of many of these motivations, such as the idea of preserving neighborhood character. The idea of neighborhood character is perhaps the most important for reformers to unpack. It means different

things to different people, but should not be allowed to prevent development without a clear definition.

Identifying the various tactics for opposing new housing development is also useful. Simply listing the opportunities in which individuals and groups have to provide input and potentially block, or scale back a project is revealing. There are too many, and they structurally favor those with the resources and incentives.

There are several avenues for reform to improve the way decisions over where and how much housing is permitted in California. The state government should begin by enforcing and enhancing existing laws, especially the Housing Element. Planning agencies need to do more to represent all of their constituents in a more equal manner, and to do so they might consider curtailing some of the current fora for participation if they are unequally accessed. Finally, the state should develop ways to make decisions at a larger geographic scale, in order that the politics align with the impacts of decisions.

Overcoming the opposition to new housing construction and higher density in California, without removing community input into development will remain an ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future. It is a challenge we can no longer ignore.

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## **Appendix A. Methods**

This white paper is based on three elements; a review of relevant academic research and news reports, a review of the minutes from meetings of neighborhood councils in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and interviews with almost thirty experts and activists in the area.

For the literature review, I searched the standard urban planning and housing policy journals (Journal of the American Planning Association, Journal of Planning Education and Research, Housing Policy Debate, and Urban Affairs Review), as well as possibly relevant news sources and reports by housing and urban research centers.

After locating the available minutes from the many neighborhood councils of Los Angeles (list with URLs available in Appendix C), I scanned them for mention of objections or concerns about new housing developments. I focused mostly on those neighborhoods near existing or proposed metro rail lines and potential for higher-than-average development.

The bulk of the white paper is based on interviews with representatives of different kinds of groups; neighborhood councils, anti- or slow-growth groups, tenants organizations, pro-growth groups, and developers. I selected representatives and groups to interview based on their being vocal about housing development issues in California's cities, chiefly Los Angeles and San Francisco. I sought to get several voices for different sides of the debate to get at the complexity of arguments for or against certain kinds of housing development and think I got a wide range of views.

I focus much of the attention in the white paper on cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles and the metropolitan areas of which they are the center because these are the largest cities and metros in the state, and as such, the sites of most urban development controversy.

## **Appendix B. Overview of Two Ballot Initiatives for Moratoria on Development: Proposition I in San Francisco and the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative in Los Angeles.**

### *Proposition I: The Mission District Housing Moratorium*

The Mission District Housing Moratorium was a proposed eighteen-month freeze on market-rate development in the Mission District of San Francisco. Only one hundred percent affordable housing development would be permitted during the freeze. The City was to create a Neighborhood Stabilization Plan regarding housing during the freeze, with a goal of ensuring that fifty percent of new housing be affordable to low, moderate, and middle-income households, and that this housing would be made available to existing residents of the neighborhood. The proposition did not pass, garnering 42.8% support in the November 2015 election.

The moratorium began as a legislative proposal from by County Supervisor David Campos and four co-sponsors. The initial proposal was for a forty-five day moratorium which could be extended to approximately two years. The measure did not win the required nine of eleven supervisor votes. The proposal was revised and put to voters as a ballot measure, Proposition I.

The ballot measure was presented as a ban on luxury apartment development. Supporters, such as The Committee to Save the Mission who spearheaded the “Vote Yes on Prop I” campaign, the Tenants and Owners Development Corp (TODCO), Causa Justa/Just Cause, the San Francisco Labor Council, the local AFL/CIO body, and the San Francisco Examiner argued that new market-rate housing developments are prohibitively expensive for current residents and would thus change the character of the neighborhood; new construction has a signaling effect on the market leading to an increase in the market value of nearby housing and incentivizing evictions of rent-stabilized tenants; a moratorium would give leverage to the city and affordable housing developers attempting to purchase some of the few remaining undeveloped parcels in the neighborhood; and that neighborhood residents deserve a greater voice in the planning process. Displacement of the Mission District’s historically Latino population was a central concern among proponents of the moratorium.

