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## URGENT ACTION: Critical Council Meeting on DOWNTOWN PLAN - JULY 10th

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# SMCLC

Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City

July 3, 2017

Dear SMCLC Supporter:

IF YOU ATTEND ONE COUNCIL MEETING THIS YEAR, THIS IS THE ONE! WRITE! ATTEND!  
SPEAK!

### **The Proposed Downtown Plan Undoes Years of Community Input to Fast-track Almost All Projects in the Pipeline and Overdevelop the Downtown**

**Santa Monica residents need to be heard forcefully on or before next Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup>** when the City Council meets to study the Downtown “Community” Plan (DCP) which will control downtown development until 2030. It is vital that we all send in our comments to the Council at [council@smgov.net](mailto:council@smgov.net) and the clerk at <http://clerk.mailbox@smgov.net> and attend or speak.

This Downtown Plan is a tourist-centric, not resident-centric Plan. Expect traffic jams to greatly worsen with 3.2 million square feet of new development and reduced parking and lanes, forcing traffic and parking into our neighborhoods. Crippling congestion increasingly will make the downtown unfriendly to residents and families. Though the DCP is heralded as “a housing plan,” its housing is far from affordable: It’s expensive, high turnover housing that will result in more high-end retail stores, forcing

more mom and pop businesses out of Santa Monica.

- **Opportunity Sites Should Be Rejected:** The Council should affirm the Planning Commission in rejecting a series of proposed zoning-busting mega-projects, centered on luxury hotels that can tower to heights of 130 ft. These misnamed “Opportunity Sites” have been rejected time and again by residents as incompatible with the scale of our small city. Residents want ALL projects to live by the same zoning rules, not exceptions for powerful, politically connected developers.
- **A Park at 4<sup>th</sup> and Arizona:** A badly needed park should be built on this City-owned land. Residents paid for and own this land. The City should not partner with a developer to maximize the developer’s profit as though it were private property. The current plans call for more traffic-generating office space and yet another tall, luxury hotel.
- **The DCP’s New Development Cap Should Be Significantly Lower than 3.2 Million Sq. Ft.:** That’s a remarkably high, unsustainable figure over a short period of time for an area that’s only six by eight blocks! Santa Monica Place is approximately 500,000 sq.ft. This means the city wants to add the square footage equivalent to SIX NEW SM PLACE MALLS to our downtown!
- **Reject the Plan’s “Greenlighting” of Virtually All Development in the Pipeline with Only Minimal Review:** When the draft plan was rolled out, it proposed a streamlined “checklist” process for approval of projects of up to 100,000 sq.ft. After a sustained resident outcry, staff reduced the number to 60,000 sq.ft. in the many community discussions that followed. 60,000 sq.ft. is still much too big a number.

Yet instead of reducing the 60,000 sq.ft. number, staff now proposes going back to a 90,000-sq. ft. approval for much of the downtown and a 60,000-sq. ft. approval for the rest. Only even *bigger* projects above these sizes would need approval by the Council. **This means that virtually all current development in the city pipeline would be fast-tracked, with limited public input, and with very little discretion to reduce the size of the projects, negotiate for a better one, or reject a bad one.** And with this limited review, expect a ubiquitous, charmless downtown planned by a few developers. It also eliminates residents’ rights to challenge these projects by referendum. The result will be increased resident disenfranchisement and alienation.

- **The Public Must Vote on Projects 6 Stories or Higher and Those on Public Land:** To get the best projects and increase public input, the DCP should require: at least 5 councilmember votes (out of 7) for projects 5 stories and higher; and voter approval for projects 6 stories and higher, as well as on projects on public land such as at 4<sup>th</sup> and Arizona. Common sense exemptions (police, fire, earthquake, remodel, etc.) should apply.

If you agree, we urge you to raise these points (and any others) about the DCP to the full Council. The Chamber of Commerce and developers are strongly advocating for more -- much more -- even though the proposed Plan is already so developer-friendly. Please raise your voices and pens to protect the city we love.

7/5/2017

Thank you,

Victor, Diana, Sherrill, and Jeff

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