



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH

CITYWIDE EDITION

January 16, 2006
Volume 4 Issue 2

CityWatch Today—One of the laments heard most often about Neighborhood Councils is that they are only advisory.

Much of the City ... and the country ... in one form or another ... will remember Martin Luther King Jr. today. In looking back over his legacy, there may be a lesson worth noting for NCs.

Martin Luther King was an activist. He was never elected to a public office. He had no charter protection, was not given government funding and generated his own empowerment. Yet the impact he had on the human condition reverberates yet today ... 37 years after his death. He was, if you will, only an empowered advisor.

True enough, Neighborhood Councils are only advisory, but as empowered activists go, they're in rare and special company.

---Editor

Say What?

*In the end,
we will remember not
the words of our enemies,
but the silence
of our friends."*

--Martin Luther King Jr.



NC Report

Planning Director Charms NCs with Neighborhood Priority Talk

By David Lowell

Neighborhood Council activists heard the words and thought somehow they had been transported to NC heaven. In the opening lines of his news conference remarks, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa launched into the importance of Neighborhood Councils in carrying out his ... and new LA Planning Director, Gail Goldberg's ... plan for Los Angeles.

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To a room full of media, city family and invited NC leaders, the Mayor promised, "We need Neighborhood Councils. A project, no matter how good on paper, is only an idea if it doesn't have the support of the community." Manna to the ears of the attending Council reps.



This was the new Planning Director's coming out press conference. When it was her turn, Gail Goldberg reinforced the Mayor's comments. "Planners," she said, "should be in the neighborhoods. I'm a big believer in giving neighborhoods great examples of what can be done. Without the support of neighborhoods, no plan can go forward." Goldberg had been quoted earlier as saying that she does not believe in "pushing density into communities that don't want it."

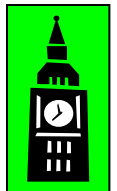
See Page 10. "Planning Director Charms NCs"

Perspective

LA City Council: It's About Time

By Ken Draper

New City Council President, Eric Garcetti, hit the road running. He marshaled the troops and made history. He started his City Council meetings on time.



This is no small task. For years Council meetings have routinely opened 20 to 30 minutes late. On occasion, even later. How refreshing for tax-paying citizens who take time of from work, or travel miles, to offer their support or concerns on issues important to them.

A Daily News editorial wants Garcetti to address another issue: "When ordinary citizens stand up to express their views, the self-indulgent council members routinely chit-chat in the back or are away entirely at press conferences in the media room or finishing up a breakfast meeting with an important campaign contributor." This, says the Daily news, "is worse than rude, it indicates a total lack of respect for the public the councils serves."

See Page 10. "Perspective"

What it Means for NCs

Garcetti Makes Committee Picks: The Winners and the Losers

By David Lowell

City Council President Eric Garcetti has named his new committees and unquestionably there were some winners and some losers. Neighborhood Councils may have broken even in the process.

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Tony Cardenas would appear to be the Councilmember most affected. He was dropped from three key and influential committees: Budget, Planning and Commerce. Speculation is that Cardenas' ties with Alex Padilla and his challenge of Garcetti for Council President may have cost him. Garcetti says the move was not punitive.

As for Neighborhood Councils, the first change to raise an eyebrow was the appointment of Padilla to chair Education and Neighborhoods ... the Committee overseeing the DONE, and therefore, NCs. Padilla has never been a big booster of Neighborhood Councils but perhaps too much is being read into that.

One source claims that Padilla, because his run for State Senate will be time consuming, had asked for a committee that "requires the least time and work." Despite the importance NCs place on E & N, in the City Council big committee picture, it's not one of the politically valuable assignments. Both Janice Hahn and Jose Huizar are NC-friendly and remain on E & N. With issues like the NC Review Commission, Council File Number, Grievance Procedures looming, remains important to Neighborhood Councils and will not benefit from a chair with a negative NC bias in charge of that committee's agenda.



See Page 8. "Garcetti Picks"

GuestWords

Diversity and Citywide Representation Will Mark a Successful NC Congress

Submitted by NALEO Educational Fund

Los Angeles is among the most diverse cities in the U.S. It is marked by a trailblazing vision to institutionalize a system of greater civic engagement through the Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils, recognizing that local government is strengthened when its citizens become active partners in the decision making process.

