

Our Neighborhood Voices Frequently Asked Questions

What does this initiative do?

The “Our Neighborhood Voices” Initiative restores the authority of your local representatives to decide what gets built in your community, on your street and right next door to where you live.

Why should you support this initiative?

Recent state laws let developers tear down the house right next door to you and build a multi-unit, multi-story building and you have no say in the matter. Under these new laws, developers are not required to conduct any environmental review, provide onsite parking, or build affordable housing. These laws give a blank check to developers that lets them do whatever they want to in our neighborhoods without any local input. The Our Neighborhood Voices Initiative is the strongest weapon we have to fight back against these draconian state laws, because it restores our ability to speak out and impact what is happening in our own communities.

If you believe that we should have a voice in our own neighborhoods – join us! Visit www.OurNeighborhoodVoices.com and volunteer today!

Why do we need this initiative?

Amending the state constitution with an initiative to put local communities in charge of land use and zoning laws will send a clear and powerful message that the recent state housing laws that damage our community without providing any affordable housing do not solve our problem – in fact, they are making our affordable housing crisis even worse.

We can’t afford to let developers make billions without paying anything to offset the impact of all this new housing on our communities – sticking all of us with the bill by overstressing our local infrastructure. We can’t afford more gentrification and economic displacement in working class neighborhoods and communities of color. We can’t afford more traffic gridlock and less parking, since these state housing laws have no funding for roads or transit, and no parking requirements.

Join Us!

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Who is backing ONV?

Our Neighborhood Voices has received significant donations from individuals and organizations, including the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. The initiative is supported by a statewide grassroots coalition of Californians that includes Democrats, Republicans, Independents and voters from every part of the political spectrum. There are five initiative proponents, three of whom are local elected officials, one is an affordable housing advocate, and one is a former city planning commissioner. Our Neighborhood Voices is building a statewide coalition of community advocates, elected officials, and Californians from all walks of life who agree that it is time to restore our voice on local community decisions.

Don't we just need to build more housing?

We need to build more housing that is affordable for middle and lower income Californians as an urgent priority. Simply allowing developers to build more housing in a market that is already dominated by investors and lots of expensive, vacant housing units will only produce more expensive housing that very few Californians can afford. That is exactly what is already happening under the current state housing laws that seek to increase housing density in single family communities without requiring anything to be affordable.

What laws will be impacted by the initiative?

The initiative enables any state law that directly impacts land use planning and zoning to be overridden by a local law, including density bonus, Housing Element requirements, Housing Accountability Act approval requirements, and certain aspects of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). State land use planning laws that address legitimate statewide interests such as coastal protection and large infrastructure projects will continue to supersede any conflicting local laws.

What about the environment and housing equity?

The initiative was written to ensure full compliance with all state environmental laws and all fair housing and anti-discrimination laws. The initiative does not conflict with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and in fact it helps local agencies ensure that new development gets sufficient environmental review and protections. Single family neighborhoods are not inherently discriminatory, and many people of color own and rent homes in these neighborhoods that represent the main means of building wealth for them. Now that BIPOC single family neighborhoods exist, Our Neighborhood Voices finds it ironic and disturbing that there is an effort to undermine and devalue the importance of single family homes. For more details about how the initiative interacts with these laws, please read our land use attorneys' expert legal opinion, available at www.OurNeighborhoodVoices.com.

How will the initiative become law?

We have until late April 2022 to obtain 1 million valid signatures from California registered voters to qualify the initiative for the November 8, 2022 ballot. Once we have qualified for the ballot, we need to educate enough Californians to vote for the initiative to restore our collective voice on these important local land use policy decisions.

You can help restore your neighborhood voice by joining us at www.OurNeighborhoodVoices.com

How can I help?

Our Neighborhood Voices is a grassroots effort that will require lots of money and volunteers to succeed. Any donation, large or small, will help, and you can make it online right now at www.OurNeighborhoodVoices.com/donate. Please make sure to volunteer to collect signatures, endorse the campaign, and spread the word about Our Neighborhood Voices to your friends, relatives and neighbors! If you sign up to receive petitions on the “Action Kit” section of our website you will receive online training and supplies before going out to collect signatures.

Where can I find more information?

Please visit www.OurNeighborhoodVoices.com for more details, and you can also email at info@ourneighborhoodvoices.com if you have a detailed question or concern.

How will the initiative affect the relationship between state and local government?

The initiative will help restore a balance of power between our state and local government by putting communities back in charge of local land use decisions, and encouraging our state legislators to remain focused on matters that are truly of statewide concern, like working with local communities to implement real solutions to California’s affordable housing crisis.

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