



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH

CITYWIDE EDITION

October 13, 2005
Volume 3 Issue 14

CityWatch Today—The revitalization of Los Angeles' downtown has been underway for some time now. It took on a new urgency this week when the City Council approved a \$290-million subsidy and loan package for a hotel project across from the Convention Center. Now, tax-payer dollars are involved. CW offers one perspective on this story in today's lead.

Janice Hahn is probably right, few things we have done, or will do, is as important as Charter-mandated review of the NC system. The formation of the commission to handle the review is now underway. Get the background and get involved. This page.

The dialogue on NC MOUs with City departments continues, a status report on "mansionization," updates on the "sign on" lists for the NC Congress, Council File #'s and the DWP MOU ... and more, in this issue.

We hope you find it helpful ... and, provocative.

--Editor

Say What?

"This is important.

This is the future of

Neighborhood Councils."

--Janice Hahn
Councilmember
15th District

(E&N Committee meeting Oct 12)



CityWatch Dialogue

The Rebirth of Downtown: Why Should the Rest of Us be Happy?

By Brady Westwater



Whether it is LA's economy, housing, traffic or culture – **downtown** affects us all.

This is why our city council unanimously passed the subsidy for the Convention Center Hotel. Some disagree with the method of the subsidy, but few dispute the need for the hotel.

Planners of major conventions need thousands of hotel rooms within walking distance or they will not book their convention. It's that simple. Now, as to

why downtown gets the hotel and the subsidy – well, can anyone tell me they want to have a dozen blocks of their community demolished for a million square foot exhibition space, parking structures, hotels and one hundred traffic intensive late night dining, shopping and entertainment venues?

I didn't think so.

But just a new hotel is not enough. We also need reasons for people to want to come to LA and fill all of our hotels and patronize all of our communities.

ext to the Convention Center, for example, and the opposition has quickly bubbled to the surface. Is a revitalized downtown good for all of us? This is the first of an occasional CityWatch series on this question.

To give one example, the number one tourist draw in New York and a major reason tourists visit London and, increasingly, Las Vegas - is Broadway theater.

See Page 4. "Downtown"

NC Review Commission

Hahn: "This is Important. This is the Future of Neighborhood Councils"

By David Lowell

The City Charter ... the one that mandated Neighborhood Councils ... also requires that a special Commission be appointed to review the LA NC system no later than seven years after its adoption. That would be next year. The Charter charges this Review Commission with evaluating the provisions of the Charter itself and the other regulations, including the Plan, related to Neighborhood Councils and then making recommendations for changes ... "as it deems appropriate."

See Page 6. "Commission"

GuestWords

The Fight against Mansionization Gains Momentum in Los Angeles

By Jeff Jacobberger



When a property owner wishes to replace a small home with a larger one, or expand an existing home, that desire sometimes conflicts with neighbors' concerns about protecting privacy and sunlight and preserving a neighborhood's architectural consistency. These conflicts are intensified in Los Angeles, where the general zoning law

allows property owners to build very large homes on single-family ("R-1") lots. For example, on a 50' x 125' lot, an owner can build a house that exceeds 6,000 square feet.

Several LA Neighborhood Councils are addressing this issue through "anti-mansionization" or "anti-massing" ordinances, including Sunland-Tujunga, Greater Valley Glen, Mid City West and Atwater Village.

The fight against "mansionization" appears to be gaining momentum in Los Angeles. Some see it as the protection of neighborhood character and quality of life. Some see it as an infringement on their privacy and ownership rights and wonder whose interpretation of "quality" gets to set the standard. This is the second in an occasional CityWatch series.

Many Los Angeles neighborhoods already restrict the size or character of new or expanded homes, under a variety of approaches, ranging from designation as a historic preservation overlay zone ("HPOZ"), which puts severe restrictions on property development; to design review boards, which review the design and appearance of each home or addition; to anti-massing ordinances Specific Plans that place limits on the size and height of new homes but do not regulate their design or appearance.

