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High-profile land use attorney part of anti-development ballot measure



Attorney Robert Silverstein is advising backers of a ballot initiative designed to stop overdevelopment in Los Angeles. Pictured at a Jan. 2015 press conference outside City Hall.

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Dakota Smith, Los Angeles Daily News

An attorney with a successful record of challenging Los Angeles City Hall over new real estate development is aiding backers of a sweeping ballot measure intended to stop large-scale construction in some parts of the city.

Pasadena-based lawyer Robert Silverstein is a consultant on the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative, a measure to rein in development, backers said.

The ballot measure, spearheaded by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, seeks to curb City Hall's power in granting exemptions for taller projects. Such exceptions bring density and traffic congestion to neighborhoods, critics contend, reducing residents' quality of life.

Supporters want to put the measure on the November 2016 ballot.

Backers say Silverstein's involvement poses a new challenge for City Hall leaders, [who have repeatedly lost development fights to the attorney](#) in recent years, resulting in stalled apartment projects from the San Fernando Valley to Hollywood. If passed, the measure could prevent construction of thousands of residential units.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti has vowed to bring 100,000 new housing units to the city by 2021.

Silverstein's law firm "consulted on the initiative and they are involved," AHF attorney Liza Brereton said last week.

The lead outside counsel, however, is Beverly Grossman Palmer of law firm Strumwasser & Woocher, she said.

Silverstein, who declined to comment and referred calls to Brereton, has sued the city over numerous projects in Hollywood, including a Target store and the Millennium towers. [His firm also sued over Il Villaggio Toscano](#), a 325-unit apartment project planned near the 101 and 405 freeways in Sherman Oaks.

Activist Jack Humphreville, who also is involved in the ballot measure, believes Silverstein was brought on because of his expertise.

“If there’s anyone at ground zero in Hollywood, it’s Silverstein and his firm,” Humphreville said.

Garcetti spokeswoman Connie Llanos didn’t respond to a request for comment on the ballot measure.

The measure would void existing zoning laws and regulations inconsistent with guidelines for building in Los Angeles. It also would impose a two-year moratorium on the construction of projects that seek amendments to the city’s building guidelines, with some exceptions, and roll back City Hall’s effort to reduce the number of parking spaces required on some projects.

Business groups are pushing back against the measure. In an update to members earlier this month, the Central City Association said it’s organizing with other opponents, and is “actively fundraising and educating the public about the dire consequences of this misguided initiative.”

Los Angeles City Councilman Mitch O’Farrell, who represents Hollywood, called the measure “misguided” in a statement.

“The ballot measure is bad for L.A., it’s bad for the economy, and it’s bad for the future vitality of Los Angeles, especially in transit-oriented neighborhoods like Hollywood where there is already a robust public transportation infrastructure in place,” O’Farrell said.

Backers will begin gathering signatures early next year for the measure, Brereton said. About 61,000 signatures are necessary for the measure to be considered for the ballot.

AHF is helping lead the initiative because it is a landowner in Los Angeles and concerned about overdevelopment, Brereton added.