

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA MONICA EDUCATION FUND
Santa Monica Ballot Measures
November 4, 2008 Election

Proposition T: *Commercial Development Limits-City of Santa Monica*



This project

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Proposition T: *Commercial Development Limits-City of Santa Monica*

The Question: Shall the City's general plan be amended through 2023 to establish a City-wide annual limit on commercial development of 75,000 square feet with exceptions for certain property such as residential, parking, hospitals, schools, care and government facilities?

The Situation: Santa Monica streets are congested. The *Sustainable City Progress Report* (http://www.smgov.net/epd/scpr/Transportation/T8_TrafficCongestion.htm) indicates that 13% of the City intersections are "unacceptably congested." However, the same report indicates that total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has decreased since 2002 so that the 2006 VMT is actually lower than the 1992 VMT.

From 1980 to 2004 Santa Monica's population was largely stable while the City's commercial/retail, office, and industrial floor area grew 70% with most of the increase in office floor area (an increase of 170%) and very little increase in industrial floor area or residential housing units. The largest increases in floor area came between 1980 and 2000 when floor area increased by almost 9 million square feet (sf). From 2000 and 2007 the increase has been more modest and actually dropped slightly between 2004 and 2007. At the same time housing units increased only about 8% or 3,758 units from 1980 to 2007. (*Patterns of Land Use In Santa Monica; A Summary* by Giles Smith [http://www.smclc.net/RIFT/PDF/Pattern of Land Use in SM.pdf](http://www.smclc.net/RIFT/PDF/Pattern_of_Land_Use_in_SM.pdf))

The City is presently undertaking a comprehensive update of the *Land Use and Circulation Elements* (LUCE) and associated Zoning Ordinance. The *Land Use Element and Circulation Elements* were last comprehensively updated in 1984 and the current update reflects changes in land use, community needs and values, lifestyles, and the regional marketplace that have occurred since that time.

The Proposal: Major provisions of Proposition T

- Amend the City *Land Use and Circulation Element* (LUCE) to include annual limits on commercial growth
- Limit commercial development to 75,000 sf annually, with certain exceptions, unless additional floor area is approved by the voters
 - Cap applies only to projects needing Planning Commission or City Council approval
 - Exempts Administrative Approvals and ministerial projects
 - Generally excludes residential, parking, schools, child or adult day care facilities, hospitals, rest homes and residential care facilities, places of worship, government facilities, neighborhood-serving services or retail located on the ground floor of affordable housing development

- Allows for “borrowing” from up to four future years’ allotments and carry forward of floor area from expired permits, but cannot exceed average of 75,000 sf per year for any five-year period
 - Exemptions for replacement or remodeling depend on vehicle trip characteristics before and after change
 - Projects permitted and under construction prior to 2008 are exempted
 - Pre-2008 projects not under construction will count against the initial five-year allocation
- Effective from January 1, 2008, to December 31, 2023, or 16 years.

The Fiscal Effect: The fiscal impact of the measure is undetermined and open to interpretation. The impartial analysis of the measure by the City Attorney indicates that implementation of the measure would require amending existing land use regulations and establishing a system for allocating commercial development rights. Some undetermined costs would be incurred. The City Attorney also states that some provisions in the measure would require legal or judicial interpretation which could incur additional undetermined costs.

A financial report commissioned by the City anticipates Proposition T would not generate enough General Fund revenue to offset increasing City service costs and would result in an annual deficit of \$5.8 million. While supporters of Proposition T agree that revenues to the General Fund would be cut they argue that it would amount to only about a 2% loss.

Possible economic impacts might include loss of potential jobs, increased rent for reduced availability of commercial space, reduced value of undeveloped commercial land, and reduced tax revenue (sales, business license, transient occupancy, parking, and property). Projections from 2008-2023 show an annual average floor area square footage growth of 195,143 for LUCE and 118,125 for Proposition T or about 40% less should Proposition T be passed.

A Yes Vote Means: A YES vote means that the Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) will be amended to limit commercial development, with certain exceptions, to 75,000 square feet annually through 2023 and allow for borrowing from future years if the five-year average stays within the limit.

A No Vote Means: A NO vote means that the Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) will not be amended to limit commercial development to 75,000 square feet annually.

Supporters say:

Proposition T, the Residents Initiative to Fight Traffic (RIFT), will reduce the amount of new traffic added to our already congested streets by limiting the annual new commercial development about half its current rate.

Commercial development causes significantly more traffic than residential, but there are currently no limits to how much of it developers can build each year.

Under Proposition T no current funding would be cut.

Proposition T doesn’t harm renters or seniors and preserves local neighborhood businesses by protecting them from large new developments.

Opponents say:

Traffic is a major problem in Santa Monica but Proposition T will not reduce traffic and will create new problems for our city.

An official, independent analysis of Proposition T conducted by transportation experts found that Proposition T does not reduce traffic.

Proposition T will harm renters, especially seniors. It will encourage developers to demolish affordable apartments and replace them with expensive condos, reducing our supply of affordable housing.

Proposition T is so poorly written that it will cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal expenses to settle key provisions in court.

Supporters include:

Diane Gordon, Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (SmCLC)
Kevin McKeown, Santa Monica City Councilmember
Julie Lopez Dad, Former Planning Commissioner
Susan Giesberg, Past President, California Consumer Affairs Association
Ted Winterer, President Ocean Park Association (OPA)

Opponents include:

Douglas Theys, vice-Chairman Santa Monica Police Officers Association
Judy Abdo, SMRR Steering Committee Member
Pam O'Connor, City Councilmember; L.A. County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Oscar de la Torre, President, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board
Bradley Lomas, President, Santa Monica Firefighters, Local 1109

For More Information:

Yes on Proposition T: Yes on RIFT <http://www.smclc.net/RIFT/faq.html>

No on Proposition T: No on RIFT <http://saveourcitysm.com/index.html>

City of Santa Monica LUCE: <http://www.shapethefuture2025.net/>

City of Santa Monica 2008 Election Information:

<http://www01.smgov.net/cityclerk/Election2008/English/English%20index.htm>