

Breaking the code

FINALLY, the secret has been exposed. The jig is up on who's behind the real power struggle in Los Angeles.

The San Fernando Valley homeowner and business leaders — those dirty, rotten scoundrels — want to seize a piece of the government to protect their own and their neighbors' property values and the quality of their lives.

That's right. All this talk about secession is just a smoke screen for the real issue, seizing "local control" over zoning and land use — that's really what the opponents of genuine reform and neighborhood empowerment are saying.

As we all know, local control often is the code for homeowners and small businesses having power over community land-use decisions.

Local control would allow neighbors to reject unwanted development. It would allow people in Reseda to have as much say and influence as people in Brentwood or Bel-Air.

Shocking!

L.A. is structured so that Brentwood can remain as exclusive as Beverly Hills. So that the rich can systematically exclude anything they regard as undesirable from disturbing their neighborhoods, undermining their investments in home and business.

It is a structure that allows big corporate and developer interests to spend fortunes on lobbyists, lawyers and other influence peddlers to make sure that nothing gets in the way of their ability to look after their property values and interests.

But the little people, the ordinary hard-working families whose whole wealth is tied up in their homes? No way should they have that same decision-making authority. Holy bureaucracy!

The little people — the middle-class majority in Los Angeles — are only good for paying taxes.

Charter reform, in the eyes of powers

'Local control' means the Valley wants a say in zoning issues. What a concept!

that dominate the city, is about protecting the Leona Helmsleys of L.A. from the Jerry Springers of the Valley.

Only the rich get to have the power to decide what gets built and where in L.A., while somehow staking out the moral high ground to caring about the needs of the

poor and needy.

The rest of us get the bill — and the blame.

The joke is that the Valley more than any other part of the city represents a fully integrated society that welcomes people of all races, all backgrounds, all incomes.

The Valley is where a broad range of people with different values live together in a relatively harmonious way. The Valley is where working-class families save and buy their starter homes next to established middle-class families.

And they all want the same things; for their children to go to school and learn, to play in their yards in safety and for moms and dads to get to work and back without spending all their time stuck in traffic.

Working-class and middle-class families want the same things to prevent oversize developments from destroying their communities, adding traffic and crime to their streets and lowering their property values.

What we and several other communities bordering downtown are tired of is the over-the-hill crowd that refuses to make room for all the rest of us at the table of power.

Local control is not a code word for exclusion. It's a code word for giving the majority of Angelenos a voice in their government, a say about what kind communities they live in, a chance to participate in creating a better future for themselves and their families.

It's not a crime to want the power to protect the value of your property and the quality of your life. It's the American way — except, of course, in L.A.