Opponents of Proposition I, including developers, realtors, Supervisor Scott Weiner, and the San Francisco Chronicle argued that the true cause of rising housing costs was a regional housing shortage and the moratorium would exacerbate the problem. Proposition I criticized this argument as overly simplistic, arguing it did not taking into account the localized effects of new housing construction. The assertion that new housing would exert downward pressure on housing costs was dismissed by many supporters as a form of supply-side, trickle-down economics. While acknowledging that a housing shortage existed, supporters argued that the problem was so large that any practically feasible amount of new construction would have an insignificant effect on prices.

### *The Neighborhood Integrity Initiative in Los Angeles*

The Neighborhood Integrity Initiative (NII) is a ballot measure scheduled to go before city of Los Angeles voters in the March 2017 election. If it passes, the measure would block all developments that do not conform to existing zoning plans for two years, except 100%

affordable developments. The vast majority of housing projects do not conform to existing zoning thus would be affected.

The pro-NII campaign has organized as The Coalition to Preserve LA. More than 95% of the coalition's funding has been provided by the AIDS Healthcare Initiative, a nonprofit charity not traditionally involved with housing issues. Much of the impetus for the proposition appears to have been a proposed thirty-story development adjacent to the AIDS Healthcare Initiative's Hollywood office. A handful of prominent citizens and retired elected officials have also voiced their support for the measure.

The central arguments made by proponents of the initiative are that new market-rate housing will increase vehicular traffic; new development is causing displacement by redeveloping moderately-priced dwellings into luxury high-rises; and the current practice of granting frequent zoning amendments is a corrupted process. Proponents of the initiative have made a number of additional assertions about the current state of the housing market in Los Angeles, for example, that there is a glut of new luxury apartments in Los Angeles; existing zoning already allows for enough new supply to satisfy demand; projected population increases for Los Angeles are unrealistically high; and that new construction only drives up neighborhood rents.

The initiative is opposed by a broad spectrum of groups, organized as The Coalition to Protect LA Neighborhoods & Jobs. Affordable housing providers, labor unions, anti-poverty groups, and business organizations have all voiced their opposition to the measure. The Los Angeles Times editorial board also opposes the measure. More than 50% of the total funding for the opposition campaign has come from the developer of the proposed Hollywood site, CH Palladium.

Opponents to the NII argue that Los Angeles does indeed have a severe housing shortage, and that making development more difficult will further increase housing costs for residents at all income levels. They also argue that Los Angeles's patchwork system of frequent zoning amendments is not a symptom of corruption but rather of an outdated general plan that does need to be updated to reflect Los Angeles's evolution as an urban center. Regarding traffic, they argue that Los Angeles is in the midst of shifting from a car-centric suburban model to becoming a more densely-populated walkable city with accessible transit options.

The measure was initially intended to be placed before voters in the November 2016 Presidential election but was moved to the March 2017 municipal election. Supporters of the proposition said this was because there were too many issues on the November ballot. Opponents argue that it was a tacit acknowledgement that the proposition would fail in a high-turnout election in which greater numbers of renters and low-income voters would be likely to participate. (Off-year municipal elections typically have much lower turnout, with a voting demographic that skews older, wealthier, and more conservative.)

Organized labor and affordable housing groups are promoting an alternative ballot measure known as Build Better LA, also scheduled to go before voters on the November 2016 ballot. This measure would impose prevailing wage and affordable housing requirements on any projects that require zoning amendments.

