

# MOTION PLANNING and LAND USE MGT.

WHEREAS, The former *Soto-Michigan Jewish Community Center* in Boyle Heights was recently demolished without any notice to community members, for the construction of a new Social Security Administration building. The Center is currently privately owned.

WHEREAS, The *Los Angeles Times* reported in its March 16, 2006 article, "*Demolition of Cultural Icon Spurs Anger*", that the Center was "built in 1934 by the Federation for Jewish Charities to serve a blossoming Jewish community in Boyle Heights." The Center served as a historical reminder of Boyle Heights' once thriving Jewish community, however, despite its historical and cultural significance, it was never designated a historic landmark.

WHEREAS, The community of Boyle Heights has a rich immigrant history. According to the Japanese American National Museum, this was a place that many immigrants have called their home. Starting in the late 1800s, African American migrants from South and Southwest settled in Boyle Heights for home ownership and employment opportunities. The Russian Molokans established themselves in the "flats" of Boyle Heights after fleeing their country of religious persecution. In the early 1900s, a wave of Mexican immigrants came to this area after experiencing political turmoil of Mexican Revolution. Considerable numbers of Jewish immigrants moved from the East Coast and Midwest, eventually settling in Boyle Heights which became the home to the largest Jewish community west of Chicago. The Japanese immigrant community also moved from the Little Tokyo area to Boyle Heights. All in all this was a place that welcome the diverse immigrant communities.

WHEREAS, Construction projects must receive city approvals— typically building permits, but in this case the property owner/developer was not required to obtain the demolition permits. The aforementioned *Los Angeles Times* article indicates that City officials thought they did not have any jurisdiction because the land was being leased to a Federal Agency.

WHEREAS, Community members deserved to be notified as to the proposed demolition of this two-story building which provided space for children and teenager activities as well as a gym in a community where recreational opportunities are scarce, and also served as a Boyle Heights community-gathering place for many years.

**I THEREFORE MOVE** that the Council take the following actions:

1. Instruct the Planning Department and the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS), with the assistance of the City Attorney, to prepare a report on the history and content of the zoning and/or building code that enabled the demolition of the *Soto-Michigan Jewish Community Center* in Boyle Heights, and also provide recommendations if the research shows that amendments are needed to the City's codes and present the Findings before the consideration of the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee in order to prevent similar incidents from occurring again.
2. Instruct the Planning Department and LADBS, to inform all applicants who have filed under the aforementioned exemptions of the zoning/building codes, that this zoning ordinance is under review and that applicants need to voluntarily conduct the community outreach that is required by those who do not qualify for the exemptions in order to prevent similar incidents from occurring any where in the city.

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3. Instruct the Planning Department, with the assistance of the Cultural Affairs Department, and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), to develop a list of potentially "historic-cultural significant structures", and notify the appropriate government and community entities of their existence and location, so as to avoid the demolition of possible historical-cultural structures, and to provide recommendations to prevent demolitions in the future in the Boyle Heights Neighborhood.

PRESENTED BY   
Jose Huizar  
Councilmember, 14<sup>th</sup> District

SECONDED BY 

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