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**MAYOR HAHN RELEASES HIGHLIGHTS OF 2002 BUDGET FOR  
NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT**

LOS ANGELES - Mayor Jim Hahn today released highlights of his budget priorities for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment for the fiscal year 2002-03, which includes a \$3 million pool of funding that Neighborhood Councils can apply for and use to fund their priority projects. Mayor Hahn's goal is to have 70 Neighborhood Councils certified by the end of June 2003. As of today, a total of 22 Neighborhood Councils have been certified.

"I am here today in the neighborhood of San Pedro at 15th Street Elementary to talk about how my proposed budget will address the concerns and needs of its neighborhood councils, the backbone of every community," said Mayor Hahn. "By empowering and funding neighborhood councils we ensure that every neighborhood in Los Angeles has the opportunity to hold their officials accountable, improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods, and become an active part of civic life."

"With its mission to empower our neighborhoods and truly return government to the people, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is perhaps the most important department in the City at this time in our history," said Councilwoman Janice Hahn. "I am thrilled that the Mayor has recognized this as a major priority in his budget."

In addition to the \$3 million that Neighborhood Councils can apply for to fund community improvement projects, such as community beautification, tree planting, and playground equipment, the budget will also include \$1.6 million for Department of Neighborhood Empowerment functions that directly support Neighborhood Councils, such as coordinating elections and providing outreach. This funding is also available to Neighborhood Councils for administrative costs such as office space, office equipment, and photocopying.

The budget for functions across city departments that directly support Neighborhood Councils will increase by 27 percent. An example of these functions is increased funding for the Information Technology Agency to provide computer assistance to Neighborhood Councils.

Mayor Hahn visited 15th Street Elementary school in San Pedro to make his budget announcement for Neighborhood Councils. One of the top priorities of the Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council is to replace the playground equipment in the kindergarten area at 15th Street Elementary School. Today, Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council President Doug Epperhart pledged to use part of its Neighborhood Council funding to purchase the new playground equipment for the school.

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Councilwoman Hahn, School Board Member Mike Lansing, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment Greg Nelson, Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council President Doug Epperhart, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Pat Herrera Duran and Bill Christopher, and 15th Street Elementary School Principal Toshiaki Dojiri attended the press conference.

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