## Appendix C. Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Minutes

Name of Neighborhood Council	Council District	Number of Minutes Available	Website
Eagle Rock	14	12	<a href="http://ernc.la/">http://ernc.la/</a>
Foothill Trails District	2, 7	0	<a href="http://ftdnc.org/meeting-minutes/">http://ftdnc.org/meeting-minutes/</a>
Glassell Park	1, 13, 14	13	<a href="http://glassellparknc.org/election/minutes/">http://glassellparknc.org/election/minutes/</a>
Greater Wilshire	4, 5	12	<a href="http://greaterwilshire.org/land-use-committee-agendas-minutes/">http://greaterwilshire.org/land-use-committee-agendas-minutes/</a>
Harbor City	15	11	<a href="http://harborcitync.com/blog/">http://harborcitync.com/blog/</a>
Harbor Gateway South	15	6	<a href="http://harborgatewaysouth.org/minutes/">http://harborgatewaysouth.org/minutes/</a>
Historic Cultural	1, 9, 14	3	<a href="http://hcncla.org/?page_id=61">http://hcncla.org/?page_id=61</a>
Lincoln Heights	1, 14	2	<a href="http://lincolnheightsnc.org/minutes/">http://lincolnheightsnc.org/minutes/</a>
Los Feliz	4	11	<a href="http://losfeliznc.org/governing-board/board-minutes-agendas/">http://losfeliznc.org/governing-board/board-minutes-agendas/</a>
North Hollywood West	2, 6	7	<a href="http://nohowest.org/meetings/meeting-minutes/">http://nohowest.org/meetings/meeting-minutes/</a>
Northridge West	12	11	<a href="http://northridgewest.org/agendas-minutes/">http://northridgewest.org/agendas-minutes/</a>
Northwest San Pedro	15	10	<a href="http://nwsanpedro.org/minutes/">http://nwsanpedro.org/minutes/</a>
Olympic Park	10	5	<a href="http://opnc.org/minutes-2/">http://opnc.org/minutes-2/</a>
Palms	5, 10, 11	10	<a href="http://palmsla.org/about/pnc-meeting-minutes/">http://palmsla.org/about/pnc-meeting-minutes/</a>
Central San Pedro	15	12	<a href="http://sanpedrocity.org/minutes/">http://sanpedrocity.org/minutes/</a>
Silver Lake	4, 13	13	<a href="http://silverlakenc.org/governing-board-minutes/">http://silverlakenc.org/governing-board-minutes/</a>
Empowerment Congress	8	7	<a href="http://southwestnc.org/minutes">http://southwestnc.org/minutes</a>
Sunland-Tujunga	7	10	<a href="http://stnc.org/committees.php?committee_id=37&amp;year=2015">http://stnc.org/committees.php?committee_id=37&amp;year=2015</a>
Studio City	2, 4, 5	7	<a href="http://studiocitync.org/minutes-and-agendas.php">http://studiocitync.org/minutes-and-agendas.php</a>
Watts	15	0	<a href="http://thewattsnc.com/meetings/">http://thewattsnc.com/meetings/</a>
United Neighborhoods	1, 10	12	<a href="http://unnc.org/meeting-archives">http://unnc.org/meeting-archives</a>
Van Nuys	2, 6	10	<a href="http://vnnc.org/agenda-and-minutes/">http://vnnc.org/agenda-and-minutes/</a>