See Page 4. "Mansionization"

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CityWatch ADVISORY

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City Budget Process

More than 400 people and more than 50 NCs attended the Mayor's Budget Day on October 1. Most will participate in the Mayor's Budget Process. This is a reminder that, in addition to the Mayor's Budget program, **there are other ways for Neighborhood Councils to influence the City's 2006-2007 budget.**

Additional points of influence

- City Council Budget Committee
 - City Council Members
 - City Departments
- All budget meetings/hearings

- Other significant/influential organizations in your community ... for support

Formulate your position. Focus on a few important recommendations. Be consistent. Use all of the points of influence, including the Mayor's program. Be persistent. \$\$

CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

October 13, 2005
Volume 3 Issue 14

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CITYWATCH is published to encourage grassroots civic engagement through information, ideas and perspective.

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Citywide or Neighborhood MOUs: The Dialogue Continues

At least two Neighborhood Council MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) projects are currently underway in Los Angeles. One is under the auspices of the USC Collaborative Learning Project which intends to gather the LA Department of Transportation and four NCs together to see if there is a need and/or desire for some kind of MOU or agreement. This is being called a "neighborhood-level" MOU. Another effort involves a group of Neighborhood Councils hoping to craft an MOU, similar to the NC/DWP MOU, with the City's Planning Department. This is referred to as a "citywide" MOU. There are differences of opinion about NC MOUs with city departments. About their value. About the process for their creation. This is the second of a two-part series on this subject.

USC CLP Responds

USC System is Open; Aims for Trust, Responsiveness

By Thomas Bryer

The Collaborative Learning Project (CLP) uses an open process to select neighborhood councils to participate in collaboration with a city agency to develop trust and enhance responsiveness. Results are still being realized. For instance, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and four South Valley Neighborhood Councils instituted the process of the department providing to each of the four councils an Annual Service Plan (ASP), comprised of neighborhood-specific information from each of the bureaus of the department. Since this time, the Bureau of Street Services has taken its piece of the ASP and replicated it citywide. Under the leadership of Bill Robertson, the bureau is engaging in conversation with any neighborhood council that expresses an interest.

Point

Mr. Jacobberger observes that the MOU with DPW has not been expanded beyond the four councils that signed it. It is not the intention of the CLP process to generate an agreement based on collaboration with a subset of councils that would be automatically applicable to all other councils. If other councils wish to forge an agreement with DPW, the Department of Cultural Affairs, or any other agency, those councils need to take the initiative, as several have demonstrated already.

Finally, Mr. Jacobberger suggested that the process we facilitate is not open to anybody who wishes to participate. In an open process, we solicit neighborhood councils to join a collaborative undertaking, but we ultimately choose a subset of neighborhood councils to participate. We do this because we recognize that every neighborhood will have a unique set of issues to bring to the table, and the resolution of such issues might require a specialized rather than citywide response. As Mr. Jacobberger observed, if the agreement that results from the CLP process does not meet the interests of his or any other neighborhood council, the neighborhood council will just demand something different. That is exactly right.

On behalf of my fellow researchers on the Collaborative Learning Project, we invite you to visit our website: <http://www.usc.edu/sppd/npp/>.

See next column.

Perspective-USC & MOUs

The Problem: Researchers Become the Researched

By Ken Draper

The problem I have with the USC Collaborative Learning Project's efforts to create MOU's between Neighborhood Councils and City departments ... local or citywide ... is that it makes the researcher and the researched one and the same. It puts USC in a position where decisions made by them can actually alter ... in some cases it could be argued, negatively ... the success of the process they are researching.

The folks at USC, under the most capable direction of Doctors Cooper, Musso and Weare, have been involved with civic engagement and Neighborhood Councils since long before the Charter mandated councils for LA. I respect their experience, skills and good intentions. But, on the subject of MOUs, I disagree with them on three issues: 1) Altering the process they are researching; 2) Their obligations ... such as good and honest communication ... to NCs as a body whole; and, 3) Their interpretation of MOU success.