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Neighborhood Councils have made great strides in the City of Los Angeles, working in tandem with city government to address local neighborhood challenges. We have seen the success of such collaborations in efforts ranging from beautification projects to community-police partnerships that have resulted in safer neighborhoods. Neighborhood Councils have proven that under a unified banner, they are a force to be reckoned with, as was the case when the Department of Water and Power tried to raise rates without duly involving the public. These successes are important milestones, yet there remain uncharted waters for Neighborhood Councils to navigate. A fundamental next step in the life of this civic experiment is to form a Citywide Congress of Neighborhood Councils.

See Page 11. "Diversity"

CITYWATCH
The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

January 16, 2006
Volume 4 Issue 2

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

CITYWATCH the E-Newsletter is published weekly. Share it with your Neighborhood Council and other activists.

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**Today is
Martin Luther King
Day**
**All city, county, state
and federal offices
and courts
will be closed.**

We've Got Mail



NC Congress One Layer too Many

I am writing as an individual about my experiences with the Neighborhood Council (NC) system. The views I am expressing are not necessarily those of the NC with which I am affiliated.

While I agree that issues at LAX and Sun Valley are every NC's problem not just those literally neighboring those sites, I believe this is a straw man argument (CityWatch "Perspective" 1/9/06). The reason many NC's have been reticent to jump into the NC Congress isn't because they don't want to assist other NC's in resolving citywide issues. For many the reason is the dilution of single NC's voices. At my NC we work with three Council Districts. We have worked with many of our neighbors locally and area-wide on a range of issues. When we advise our CD, the mayor, or any other city department about our views we speak on behalf of our community.

Council File Number Best Way

I believe the NC Council File Number (CFN) issue is the way that multiple NC's can have an effective citywide voice. The Congress on the other hand seems to be too much more government. The whole point of the NC's is to create a path for local citizens to advise the City on various issues. With a CFN being assigned to the motion put forward by one NC, our NC can advise that we support or don't support that motion in one easy step. As opposed to the Congress, which would require another set of meetings at another location separate from the stakeholders we represent. It is an unnecessary layer.

Logical Conclusion

Take the Congress to its logical conclusion using for example the LAX development issue. Say, Westchester-Playa del Rey NC moves that restrictions be placed on a certain level of development that will keep the airport from expanding (Which might exactly be what the local stakeholders want) Well, they vote for it and then they bring it to the Congress (or another NC does). Imagine that most other NC's, while sympathetic to the concerns of the stakeholders in Playa del Rey, would rather not see another airport opening in their stakeholder area/they'd like to see more flights at more hours of the day/(or for whatever reason) they vote against it. So, now you have the Congress effectively silencing the local stakeholders' voice. Let's not be naïve enough to think that all NC's will all be supportive of every position taken by our neighboring NC's. I don't think the Congress is intending to silence other NC's but that would be the logical result of what the Congress plans to do.

Take the same issue and put a CFN on it and each of the NC's can voice an opinion, but without the extra

See Page 5. "NC Congress Another Layer"

Councilmember Title Reserved for City

I just noticed in my Encino Community Council newsletter that articles are being submitted by "Councilmember so and so." While they may technically be elected members of a neighborhood council, using this title is confusing, misleading and disingenuous. As a former member of the ECC, I would never have presumed to call myself Council woman or member as a title. That privilege is reserved for members of the Los Angeles City Council.

**--Francine Oschin
Encino**

Redistrict Around Real Neighborhoods

(CityWatch 1-9-06 "Zine Suggests NC Boundaries ...")

Maybe City Council districts should be shaped to reflect NC boundaries and our "real" neighborhoods—not the other way around.

**Kim Benjamin, President
LaeRoc Partners, Inc.**

CityWatch Blather has George in a Dither

It is truly remarkable how much blather is going on in the City Watch website.

I read an editorial (CityWatch 1-9-06 "Perspective") by Ken Draper today in which the word "service" was used not once.