Westlake North	1, 13	0	<a href="http://westlakenorthnc.org/minutes/">http://westlakenorthnc.org/minutes/</a>
Wilmington	15	12	<a href="http://wilmingtonneighborhoodcouncil.com/minutes/">http://wilmingtonneighborhoodcouncil.com/minutes/</a>
Westside	5, 10	11	<a href="http://wncla.org/minutes/">http://wncla.org/minutes/</a>
Arleta	6	20	<a href="http://www.arletanc.org/board-minutes-and-agendas/">http://www.arletanc.org/board-minutes-and-agendas/</a>
Arroyo Seco	1, 14	8	<a href="http://www.asnc.us/archives-2015.htm">http://www.asnc.us/archives-2015.htm</a>
Atwater Village	13	9	<a href="http://www.atwatervillage.org/node/27/meetings_archive">http://www.atwatervillage.org/node/27/meetings_archive</a>
Bel Air-Beverly Crest	5	11	<a href="http://www.babcnc.org/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.babcnc.org/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Boyle Heights	13	5	<a href="http://www.bhnc.net/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.bhnc.net/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Ninth District Unity	9	8	<a href="http://www.canndunc.org/minutes">http://www.canndunc.org/minutes</a>
Canoga Park	3	11	<a href="http://www.canogaparknc.org/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.canogaparknc.org/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Central Alameda	9	0	<a href="http://www.centralalamedanc.com/">http://www.centralalamedanc.com/</a>
Chatsworth	12	4	<a href="http://www.chatsworthcouncil.org/land-use-minutes/">http://www.chatsworthcouncil.org/land-use-minutes/</a>
Central Hollywood	4, 13	0	<a href="http://www.chnc.org/meetings">http://www.chnc.org/meetings</a>
Coastal San Pedro	15	12	<a href="http://www.cspnc.org/agendasminutes/">http://www.cspnc.org/agendasminutes/</a>
Greater Cypress Park	1, 14	0	<a href="http://www.cypressparknc.com/2015-agendas---minutes.html">http://www.cypressparknc.com/2015-agendas---minutes.html</a>
Del Rey	11	10	<a href="http://www.delreync.org/documents/minutes/">http://www.delreync.org/documents/minutes/</a>
Downtown Los Angeles	1, 9, 14	7	<a href="http://www.dlanc.org/planning-and-land-use">http://www.dlanc.org/planning-and-land-use</a>
East Hollywood	13	7	<a href="http://www.easthollywood.net/2015_minutes_posts">http://www.easthollywood.net/2015_minutes_posts</a>
Empowerment Congress Central Area NDC	8	1	<a href="http://www.eccandc.org/meeting-minutes.html">http://www.eccandc.org/meeting-minutes.html</a>
Empowerment Congress Southeast Area NDC	8, 9, 15	0	<a href="http://www.ecseandc.org/minutes-and-agendas.php">http://www.ecseandc.org/minutes-and-agendas.php</a>
Empowerment Congress West Area NDC	8, 10	0	<a href="http://www.ecwandc.org/board/agendas/">http://www.ecwandc.org/board/agendas/</a>
Encino	5, 6, 12	11	<a href="http://www.encinonc.org/minutes-and-agendas.php">http://www.encinonc.org/minutes-and-agendas.php</a>
Greater Echo Park	1, 13	9	<a href="http://www.gepenc.org/committees/board-governors/">http://www.gepenc.org/committees/board-governors/</a>
Granada Hills North	12	10	<a href="http://www.ghnnc.org/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.ghnnc.org/agendas-and-minutes/</a>

Granada Hills South	12	9	<a href="http://www.ghsnc.org/resources/minutes-and-agendas/">http://www.ghsnc.org/resources/minutes-and-agendas/</a>
Greater Valley Glen	2	4	<a href="http://www.greatervalleyglencouncil.org/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.greatervalleyglencouncil.org/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Greater Toluca Lake	4	5	<a href="http://www.gtln.org/committees/planning+_land_use/">http://www.gtln.org/committees/planning+_land_use/</a>
Harbor Gateway North	15	13	<a href="http://www.harborgatewaynorth.org/minutes">http://www.harborgatewaynorth.org/minutes</a>
Hollywood Hills West	4, 13	7	<a href="http://www.hhwnc.org/hhwnc-meetings/">http://www.hhwnc.org/hhwnc-meetings/</a>
Historic Highland Park	1, 14	5	<a href="http://www.highlandparknc.com/site/land-use-committee-2/">http://www.highlandparknc.com/site/land-use-committee-2/</a>
Hollywood United	4, 13	12	<a href="http://www.hollywoodunitednc.org/fullboard.htm">http://www.hollywoodunitednc.org/fullboard.htm</a>
Hollywood Studio Dist.	13	0	<a href="http://www.hsdnc.org/agendas-and-minutes">http://www.hsdnc.org/agendas-and-minutes</a>
LA-32	1, 14	7	<a href="http://www.la32nc.org/committees/land-use-and-development/">http://www.la32nc.org/committees/land-use-and-development/</a>
Lake Balboa	6	11	<a href="http://www.lakebalboanc.org/agendas-and-minutes/minutes/">http://www.lakebalboanc.org/agendas-and-minutes/minutes/</a>
Mar Vista	5, 11	8	<a href="http://www.marvista.org/past-meetings-urbanplanning/2015">http://www.marvista.org/past-meetings-urbanplanning/2015</a>
Mission Hills	7	11	<a href="http://www.mhnconline.org/agendas-minutes/">http://www.mhnconline.org/agendas-minutes/</a>
Mid-City West	4, 5, 10	10	<a href="http://www.midcitywest.org/pages/agendas-all.asp#general">http://www.midcitywest.org/pages/agendas-all.asp#general</a>
Mid-Town NoHo	2, 4	0	<a href="http://www.midtownnoho.org/minutes-and-agendas.php">http://www.midtownnoho.org/minutes-and-agendas.php</a>
Valley Village	2, 5	8	<a href="http://www.myvalleyvillage.com/agendas-minutes/">http://www.myvalleyvillage.com/agendas-minutes/</a>
Empowerment Congress North Area NDC	1, 8, 9	11	<a href="http://www.nandc.org/what-we-do/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.nandc.org/what-we-do/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Westchester/Playa	11	11	<a href="http://www.ncwpdr.org/minutes">http://www.ncwpdr.org/minutes</a>
Northridge East	12	2	<a href="http://www.nenc-la.org/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.nenc-la.org/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
North Hollywood NE	2, 6	10	<a href="http://www.nhnenc.org/minutes">http://www.nhnenc.org/minutes</a>
North Hills West	12	10	<a href="http://www.nhwnc.net/agendas-minutes/minutes-and-agendas/">http://www.nhwnc.net/agendas-minutes/minutes-and-agendas/</a>
North Hills East	6, 7	4	<a href="http://www.northhillseast.org/nhe-agendas.html">http://www.northhillseast.org/nhe-agendas.html</a>
Northridge South	12	9	<a href="http://www.northridgesouth.org/meetings-info/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.northridgesouth.org/meetings-info/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Pacoima	6, 7	5	<a href="http://www.pacoimanc.com/agendas-and-minutes/">http://www.pacoimanc.com/agendas-and-minutes/</a>
Panorama City	6	0	<a href="http://www.panoramacitync.org/committees/land-use-committee/">http://www.panoramacitync.org/committees/land-use-committee/</a>
P.I.C.O.	5, 10	4	<a href="http://www.piconc.com/">http://www.piconc.com/</a> (click on "For the Record")