Counter Point

Some of my conclusions are probably colored by what is perhaps a misunderstanding. I have always viewed the Neighborhood Participation Project, and its various mutations, as a research effort. Their goals, as posted on their website ... to paraphrase ... are three fold: To document and analyze the implementation of the LA NC system, to analyze the Early Notification System's affect on NC and City communications and disseminate findings on NC best practices. No mention of becoming a part of the subject process here.

See Page 7. "Perspective"

Cont from previous column

There you will find a Statement of Purpose and Activity of the project. This statement outlines our views of the neighborhood council system, the open process we use to solicit participants in the process, and our objectives in facilitating these processes. (Thomas Bryer is with the USC Neighborhood Participation Project and the Collaborative Learning Project. He can be reached at: bryer@usc.edu or 213.740.0202. You can also visit the NPP website at: www.usc.edu/sppd/npp/.) ■

Downtown-From Page 1

Just Broadway – and not any other form of theater – brought over \$4 billion dollars into the New York economy last year; income that created many thousands of blue collar jobs not requiring a college or high school diploma. And yet LA has almost no commercial theater even though our Broadway has the world's largest collection of historic theaters, all once closed. But the Orpheum has re-opened and three more theaters will re-open in 2006, starting with the Los Angeles in January.

Night clubs and bars are also opening and boutique hotels (not convention hotels and not by the convention center) are planned in historic buildings.

Gallery Row

And next to Broadway, along Main and Spring, is Gallery Row – founded by DLANC Arts Committee. Over twenty galleries have opened in little over a year and they are being followed by bookstores, Indy film theaters, a large jazz club, a performing arts center, fashion boutiques, ethnic restaurants and over a hundred creative businesses. And, increasingly, people who work here, live here and walk to work – taking traffic off the 101 and the 405.

Plus there is an unexpected benefit. Right now Angelinos have to travel to New York, London, Paris to find a great theater district, miles of walking streets, historic buildings, museums, art galleries – all within walkable neighborhoods.

World Will Come

But by creating a great city center the world will come to visit – we are also building a place that everyone in Los Angeles can visit for a night, a weekend – or even a week. Except that now we will no longer have to cross continents and oceans once or twice a year to experience a great urban center; it will soon only be a subway or a train ride away.

Much like New York – not everyone will want to live Downtown, but everyone will want to visit. So if your Neighborhood Council would like a walking tour of the new heart of your city, I would be happy to play host. *(Brady Westwater is the President of the Downtown LA Neighborhood Council and a knowledgeable participant in the revitalization of downtown.)* ■

Mansionization-From Page 2

Most of the proposals currently before NCs fall into this third category, limiting the size and height of new homes without mandating how the houses look. The **Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council**, supported by Council-member Wendy Gruel, recently passed an interim control ordinance ("ICO") that limits the size of new homes to a floor area ration (FAR) of .4:1 (that would be a 2500 ft² house on our hypothetical 6250 ft² lot. Under this FAR approach, larger homes can be built on larger lots. The **Greater Valley Glen Council** has adopted and forwarded to Ms. Gruel a proposed ICO that has a .6:1 FAR limit (3600 ft²) and attempts to protect the privacy of neighbors by requiring additional second-floor setbacks and prohibiting balconies and decks on second-floor side yards.

MCW Considering ICO

The **Mid City West Community Council** is considering a simple FAR-based ICO in one of its residential neighborhoods, but the proposal there faces opposition from those who contend, among other things, that anti-massing ordinances unfairly impact large or extended families. The **Atwater Village Neighborhood Council** also has begun to address the issue.

