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COUNCILMEMBER JOSE HUIZAR RECEIVES FULL COUNCIL APPROVAL TO ASSERT JURISDICTION OVER THE CITY'S PLANNING DEPARTMENT

LOS ANGELES (Jan. 8, 2008)—Councilmember José Huizar, District 14, received unanimous City Council support today to assert jurisdiction over the City's Planning Commission, which deadlocked on a 3 to 3 vote on the proposed downtown AMP Lofts project located at 695 Santa Fe Avenue.

Councilmember Huizar championed the effort to bring the matter to Council after the Commission failed to act, because he considers it to be a model for downtown development in an industrialized zoned area, which is already largely converted to residential.

"I believe this project will be a model for the future development of downtown. I introduced this City legislation in support of the project because it will help us continue to build a community in an area, which is already largely converted and it will also support the Los Angeles River Master Plan redevelopment."

Today's Council action asserts jurisdiction over the project and will be referred to the City's Planning and Land Use Committee for review. The committee will evaluate the merits of the project, and committee recommendations will be presented to the City Council.

"This is the first project in the Arts District that will offer affordable housing; and will provide existing residents of the area with retail and amenities that they currently have to travel elsewhere to obtain."

The proposed AMP Lofts project features an award-winning design for 180 live-work units and 5,000 square feet of commercial/retail which would provide amenities to the residents of the Arts District. It also incorporates numerous environment-friendly construction elements, and offers significantly more open space than required for a project of its kind.

The case was originally recommended for approval by planning staff, but when it came to the zoning administration, it was denied, likely due to directives included in a proposed Planning Department Industrial Land Use Policy. On December 13, 2007, the City Planning Commission heard the appeal and deadlocked on a 3 to 3 vote about whether to reverse a denial from Zoning Administrator that would put a stop the AMP Lofts project.

The Commission had many positive comments on the proposed project, which also has widespread community and council district support. However the issue that prevented approval was a boundary line for where conversions of industrial uses to live and work and other uses will be allowed within the yet-to-be-approved industrial lands policy. Due to the lack of five votes in favor or against the project, the underlying project denial by the Zoning Administrator was deemed the decision of the Commission.

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