

Builder Blight! The Beat Goes On



(What is the builder's responsibility to the neighborhood ... Legally? Socially? Ethically? And what can you do about it? The CityWatch search for answers continues. Today's entry comes from Marilyn Noyes, a West LA NC stakeholder and property owner.)

Thank you for bringing up the issue of developers' disregard for the neighborhoods they are imposing themselves upon. I live in West LA, not far from Santa Monica Blvd. & Bundy Dr. We have been inundated with a profusion of unwanted development for the past several years in West LA, and not only do the developers wipe out affordable apartments for our residents, but once they take over the sites, most of them have total disregard for the people who live in and own property in the neighborhood. Sometimes they tear down a building and then don't proceed to work on their project for months and months. Sometimes they stop partway through. Sometimes they are actually working on it, but in almost all cases they don't cover over the graffiti on their prefab offices, dumpsters, tarped fences and the perimeter walls of the property.

The Back Story

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Let's be clear at the outset. We are not anti developer. Not anti growth. Not supportive of NIMBYism. In fact, we tend to lean about as far to the left as one can get on the subject of an owner's right to do what he or she wants with what they own. So long as it is done with respect for the community and the neighbors you share it with.

I will leave the discussion on what is disrespectful and what isn't for another time (I'm inclined to think the answer to that is the same as Justice's now famous answer to what is pornography? "You'll know it when you see it.") For the purposes of this series, I would like to focus on the graffiti with the real example posted above. --CityWatch

According to the planning department, the developer is obligated to post a sign with contact information so the public can contact them if they have problems remedied. Most of these developers do not comply, and if you make an attempt to report the blight, you won't even have an address (which does not get you very far with city departments).

If you call 3-1-1, the graffiti on these tarps will never get painted over. If you call your senior field officer, as I have in this situation, on the 1400 block of S. Bundy, it drags on and on, and the job doesn't get done. Our new SLO called Pacific Graffiti Solutions only to be told that they will not paint out tarps. HUH???. No matter what logic he used on them, they blew him off.

I've been told by our WLA Neighborhood Council board that the owner of the property is obligated to clean up the graffiti within 24 hours. Well, I can't get it enforced, and I've tried for months! It gets worse and worse as time goes by.

This is just one. I can show you more problem sites in West LA. It's horrible, and the city is basically ineffectual in dealing with this type of blight in our neighborhoods.

--Marilyn Noyes, West LA NC stakeholder and property owner

Stories like this one are citywide ... neighborhoods facing Builder Blight! daily because they are faced with an owner who feels no obligation to the community he has joined or for the maintenance and appearance of the site he has invested in.

--CityWatch

(This is the second of series. Your comments, suggestions, photos and YouTube videos are welcome: Editor@CityWatchLA.com.) ■