

The League of Women Voters of Santa Monica
Ballot Measure Update for November 8, 2016 General Election

Residocracy Initiative: OPPOSE

We are a community of strong and varied values willing to speak out on the many issues that absolutely need addressing in Santa Monica.

The voters of Santa Monica are again being asked to decide whether one specific initiative on November's local General Election ballot will resolve Santa Monica's development, housing, and traffic issues in a way that reflects our collective vision of what our community should look like and what our role and responsibility as voters/community members should be.

A citywide initiative, crafted by Residocracy leaders (the proponents), has qualified for the Santa Monica General Election 2016 ballot. Proponents have titled it the Land Use Voter Empowerment or LUVE. The ballot title given it is as follows:

AN INITIATIVE MEASURE AMENDING THE CITY'S LAND USE AND CIRCULATION ELEMENT (LUCE) AND ZONING ORDINANCE TO REQUIRE VOTER APPROVAL OF CERTAIN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THAT WOULD BE SUBJECT TO A NEW PERMIT REQUIREMENT, OF ALL DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS, AND OF CERTAIN CHANGES TO THE CITY'S LAND USE AND PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS SUBJECT TO SPECIFIED EXEMPTIONS

Because provisions in the initiative could impact election, voter, community and government-related processes, as well as the housing supply in Santa Monica, the LWVSM board of directors deemed it important enough to study.

It should be noted that because of the complexity and level of contention around this measure, the study itself was 15 pages in length, required an excess of 50 hours of research, discussion and writing, and includes a series of questions that were raised in the process. The committee considered not only the language of the initiative, but specifically thought through steps needed for implementation of its various provisions, both programmatic and operational.

Based on the study's findings and the applicability of numerous League positions, the board of directors unanimously voted to oppose the Residocracy initiative and sign the ballot arguments in opposition, if asked.

It is clear that here are many issues that need addressing in Santa Monica. The LWVSM board was tasked with determining whether this particular initiative would be effective in addressing the issues that are being raised. The board was also tasked with reviewing the process aspects of the initiative and to determine whether they, as the proponents say, increase transparency, engagement, voter empowerment, responsiveness, accountability and democratic process in the City of Santa Monica.

After reviewing the study and an additional two-hour discussion and consideration, the LWVSM board reached consensus around the following. (Note: this is a partial list.)

We believe that:

- this particular initiative will not be effective in addressing the issues being raised by Residocracy;
- there are numerous questions and concerns about the implementation of various provisions that become apparent when going beyond the language of the measure and following them through operationally;
- the inflexibility of the requirements for amending the initiative creates unnecessary obstacles to the voters when a need to clarify, amend, or correct its language arises;
- these obstacles would interfere with Santa Monica's ability to engage in thoughtful long-term, integrated land-use planning, even if voter-driven as the initiative calls for;
- the provisions regarding affordable housing are misleading;
- **in a world of Citizens United, in which both individuals and corporations can spend unlimited amounts of money on issue campaigns, increasing the number of issues that must be placed on the ballot could impact the amount of money on all sides in our local elections dramatically;**
- there are questions about the provisions of the initiative that appear to interfere with the City of Santa Monica's Administrative authority. If it limits City administrative authority...the measure could be legally invalid under the California Constitution, which prohibits initiatives on administrative matters. That was a question raised during the Measure D campaign in Santa Monica, as well as by the court on a similar issue that was raised by Measure R in Malibu.
- the initiative, when taking all of its provisions into account, would not result in an increase in transparency, engagement, voter empowerment, responsiveness, accountability and democratic process in the City of Santa Monica; and
- the community conversation should reflect informed engagement and an understanding of the major public policy issues that are being raised.

The League believes in representative government as established in the Constitution. In Santa Monica, that form of government is described in the City Charter. Our mission includes encouraging informed and active participation in government and working to increase understanding of major public policy issues.