As more and more neighborhoods take up this issue, it might very well come to the forefront citywide. According to Sharon Mayer of the LA Planning Department, the department has had some preliminary discussions about a city-wide anti-massing ordinance, but has no firm plans to move forward at the

See next column



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From previous column

present time. Stay tuned. *(Jeff Jacobberger is an attorney and member of Mid City WEST Community Council Board. He was the principal drafter of the NC/DWP MOU and is an occasional contributor to CityWatch. He is currently engaged in an analysis of the mansionization issue.)* ■

CityWatch-Briefly

Lincoln Heights Lights Up the Election Score Board

With a history of election and meeting quorum problems, Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council may have turned a positive corner. The League's Jerry Kvasnicka calls the LHNC election "very good news."

Over six hundred voters elected 21 new board members from among 39 candidates two weeks ago, and as of a few days ago, no challenges filed.

Who Turned LA's Lights Out?

First rate blog, **LA Observed**, posts: "Tuesday's downtown power outage occurred the same day that 22 DWP managers called in sick to protest contract delays."

LA DWP spokesperson, Paul Wang, counters: "1) The power outage was in no way related to the absence of our employees and 2) All of the employees that were out on Tuesday were back at work today (10-13-05)."

A Cardenas – Smith City Council motion I05-1914-S1) wants a report on all of the recent power outages.

Last Lap

The **LA Police Commission** has recommended passage of yet another ordinance that would in effect put an end to lap dancing in adult clubs. The new measure would require a distance of six feet between dancers and patrons at all times. An attempt by City Council to restrict lap dancing failed in 2003.

Assembly Candidate Raises \$25,000

Northridge West NC President and candidate for the 38th State Assembly seat, Jim Alger has reported raising nearly \$27,000 in a one-day fundraiser late last month. That, plus a reported \$20,694 cash on hand considerably ahead, Alger's release says, of the last Democrat to run in the 38th District.

Bill Rosendahl has asked the DOT to suspend the drive-time bus-only lanes on Wilshire (between Federal and Centinela) until Beverly Hills and Santa Monica agree to implement the project all the way from Downtown to Santa Monica. ■

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City Council

October 18, 19, 21 (10 a.m.)

Education & Neighborhoods

October 26 (2 p.m.)
City Hall (Rm 1060)

BONC

October 27 (6:30 p.m.)
Ridley-Thomas Constituent Center
8475 S Vermont Ave

First meeting with four new board members

LA NC Congress Working Group

Saturday, October 15 (10 a.m.)
Portland Rm-DWP Building
1st & Hope St

Outreach Plan. Open to all stakeholders.

Only official NC reps vote.

LA NC Gay & Lesbian Caucus

Saturday, October 15 (12 n – 2 p.m.)
Historic Cabrillo Beach Bathhouse
3800 Stephen M. White Dr.
San Pedro

Councilwoman Janice Hahn featured

Info: www.ginc.info

Share Your LA River Vision-Workshop

Saturday, October 22 (10 a.m.-2 p.m.)
Goodwill Work Source Center
342 San Fernando Rd

Info: 323.669.9100

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Commission-From Page 1.

Other than calling for the Mayor and the City Council to appoint the Commission, the Charter offers no other instructions or guide lines. Who and how many should serve on the Commission, its term, standards for evaluation are left unaddressed. If we accept, however, that one of the reasons for the creation of NCs is to hold elected officials accountable, the prospect of having those same elected officials select the members of the commission and give them their marching orders would seem to leave NCs in a somewhat vulnerable circumstance.

"This is important," Councilmember Janice Hahn told a gathering at the E & N Committee meeting this week. "This is the future of Neighborhood Councils," she said.

Everything will be Evaluated

At the very least, issues like stakeholder definition, conflict of interest, election and grievance procedures will be on the table. "Everything that we've been struggling with, or might struggle with, will be evaluated," Hahn told the group. We also will "have to decide if we've been true to the Charter," she said.

The good news for Neighborhood Councils is, they've been invited by both the Mayor and the E&N Committee into the process. The Mayor told a Citywide Alliance audience that he felt NC involvement "should be organic." The E & N folks have asked for NC input ... possible language for the ordinance to select the special commission, ideas on who should serve on it, perimeters for evaluation ... by December 14. "I want every Neighborhood Council and stakeholder to come forward and be a part of the process," is the way Committee Chair, Bill Rosendahl, put it.

