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Sidewalks on Agenda at Public Works Committee Today

The Public Works Committee of the LA City Council today will consider new information from the Bureau of Street Services (BSS) on options to repair City sidewalks, including sidewalks damaged by City trees in the public parkway. The BSS report is posted on the ["City of Broken Sidewalks"](#) page of the LA Neighbors United website.

Among other things, the report recommends development of a solution that "will allow the sidewalk network, the urban forest and other Public Works infrastructure ... to be managed in a holistic approach."

LA Neighbors United, long concerned about the City potentially dumping the problem on property owners with no regard for tree preservation or the affordability of repairs, welcomes the BSS report and recommendations. A key recommendation is for the City to determine, once and for all, a "repair scope," that is, the true extent of the problems and how they might be categorized and addressed.

"The time is now for action on this issue," said Cary Brazeman, founder of LA Neighbors United. "The City has the funds to assess and scope the work. In the meantime, the proposed ordinance shifting liability for tree-root damaged sidewalks to property owners can be filed somewhere inconvenient and allowed to age nicely."



LA Neighbors Files Appeal in Community Plan Protection Lawsuit

LA Neighbors United last week notified the City that it is appealing a Superior Court decision denying further environmental review of an ordinance enabling Community and Specific Plans to be overridden in pieces without a full Community Plan update.

More specifically, the ordinance allows "overlays" that can increase housing units and decrease parking requirements, among other things, with limited community notice.

"The ordinance was passed prematurely," said LA Neighbors' Cary Brazeman, "without any sort of implementing regulations to ensure negative impacts of overlay districts are acknowledged and mitigated. With our appeal, we're simply asking the Courts to require the City to implement overlay districts concurrent with Community Plan updates so their impacts can be recognized, or to impose a test on districts before they can be implemented. For example, before a high-density/low-parking district overlay can be imposed, a test might require evidence that there is sufficient sidewalk and bike lane capacity to support mobility of the people."

James Rojas, the former MTA planner now an acclaimed city planning consultant, said at the time the LA Neighbors suit was originally filed that intensified development, including through overlay districts, without properly designed streets to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists could result in even higher pedestrian and bike fatalities in low-income communities in Los Angeles.

Brazeman added: "Our suit isn't about growth or no growth, but about comprehensive planning versus piecemeal planning. When the City plans comprehensively, we get better plans, more stable property values and more predictability."

Another Tax Giveaway for a Downtown Hotel?

The *LA Times* documented last year that City officials have subsidized downtown hotel development to the tune of more than \$600 million. Now, the City is considering a tax break for another new hotel. As Peter Zen, owner of the Westin Bonaventure told the *LA Times* on January 18, the number of tax breaks offered by City Hall has gotten "ridiculous." Said Zen: "I thought we are short on tax income for Los Angeles, but we keep giving it away." The taxes given away would pay for approximately two-thirds of the cost of permanently fixing sidewalks across the City, or significant street reconstruction.

Update on the Proposed New Sign Ordinance: It'll Be Back in April

The organization Ban Billboard Blight tells LA Neighbors United that the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee has instructed the Planning Department and city attorneys to revise the draft ordinance to incorporate a series of changes. A copy of the transmittal letter is posted under "Latest News" on the [LA Neighbors United website](#). The ordinance is expected to be back before the City Council's Planning Committee in April. It has far-reaching implications for sign rights across the City.