Instead, we had a tiresome repetition of the same hackneyed phrases that we have heard for lo! these many months, over and over: "empowerment," "potent constituency," "influence votes and outcomes," "make themselves heard," "grassroots 'rebellion,'" "right to empowerment," "empowerment coalition," "a voice in the City's business," "empowerment is not given; it is taken," "hold elected officials accountable," "empowerment concept," "ability to influence"!

Lord almighty, who appointed this man and his middle-class, property- owning cohorts to the papal conclave?

**--George Garrigues
Palms, Los Angeles, California**

Note

(Opinions expressed are not those of CityWatch. Some letters are edited for brevity and/or clarity. Send comments to: Editor@CityWatchLA.com.)

CITYWATCH**The News That Was ...**

JANUARY 9 – 16, 2006

E & A Union Turns Up the Heat

The Engineers and Architects Association ... a union of about 8,000 members negotiating a new with the City has turned up the heat on the Mayor. They have taken to the air with radio ads that claim that the Mayor plans to raise taxes unnecessarily.

The E & AA has asked for a wage increase comparable to the one received in July by the IBEW from the LADWP. Mayor Villaraigosa has said that the 2006-2007 budget would not allow it.

...

Council Cool to Appeal

Former Animal Services head, Guerdon Stuckey, got no help from the City Council. He appealed his firing by Mayor Villaraigosa but the Council took no action, in effect turning him down.

...

Council Refuses to Review LAX Contract

Councilmember Tony Cardenas asked his colleagues to allow his Commerce Committee to review the contract with the Tutor-Saliba Corporation to handle the runway work at LAX. He couldn't get the votes and the contract, worth \$253-million stands, even though some of Tuto-Saliba's past work has been questioned.

Cardenas was appointed to a different committee later in the week when Council President Eric Garcetti handed out his new assignments.

...

Perry Honored for Community Service

Councilwoman Jan Perry was named on of the 10 visionaries of 2006 by Metropolis Magazine this month. The magazine pointed to Perry's work on the development of the first South Los Angeles Farmer's Market on Central Avenue and the creation of the Augustus Hawkins Wetlands as the reason for her being honored.

...

Chick: Rec & Parks "Groping in the Dark"

In an audit of the Recreation and Parks Department, City Controller Laura Chick found "serious issues" with how the Department is running recreation and community services. She issued 20 recommendations.

"This audit revealed," said Chick, "a startling and disturbing fact: we cannot evaluate the delivery of recreational services to the public because there just isn't enough information to do so."

*See next column***7-9-1-3-10-8-2-4-6-5-****CityWatch ...****... by the Numbers***(A statistical status report on some of the ongoing citywide NC issues and activities at deadline.)***LA Neighborhood Council Congress***(Councils that have joined the proposed NC Congress)***30****NC File Number Proposal***(Councils that have submitted Community Impact Statements of support)***43****LA County Homeless***(Latest count on homeless persons in LA County)***88,000****NC/Planning MOU***(NCs participating in the NC/Planning Dept MOU)***42****NC/DWP MOU***(NC that have signed onto the NC/DWP MOU)***47**

▼ ▲ ▼

Good to Know **** Mayor's Budget Day****January 21 (8 a.m. – Registration)****City Hall (Council Chambers)***** Citywide Alliance of NCs****January 21****CANCELED****US Mail Coming Late; Not at All**

Representative Henry Waxman has asked the US Postal Service to look into complaints that mail in Los Angeles, Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica ... and some other regions ... is arriving late at night or, for some, not at all. Residents say mail is being delivered as late as 10:30 at night and in some cases, not at all. A Postal Service spokesperson said that they are in the process of changing their system ... and are experiencing personnel shortage ... but that the problem would be resolved in the next 60 days. ■

CITYWATCH DayPlanner

City Council

January 17, 18, 20 (10 a.m.)
City Hall (Council Chamber)

Education & Neighborhoods

TBA

BONC

January 17 (6:30 p.m.)
Granada Hills Rec Center
16730 Chatsworth St
Granada Hills

- Certification hearing-Granada Hills South NC
 - NC Review (912) Commission
- (Info: www.lacityneighborhoods.com)

Arts, Parks, Health, Aging

January 17 (8:30 a.m.)
City Hall (Rm 1060)

- Griffith Park progress
- Joint use possibilities Rec & Parks/LAUSD
- Businesses must make restrooms available to public

Auto Repair Code Change Workshops

January 18 (6 p.m.)
3rd Floor Conference Rm
Braude Constituent Center
6262 Van Nuys Blvd

January 25 (6 p.m.)
Council District 10 Field Office
1819 S. Western Ave

(Info: 818.374.5037 or rplatkin@planning.lacity.org)

Martin Luther King Parade/Festival

January 16 (11 a.m.)