Time is Short

Shortness of time, however, creates some urgency for NCs. With the holidays on the horizon, the need for the City Council to approve an ordinance that establishes the commission and the need to have the commission in place by June 8 NCs will be working on a short calendar. "Thus, the need," said one NC President, "to get Neighborhood Council input organized and into the process immediately."

The question is: Will LA's Councils heed Hahn's warning ... "This is the future of Neighborhood Councils" ,, and shift the input process into high gear in sufficient time to make a difference. Not responding would also send a message and could ultimately influence the Review Commission's recommendations.

Info

(CityWatch will provide information on input organizing committees and on the various ways Councils can weigh in the CityWatch Extra, due out on October 20. In the meantime, you can read and/or download the CLA's Report, and other Review Commission information by visiting DONE's website: www.lacityneighborhoods.com.) ▣

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Perspective-From Page 3.

Even in the Collaborative Learning Project posting, spelling out its purpose, "...we aim to inform and ultimately improve the neighborhood council system ...in LA ..." there is no indication that they mean to insert themselves into the process in a way that could actually change its dynamic.

But back to my issues: Affecting the outcome, communication and determining success.

Impact on Councils

It is simply not possible for USC to decide to facilitate an agreement between some Councils and a city department ... local or citywide ... and not have it affect the NC system as a whole. The success or failure of the project impacts all Neighborhood Councils. As with the Public Works MOU, it can create divisiveness, both among the involved Councils themselves and among the participants and the have-nots.

It sets precedent ... good and bad ... that affects the way other Councils, or groups of Councils, approach and negotiate with any department that has already participated in an MOU.

Involved in the Outcome

In short, USC becomes involved in the success or failure of the LA NC system that it is researching. And then, attempts to objectively analyze a project and a system on which it has had ... perhaps a negative ... impact.

Which leads us to the matter of interpreting success. CLP has facilitated two MOUs to date. One with four Valley NCs and the Department of Public Works and one with the Cultural Affairs Department and the Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council.

Area Level MOU

The NC/DPW MOU is called, by USC, an area-level MOU. However, the one page agreement itself, which was signed in January, 2004, deals with notification, education, policy and delivery of services. Hardly local or area only issues.

I was told emphatically, by one of the major crafters of the document, that once the kinks had been worked out, the results of their work would be rolled out to all other NCs across the city at the projected rate of two per month. That was never done. In fact, other Neighborhood Councils got zero information on this project. And, the claim by USC, that this pilot MOU was a success because the Bureau of Street Services has replicated citywide, some portion of the Annual Service Plan for the benefit of NCs, is an incredible stretch in an attempt to make a failure appear to be a success.

And, the claim that the Bureau of Streets is "engaging in conversation with any Neighborhood Council that expresses an interest" would hold more weight if NCs knew that the information was available. Speaking of research, I submit that a check of Councils would tell us

See Page 8. "Perspective"

CityWatch Ticker

NC/DWP MOU

The following 44 Neighborhood Councils have approved the NC/DWP MOU and have returned their signed MOUs to LADWP. Last updated: October 13, 2005.

Arroyo Seco	MacArthur
Bel-Air / Bev Crest	Mar Vista
Boyle Heights	Mid City WEST
Canoga Park	No Hills West
Central San Pedro	Northridge East
Chatsworth	Northridge West
Coastal San Pedro	No West San Pedro
CANNDU NC	Olympic Park
Downtown LA	Pico Union
Central NC	Reseda
Empower Southeast NC	Sherman Oaks
Empower Southwest NC	Sliverlake
Encino	So Robertson
Glassell Park	Sunland Tujunga
Granada Hills North	Sylmar
Greater Echo Pk Elysian	Tarzana
Greater Griffith Park	Van Nuys
Harbor Gateway No	Watts
Harbor Gateway So	West Los Angeles
Historic Highland Pk	Westside
Hollywood Hills W	Winnetka
Hollywood United	Woodland Hills/ Warner Cntr

