

Communication from Public

Name:

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Council File No: 22-1476

Comments for Public Posting: Please see attached letter from eight community organizations in support of this motion.



January 13, 2023

Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmembers:

On behalf of the organizations above, we write in support of Council File 22-1476 to stop requiring developers to spot widen roads, leading to incoherent streetscapes that are at odds with a safe, livable City.



As the City’s own recent plans attest, wider roads make the City more dangerous, polluted, congested, and costly to maintain:

- The Mobility Plan 2035 states that “wider roads can result in adverse environmental, public health, and fiscal impacts. Wider roads are more expensive to maintain and enable driving at faster speeds in the short term, which leads to more pollution, noise, and higher risks to bicyclists and pedestrians in the long term.”

- The Complete Street Design Guide explains that “when streets are continually widened to accommodate more vehicular volume, they create an induced demand for car travel that only encourages future traffic congestion.”

Requiring developers to spot widen roads also contributes to our housing crisis. Widening can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost of a housing development, as it may include utility relocation; moving street lights, fire hydrants, and signal boxes; and tree replanting. In the case of smaller “missing middle” projects, the added cost may render the developments financially infeasible.

Spot widening often converts greenery to impermeable asphalt. Mature trees may have to be removed to accommodate the wider street. In the 1990s, space was taken away from MacArthur Park in order to widen 7th Street.

Spot widening also creates streets designed for drivers, not pedestrians. Sidewalks meander, curb radii are maximized, and crossing distances are lengthened. These streets are more dangerous and confusing to walk along and across.

Finally, spot widening leads to poorly designed, incoherent streets. The City’s streetscape should be intentionally planned block by block and neighborhood by neighborhood, not parcel by parcel with no vision other than widening. Ending spot widening will lead to a better designed City that works better for all who use it.

We are particularly encouraged by the motion’s emphasis on pedestrian safety by “minimizing crossing distance” and “promoting curb extensions.” In the same way that the Mobility Plan defines the ideal roadway width for each type of street, the report requested by this motion should include the ideal pedestrian crossing distance for each type of street. These crossing distances would serve as guidelines for when curb extensions and other pedestrian safety measures should be required improvements for developers.

We express strong support for this motion and urge you to pass it.

Sincerely,

David J. Barboza, AICP
Director of Policy and Research, Abundant Housing LA

Eli Akira Kaufman
Executive Director, BikeLA

Bryn Lindblad
Deputy Director, Climate Resolve

John K. Yi
Executive Director, Los Angeles Walks

Zak Accuardi
Transportation Advocate, Natural Resources Defense Council

Frank Martinez
Policy Director, Southern California Association of NonProfit Housing

Damian Kevitt
Executive Director, Streets Are For Everyone

Michael Schneider
Founder, Streets For All