Pico Union	1, 10	6	<a href="http://www.picounionnc.org/node/13">http://www.picounionnc.org/node/13</a>
Park Mesa Heights CC	8	0	<a href="http://www.pmhcc90043.org/agendas.html">http://www.pmhcc90043.org/agendas.html</a>
Porter Ranch	12	13	<a href="http://www.prnc.org/about-us/agenda-and-minutes">http://www.prnc.org/about-us/agenda-and-minutes</a>
Reseda	3, 12	0	<a href="http://www.resedacouncil.org/index.php/documents/category/8-minutes">http://www.resedacouncil.org/index.php/documents/category/8-minutes</a>
Sherman Oaks	2, 5	17	<a href="http://www.shermanoaksnc.org/committees.php?committee_id=38">http://www.shermanoaksnc.org/committees.php?committee_id=38</a>
South Robertson	5, 10	12	<a href="http://www.soronc.org/committees/general_board">http://www.soronc.org/committees/general_board</a>
Sun Valley Area	2, 6, 7	2	<a href="http://www.svanc.com/meeting_docs_2015.php">http://www.svanc.com/meeting_docs_2015.php</a>
Sylmar	7, 12	6	<a href="http://www.sylmarneighborhoodcouncil.org/land-use-committee.php">http://www.sylmarneighborhoodcouncil.org/land-use-committee.php</a>
Tarzana	3, 5	9	<a href="http://www.tarzananc.org/board-meetings.php">http://www.tarzananc.org/board-meetings.php</a>
Venice	11	15	<a href="http://www.venicenc.org/committees/lupc/">http://www.venicenc.org/committees/lupc/</a>
Wilshire-Koreatown	4, 10, 13	0	<a href="http://www.wcknc.org/">http://www.wcknc.org/</a>
West Hills	3, 12	12	<a href="http://www.westhillsnc.org/minutes-and-agendas.php">http://www.westhillsnc.org/minutes-and-agendas.php</a>
West Los Angeles	11	9	<a href="http://www.westlasawtelle.org/boardofdirectors/">http://www.westlasawtelle.org/boardofdirectors/</a>
Woodland Hills-Warner	3, 11	4	<a href="http://www.whcouncil.org/page2.php?snum=7">http://www.whcouncil.org/page2.php?snum=7</a>
Winnetka	3, 12	13	<a href="http://www.winnetkanc.com/documents">http://www.winnetkanc.com/documents</a>
Westlake South	1	0	<a href="http://www.wsncla.org/minutes/">http://www.wsncla.org/minutes/</a>
Westwood	5	9	<a href="http://www.wwnc.org/agenda-minutes/">http://www.wwnc.org/agenda-minutes/</a>
Zapata King	9	4	<a href="http://www.zapatakingnc.org/agendas-minutes.html">http://www.zapatakingnc.org/agendas-minutes.html</a>
Mid-City	10	0	<a href="https://mincla.org/tag/minutes/">https://mincla.org/tag/minutes/</a>
West Adams	10	11	<a href="https://sites.google.com/site/westadamsnc/agendas-minutes">https://sites.google.com/site/westadamsnc/agendas-minutes</a>
MacArthur Park	1, 10	0	No dedicated website: <a href="https://empowerla.org/mpnc/">https://empowerla.org/mpnc/</a>
South Central	9	0	No dedicated website: <a href="https://empowerla.org/southcentralnc/">https://empowerla.org/southcentralnc/</a>
Voices of 90037	9	0	No dedicated website: <a href="https://empowerla.org/voicesof90037/">https://empowerla.org/voicesof90037/</a>
Elysian Valley Riverside	1, 13	0	Website down: <a href="http://evrnc.com">http://evrnc.com</a>
Rampart Village	1, 10, 13	0	Website down: <a href="http://www.rvnc.org/">http://www.rvnc.org/</a>

