



Is City Hall Out to Kill Los Angeles’ Historic Buildings — And the Uniqueness of LA?

by [Patrick Range McDonald](#) | Oct 14, 2016



Eastern Columbia Building in DTLA - photo by Illithid Dude/Creative Commons

From the Valley to Hollywood to downtown L.A., City Hall politicians seem unconcerned about ruining the city’s most historic buildings — and, as a result, killing the uniqueness of Los Angeles. One major example is the battle between downtown residents and a Texas-based developer over the [historic Eastern Columbia Building](#).

Developer Trammel Crow, based in Dallas, wants to build a 27-story skyscraper with 305 residential units — deemed the “Alexan” — right next to the Eastern Columbia Building, where

[movie star Johnny Depp owns penthouses](#). The mega-development would tower over the Art Deco high-rise and block its world-famous clock.

The [New York Times recently swooned](#) over the Eastern Columbia Building:

The building sets the tone for decorative architecture in the city. The entrance extended inward, with a terra cotta sunburst detail that evoked optimism. Topped by a clock tower that loomed over the immediate area, the gold-trimmed building staked its position as a center of commerce.

The Society for the Preservation of Downtown Los Angeles (SP-DTLA) is fighting to save such an extraordinary L.A. treasure.

“While this type of building is common — and welcomed — in South Park, where new construction is the norm,” states [the organization on its website](#), referring to the Alexan, “the SP-DTLA is taking a stand that this destroys the historic integrity that is precisely what makes the Historic Core such a vital and important part not only of Los Angeles, but also of California.”



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So far, city officials have been unmoved by the preservationists’ valid concerns. Which isn’t surprising when you consider that developers often get the edge over residents in L.A.’s rigged and broken planning and land-use system. It’s why we need to pass the [reform measure known as the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative](#) in March 2017.

The real estate industry, by the way, has given [at least \\$6 million in campaign contributions](#) to L.A. politicians since 2000 — and has spent untold millions on high-priced City Hall lobbyists to woo the City Council and mayor.

SP-DTLA has now hired [attorney Robert P. Silverstein](#), who's famous for battling City Hall's crooked ways — and winning.

“If not stopped,” Silverstein recently said in a statement, “the Alexan building would be another in a parade of mega-monstrosities marching across Los Angeles ... The project embodies so much of the corruption in the L.A. development process that allows deep-pocketed developers to wield undue influence. The process is grossly rigged against the public. That is what we are fighting.”

SP-DTLA and Silverstein are carrying out the very important fight to respect and preserve the magnificent buildings that make L.A. a one-of-a-kind, world-class city.