Corner: Western & MLK Blvd

(Grand Marshall: Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa)

Mayor's Budget Day

January 21 (8 a.m. – registration)
City Hall (Council Chambers)

Citywide Alliance

January 21
CANCELED

Neighborhood Café

Channel 35

January 19 (1:30 p.m.)
January 23 (10 a.m. 7 7:30 p.m.)
(Inside the Fire Department)



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NC Congress Another Layer-From Pg 3

meeting and without it appearing that the number of yes or no votes means anything more than that's what the individual NC's view was on that motion.

I think that CityWatch is fulfilling the only legitimate reason for a Congress - information sharing. Outside of that, any Congress that votes to approve any matter will only dilute the voice of individual NC's. I concur with David Coffin's assessment on page two of your recent issue (1/9/06) we don't need another city council. What we need is relevant timely notice of issues facing our stakeholders and the city as a whole. CityWatch is performing that function on the boundaries issue and other issues facing the NC's. The MOU's central issue is notice and information sharing. (As we progress through the upcoming review, I believe the NC's will come out fine but the city departments who refuse to share information with the NC's will not be as lucky.)

Beyond these structural issues is the issue of burn out for those involved. NC reps are all volunteers. As is most often the case in each NC, there is a core of active participants. These participants have more and more demanded of them with these additional meetings outside their area. Often I see the same people attending the LADWP MOU meetings, the Planning MOU meetings and the Congress meetings. Not everyone is capable of that time of involvement, nor should NC involvement demand eight meetings a month. It makes it nearly impossible for those who have full-time or multiple part-time jobs and family lives to be involved – or to feel that they are somehow not involved enough.

--Karl Fenske
Glassell Park

CityWatch Now ...

... 1st Thing Every Monday Morning

Early Years, Golden Age, Case Processing

By Jon Perica

The beginning of the City Planning in Los Angeles goes back to 1923 when the first 50 member City Planning Commission was created. Early graft and selling of zone changes in the early 1930's lead to the League of Women Voter's backed recall of the Mayor and City Council. The Mayor and the head of the Planning Commission went to jail (movie goers may recall "Chinatown" with Jack Nicholson, which featured an early bribery scene). Out of the reform efforts of the next Mayor, Los Angeles established the first Zoning Administrator position in the nation which many larger cities have copied over the years.

Back Story

Planning issues dominate many NC agendas. Yet, few NC members understand much about the how Planning Department or Land Use works.

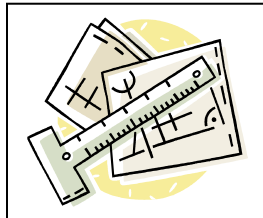
This is the second of a series on this subject, by respected former Zoning Director, Jon Perica.

Couldn't Fire Judges

These land use judge positions were intentionally written into the City Charter so that the Mayor or City Council couldn't fire them. Zoning Administrators were relatively well paid, compared to other city staff, to prevent bribes. ZA decisions were final unless appealed, unlike all other "recommended actions" by Hearing Examiners, that all go to the Citywide Commission and City Council for final decision. The goal was to have a totally "independent" decision maker on the most important cases, and that person would not be influenced by politics or money. Seven decades later, this independent Zoning Administrator positive has served the City well and

ensures that only the facts of any development issue are considered in making the final decision.

The Golden Age of the Planning Department was the period of 1964-1986, when Calvin Hamilton was Director of Planning and developed the first comprehensive General Plan for the City. This visionary plan had a 50 year "Centers Concept" as its centerpiece. Future growth was to take place outside of single family neighborhoods in 40 targeted urban growth centers, like Century City, Warner Center, Van Nuys, Crenshaw, Boyle Heights, and San Pedro spread out the City and connected through the City by new public transit.