## Appendix D. Interview List

Name	Organization	Title	Interview Date
Amy Bayley	Mercy Housing	Vice President, Community Planning	9/16/2016
Amy Fitzgerald	Oakland Community Organizations	Executive Director	9/29/2016
Anthony Albert	Tech for Housing	Cofounder	9/22/2016
Avrum Shepard	Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association	Member	8/26/2016
Brad Johnson	City of Oakland	Assistant to the City Administrator	10/31/2016
Corey Smith	San Francisco Housing Action Coalition	Community Organizer	10/1/2016
Dan Lieberthson	Miraloma Park Improvement Club	Corresponding Secretary	
Erick Arguello	Calle 24	Cofounder/President	9/6/2016
Eve Stewart	Satellite Affordable Housing Associates	Director of Housing Development	9/16/2016
Greg Scott	Pacific Heights Residents Association	Vice President	8/31/2016
Hillary Ronen	Office of Supervisor David Campos; Candidate for District 9 Supervisor	Chief of Staff	8/10/2016
Isabella Chu	Redwood City Forward	Founder	9/23/2016
J. Scott Weaver	Proposition I author; United to Save the Mission	Attorney; Member	8/26/2016
J.R. Eppler	Potrero Boosters	President	9/20/2016
Jack Humphreville	Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council	Former board member	9/18/2016
Jay Handal	West LA Neighborhood Council	Treasurer; Organizational Representative	9/26/2016
JoAnn Koplín	Hollywood Hills West Neighborhood Council	Housing Chair	10/25/2016
Lee Wallach	Motor Avenue Improvement Association	Member	9/29/2016
Malcolm Amado Uno	Asian Pacific Environmental Network	Political Director	9/2/2016
Mara Blitzer	San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development	Director of Housing Development	10/14/2016
Maryann Sargent	City of Oakland	Housing Development Coordinator	10/5/2016
Mike Ege	San Francisco Bay Area Renter's Federation	Member	9/23/2016
Nick Grieff	Palms Neighborhood Council	President	9/16/2016
Patrick Kennedy	Panoramic Interests	Owner	10/3/2016
Peter Cohen	Council of Community Housing Organizations	Co-director	10/5/2016
Peter Papadopoulos	Mission Cultural Action Network	Member	8/26/2016

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Sue Vaughan	Sierra Club, San Francisco Chapter	Representative	8/19/2016
Susan Suval	Parkmerced Action Coalition	Vice President	8/31/2016
Wayne Chen	City of Mountain View	Housing and Neighborhood Services Manager	10/14/2016

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