If you need more info, visit: www.LADWP.COM



CityWatch Ticker

LA NC Congress

(Here is the 10-9-05 count on NCs that have ratified the LANCC Charter Proposal)

**Arroyo Seco
Bel Air Beverly Crest
Coastal San Pedro
Granada Hills North
Historic Highland Park
Tarzana**

*(To read the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council's Congress Charter Proposal, to learn more about LANCC or to contact LANCC, visit:
www.LANCCongress.org)*



CITYWATCH: KNOWMORE

Perspective-From Page 7,

that most don't know what an ASP is, that most don't know how to retrieve it and that most didn't even know it was available.

The Cultural Affairs MOU never got off of the ground. Last I checked the Council and the Department are not talking. And, the project alienated at least one sister San Pedro NC because they could not be included in the process. I take issue with calling these successes. And their failure impacts the participating Councils and the entire citywide NC system.

Early on, in the LA NC process, experts were warning that there is very little, if anything, more important to Councils than communication. To the stakeholders. To the City. To each other. NPP and CLP projects are hatched and facilitated by USC with little or no communication with citywide NCs. The current effort to help create a DOT agreement is a case in point. There was no general announcement to NCs. They were left to find out about the project through the inevitable NC grapevine, absent the rationale and the facts.

There was no information, provided by USC, on the progress ... or lack thereof ... on the DPW MOU. They have told me that that's the responsibility of the NC participants. I contend that if USC is going to inject itself into the NC system, in a way that affects outcome, they have a communications responsibility. Perhaps, the primary responsibility for getting info to Councils. Letting all of the Neighborhood Councils know the basis and purpose of the project, how it will affect them, when/if they will be involved, would go a long way toward diminishing some of the animosity that results from being ignored and/or left out of the project. In addition, and equally important, it demonstrates some respect for Neighborhood Councils that make the system tick ... and, provide USC with a subject for their work.

I don't think it's about area-level vs. citywide MOUs. It's about researchers intruding in the process they are analyzing, respect and communications and objective determination of what is successful and what is not. ■

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The Melrose Trading Post
Antiques & Collectibles Market

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-Los Angeles Magazine



CityWatch Ticker

Council File # Issue

(Here is the 10-13-05 count on NCs that have provided Community Impact Statements in support of the Council File issue)


- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Silver Lake | 16. Winnetka |
| 2. Glassel Park | 17. North Hills West |
| 3. Greater Griffith Park | 18. Harbor Gateway No |
| 4. Mar Vista | 19. Arroyo Seco |
| 5. Historic Highland Park | 20. Tarzana |
| 6. Granada Hills North | 21. Boyle Heights |
| 7. Greater Echo Park Elysian | 22. Central San Pedro |
| 8. Pico Union | 23. Sherman Oaks |
| 9. Sunland Tujunga | 24. Van Nuys |
| 10. Chatsworth | 25. Westside |
| 11. Greater Valley Glen | 26. Hollywood United |
| 12. Northridge West | 27. Studio City |
| 13. Atwater Village | 28. Valley Village |
| 14. Mid City WEST | 29. Bel Air Bev Crest |
| 15. Westchester Playa del Rey | 30. Central Hollywood * |
| ** Valley Alliance of NCs | 31. Woodland Hills |
| * Supports modified version | 32. Greater Toluca Lake |
| | 33. Encino |
| | 34. Del Rey |
| | 35. Sun Valley |
| | 36. SE/Central Ave |

If you need more background or information on the Council File # Proposal:

1. Email: Jason@jasonlyon.com
2. Call: 323.661SNLC
3. Check the June 21 back issue of CityWatch at: www.LANCIssues.org

If you need instructions on sending a Community Impact Statement: www.lacityneighborhoods.com



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