

INFLUENCING LAND USE DECISIONS

Los Angeles City
ETHICS COMMISSION

Are Land Use Professionals Required to Register as Lobbyists?

Any individual may qualify as a lobbyist, regardless of occupation, education, training, or professional title. This includes applicants for entitlements, property owners, permit expeditors, and other land use professionals. It also includes CEOs, attorneys, consultants, architects, and engineers.

Everyone who meets the criteria on the “Checkpoint” to the right must register as a lobbyist with the Ethics Commission and submit quarterly reports disclosing their lobbying activity.

Some cases filed with the Planning Department must be registered in the Restricted Developer Filing System (RDFS) (see ethics.lacity.org/developers). Please note that RDFS registrations are separate and distinct from lobbying registrations. Some entities may be required to register under **both** Lobbying and RDFS.

Frequently asked questions can be found on the back of this sheet. More information about registering as a lobbying entity is available on the Lobbying Brochure: ethics.lacity.org/wp-content/uploads/Lobbying-Brochure.pdf.

If you believe you may qualify as a lobbyist, please contact the Ethics Commission for assistance.

We are happy to help!

Checkpoint

You are a lobbyist if you are compensated to do both of the following regarding one or more legislative or administrative City matters (including land use permits) on someone else's behalf:

1. Have at least one direct communication with a City employee (either personally or through an agent) in an attempt to influence City action;
- and**
2. Spend at least 30 hours during any consecutive three-month period engaging in lobbying activities, such as trying to influence a City employee, providing advice or recommending strategy to a client, researching an issue, engaging in public relations, drafting a planning application, attending or monitoring a City hearing or meeting, or engaging in other similar activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

I already registered our Planning case in RDFS. Do I also need to register as a lobbyist?

The filing requirements under the Restricted Developer and Lobbying programs are separate and distinct. Individuals who file with RDFS may also need to register as lobbyists if they meet the definition of "lobbyist."

I help property owners navigate the City's permitting processes. Does trying to get a client's project expedited count as lobbying activity?

Yes. Getting a project expedited involves communicating with City employees and convincing them that the project is suitable for fast tracking.

I am trying to get two conditions removed from a client's conditional use permit. Is that lobbying activity?

Yes. Removing a condition from an entitlement involves communicating with City employees and convincing them that the removal is appropriate.

My client is seeking a "by right" permit from Building and Safety. Can lobbying occur there?

Yes. There can be gray areas in "by right" entitlement processes that involve attempts to influence City employees.

Can I qualify as a lobbyist if I have no direct contact with City Council members or their offices?

Yes. A direct communication with a City employee in an attempt to influence City action is required to qualify as a lobbyist, but that City employee does not have to be an elected official or a member of an elected official's staff.

I asked a Planning Department employee for an interpretation of a regulation. I disagreed with the interpretation and provided my view on why the interpretation should be different. Is that lobbying activity?

Yes. Requesting an interpretation of a rule or regulation is not considered lobbying activity, however, attempting to influence or change the interpretation is lobbying.

I had one conversation with Planning Department staff regarding my client's project; but since then, my only activity at City Hall has been attending Planning Commission and City Council meetings. Am I a lobbyist?

Possibly yes. The conversation is a direct communication if it included an attempt to influence City action. Public comment at a City meeting may also be a direct communication. If you had a direct communication and also spent at least 30 hours engaged in lobbying activity (e.g., attending or monitoring City meetings, recommending strategy to a client, researching an issue, etc.) in a consecutive three-month period, you qualify as a lobbyist.

I have been talking with a City employee about a permit that I need to remodel my house. Does that make me a lobbyist?

No. Because you are not being compensated, you do not meet the definition of "lobbyist."

I work for an architect, not a lobbying firm. I'm not a lobbyist, am I?

You might be. Any individual who meets the definition is a lobbyist, regardless of title or employer.

I interact with neighborhood councils about my clients' projects. Is that lobbying activity?

Yes. Lobbying activity includes attempting to influence the opinion of a third party regarding your client's project. If a neighborhood council member is also a City employee, the interaction may also be a direct communication.

How can I find out who has registered as a City lobbyist?

Lists of lobbying registrations are available at ethics.lacity.org/lobbying/lobbyists/#summaries. You may also search for specific lobbying entities at ethics.lacity.org/data/lobbying/registrations.

Please contact the Ethics Commission for assistance regarding your specific situation.