

WE SAW



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Traci Park
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Dear Councilwoman Park:

We are writing on behalf of the West Sawtelle Homeowners Association, a Community of approximately 270 homes. We are bordered by Bundy to the west, Centinela to the east, Nebraska to the south and Idaho to the north. We are writing to express our shock and displeasure that the Westside Community Plan Update (2024 edition¹) is proposing to upzone our single family neighborhood into a combination of new, denser zones. Not only will this destroy our Community and neighborhood, it will break blocks up into separate zoning, to which the City Planning Department is itself opposed. Additionally, they are proposing to upzone the light manufacturing zone directly to the south of our single family neighborhood into hybrid industrial, with no height limits. This creates a block of towers dominating our homes and ignores any transition zone that the City itself recommends.

These are our homes and this is our Community. We are a working class neighborhood that dates back to the 1930s and 40s, and we have more than a few original residents still living here in their homes. We have homes that have been passed down from family member to family member, creating generational wealth. Upzoning our Community, allowing apartment buildings and removing open space will destroy the generational wealth that families have struggled and fought for. It will destroy the peace and tranquility of our small neighborhood. It will bring even more traffic to our Community which is already negatively impacted by the heavy congestion of West Los Angeles. It will further delay the response time of Emergency Services.

1. https://planning.lacity.gov/odocument/c982e6dd-e975-408e-b885-ecddce3402ce/WLA_Proposed_GPLU.pdf

This Community is the backbone of the City of Los Angeles. We are the social workers, the teachers, the day care workers, the EMTs, and the doctors, who worked the frontlines during the pandemic, of Los Angeles. We come home to our Community to feel safe, to gain strength to go back to work the next day. We have a right to that peace and safety. We purchased homes here knowing that we wanted to live in Los Angeles, to raise our children in Los Angeles, to retire here.

The Sawtelle Community as a whole has seen almost its entire stock of single family housing destroyed, at least partially, if not entirely because it was redlined in the 1920s. Over the last 100 years that has seen Sawtelle lose 90% of its single family neighborhoods², wealthier parts of Los Angeles were down-zoning their communities to enlarge their R1 neighborhoods. Now the City Planning Department sets its sights on destroying our small single family neighborhood, while leaving much wealthier, single family neighborhoods in Brentwood and Westwood intact. If this proposed upzoning actually occurs, the Sawtelle neighborhood will be left with just 5.5 blocks of R1 housing, and our diverse Community will be decimated.

We are not content with letting history repeat itself. Our neighborhood, formerly the City of Sawtelle, was created by families who could not purchase homes because of racist covenants that kept Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos and Blacks from purchasing homes in Los Angeles. Our Community continues to suffer from the racist practice of redlining. The changes brought about by redlining are well documented by local historian Randy Sakamoto and many others. Choosing to destroy our Community in order to build more units is just that, a choice by the City and our elected officials. It is a leap backwards, not movement forward.

On June 28, 2023, the West Los Angeles Sawtelle Neighborhood Council voted unanimously to request that the City “Postpone the Housing Element’s proposed upzoning of our neighborhood until the gross/theoretical and realistic zoning capacity is fully disclosed.”^{3 4} In that same motion that was provided to the Planning Department and Council District 11, Jay Ross, the Chair of the Planning and Land Use Committee of the WLASNC at the time, provided a chart that looked at the zoning capacity for West Los Angeles, including Sawtelle, based on our current zoning.⁵ Mr. Ross showed that the while we currently have a population of approximately 91,664 people (number in yellow in the table below) in West Los Angeles, we have the capacity to house 205,985 (number in green). This means we could provide housing for an additional 114,321 persons (number in red). This is a 124% increase in our population using our current zoning! Besides serving as the Chair of the WLASNC, Mr. Ross also served on the Westside Community Plan Update Advisory Group and former Chair of the Land Use and Planning Committee of the Westside Regional Alliance of Councils.

In that same motion that was provided to the Planning Department and CD11, there was a list of the parcels along the major corridors that could be redeveloped.^{6 (page 7)} These parcels benefit from a TOC density bonus, and using a conservative estimate of a 35% bonus, these parcels alone provide an additional 13,000 units and housing for 27,000 residents!

2. <https://www.westsawtelle.org/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=randysakamotoletterwlasnc.pdf>

3. https://www.westsawtelle.org/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=resolution_wlasnc_zoningcapacity_4.2022.pdf

4. <https://westsidecouncils.com/motion/request-for-dwelling-unit-capacity-calculations/>

5. https://www.westsawtelle.org/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=resolution_wlasnc_housing_element.pdf

6. https://www.westsawtelle.org/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=resolution_wlasnc_housing_element.pdf

Existing West LA Housing Capacity

Zone	Units ⁷	Persons /Unit	Person Capacity			Population
			Before ADU & Density bonus	ADU & Density Bonus	After ADU & Density bonus	After Expo upzone 2020 ⁸
Low	9,568	2.64	25,260	25%	31,574	31,574
Low Medium I	1,296	1.89	2,449	35%	3,307	3,307
Low Medium II	1,575	1.89	2,977	35%	4,019	4,019
Medium	32,550	1.85	60,218	35%	81,294	81,294
High	8,300	1.87	15,521	35%	20,953	30,303 ⁹
Commercial	21,980	1.87	<u>41,103</u>	35%	<u>55,489</u>	<u>55,489</u>
Estimated Total Capacity			147,527		196,635	205,985
Extra capacity before ADU and Density Bonus						55,863
Extra capacity after ADU and Density Bonus						104,971
Extra capacity after Expo Plan Upzone						114,321

Our Community has already provided additional housing, effectively doubling our potential density with ADUs. The Planning Department would target our single family neighborhood for upzoning when there is no need to upzone any part of Sawtelle to provide additional housing. It makes no sense that the Planning Department would elect to continue to destroy a community that has suffered from decades upon decades of racist practices. Has ‘redlining’ simply been renamed ‘Community Plan Updates?’

Councilwoman Park, please support the following:

- 1) Our right to remain single family zoning, and
- 2) Our right to protect our Community of Sawtelle from any upzoning proposed in the Westside Community Plan Update

Lastly, we would like to arrange a meeting with you, Councilwoman Park, our Community and the City Planning Department, so that we can prove upzoning is not needed in any part of our Community and that any such upzoning would destroy the very fabric of our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Xochitl Gonzalez
Aric Gregson
WESAW

7. Units for each zone was calculated by multiplying the Dwelling Units per Acre (DUA) by the number of acres of each type of zone, the latter available in the Community Plan. The DUA is a standard number for the City: R4/High ~100, R3/Medium ~54, RD1.5/Low Medium ~30.

8. Based on the 2010 census with a 1% increase each year. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2024/04/30/californias-population-is-increasing/>

9. Estimated 5,000 additional units from the Expo Transit Plan, which upzoned from R1 to R4 the area south of the station. This leads to 10,000 additional persons at 2.1 persons per unit. Note that City Planning uses a higher 2.5 persons per unit, which gives 15,000 additional people.