



American Planning Association
California Chapter
Los Angeles

September 27, 2016

APA Los Angeles Statement of Opposition to Land Use Ballot Measures

In the next two elections, Los Angeles-area voters will be asked to make decisions on critical ballot measures pertaining to planning and development policy. These initiatives address community and stakeholder interests in affordable housing, prevailing wages, and transit-oriented development, as well as the processes used to approve plans and specific projects.

In November, the Build Better LA Initiative (BBLA) proposes to increase the production of affordable housing and jobs through mixed-income and prevailing wage mandates for certain types of development in the City of Los Angeles. In Santa Monica, the Land Use Voter Empowerment (LUVE) Initiative seeks to require voter approval for new construction taller than 32 feet or two stories. And in March, the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative (NII) will seek to significantly restrict the City's flexibility to change zoning and parking requirements, and to compel the City of Los Angeles to engage in comprehensive planning by placing a two-year moratorium on zone changes and general plan amendments that result in more intense use.

As proposed, these initiatives have both merits and limitations from a planning perspective. Ultimately, the American Planning Association's adopted national policy guides, which represent the collective thinking of members on positions of principle and practice, both support and reject the claims made by the initiatives' proponents. For example, the [APA Policy Guide on Smart Growth \(2012\)](#) champions mixed-income housing production and transit-oriented development, as well as the preservation of pedestrian-scaled neighborhoods and the cultural identity and integrity of places.

APA Los Angeles acknowledges that our metropolitan area is both suffering an affordable housing crisis and realizing an opportunity to improve its transportation system, and that many communities are experiencing dramatic change. However, after careful deliberation and evaluation of [APA's National Policy Guides on Collaborative Planning \(1998\)](#), [Planning for Sustainability \(2000\)](#), [Homelessness \(2003\)](#), [Housing \(2006\)](#), and [Smart Growth \(2012\)](#), the Board has decided to oppose all three initiatives. This decision is based not on their specific merits or demerits, but on concerns that land use initiatives and referenda 1) undermine local planning authority as a cornerstone value in our system of government; and 2) disacknowledge the value of professional planners, whose [Code of Ethics](#) requires a conscientiously attained concept of the public interest with special concern for the long-range consequences of present actions, and special attention to the interrelatedness of decisions. APA supports inclusive citizen participation in all levels of planning, but also affirms that effective comprehensive planning is the primary means of implementing policies that promote efficient and sustainable development.

Land use initiatives have a decades-long history in California. APA Los Angeles believes that this history demonstrates the tool's deficiencies in creating communities of lasting value; balancing the varied interests and viewpoints that emerge as a community plans its future; and comprehensively addressing the impacts of today's actions on tomorrow's communities. Indeed, APA Los Angeles believes that the City's history of land use initiatives has significantly contributed to the challenges that our communities face today.