Transit Has Fallen Behind

Most new growth has generally gone into these Centers but the public transit system has fallen behind in adequate capacity to accommodate recent growth. The General Plan also consists of the 20 year time frame Citywide Plan which is more specific in growth policies, 35 Community Plans covering the whole City look 5-10 years into the future for local growth policies and 10 Citywide Elements focus on particular key issues like Housing, Transit, Conservation and Seismic.

These General Plan elements were all adopted by 1976. Since then, additional detailed, level plans of subject driven plans have been adopted including: 1) 45 Specific Plans covering local areas in a community; 2) 20 Historic Preservation Area plans; 3) three Pedestrian and Neighborhood Orientated Districts (PNODs); 4) 13 Streetscape Plans; 5) 11 Community Design Overlay Districts; 6) one Certified Coastal Area Plan; 7) three Draft Coastal Area Plans; 8) five Design Guidelines; 9) one Sign District; and 10) one Community Artcraft District. These original and recent General Plan Elements total 150 plans.

See Page 12. "Planning 101"



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Garcetti Picks-From Page 2

Jan Perry, another less than enthusiastic NC fan, will now oversee the Department of Water and Power, with whom Neighborhood Councils have an agreement. Perhaps the NC/DWP Oversight Committee will find less support from Perry's committee than they got from the old Commerce and Energy committee with Hahn and Cardenas on it.

As for other committees popular with Neighborhood Councils, the scorecard looks like this: Ed Reyes remains chair of the PLUM; Hahn now chairs Trade, Commerce and Tourism (LA Port and LAX); Wendy Greuel heads Transportation ... and an ad hoc Business Tax Reform committee; and Bernard Parks will continue to chair Budget and Finance.

In the final analysis, the key to success at the committee level isn't the gift of NC-friendly chairs, so much as it is Neighborhood Councils learning how to negotiate the political system whether on friendly terrain or not. *(See complete list of new City Council committee assignments next column)* ▣

City Council Committee Assignments
2006-2007

ARTS, PARKS, HEALTH & AGING

LaBonge-Ch, Perry, Cardenas

AUDITS & GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCY

Huizar-Ch, Zine, Greuel

BUDGET & FINANCE

Parks-Ch, Greuel, Huizar, Smith, Rosendahl

EDUCATION & NEIGHBORHOODS

Padilla-Ch, Hahn, Huizar

ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Perry-Ch, Garcetti, Greuel, LaBonge, Padilla

HOUSING, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC

DEVELOPMENT

Wesson-Ch, Reyes, Cardenas, Garcetti, Perry

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND GENERAL

SERVICES

Cardenas-Ch, Parks, Hahn

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Smith-Ch, Wesson, Padilla

PERSONNEL

Zine-Ch, Cardenas, Wesson

PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Reyes-Ch, Huizar, Weiss

PUBLIC SAFETY

Weiss-Ch, Smith, Parks, Zine, Reyes

PUBLIC WORKS

Rosendahl-Ch, LaBonge, Smith

RULES & ELECTIONS

Garcetti-Ch, Padilla, Zine

TRADE, COMMERCE & TOURISM

Hahn-Ch, Rosendahl, Weiss

TRANSPORTATION

Greuel-Ch, Parks, LaBonge, Wesson, Rosendahl

(Ad hoc committees not included)



January 16

Martin Luther King Jr. Day



Note: Martin Luther King Jr. was never elected to a public office. Never, as government goes, had "decision-making" power. Was, if you will, an activist advisor who generated his own empowerment.

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CITYWATCH: KNOWMORE

Planning Director Charms NCs

From Page 1

The Mayor also said that one of the reasons he chose Goldberg was her background of working with neighborhoods. One of the complaints heard most often of the Planning Department under her predecessor.

CSUN instructor, David Diaz, told Rick Orlov of the Daily News, "her idea of getting planners out from behind their desks and out into the community will be a radical concept for Los Angeles and something long overdue."

Goldberg will meet with NCs

The capper for NCs came with Humberto Camacho's (Pico Union NC) final question of the conference, "Would you be willing to meet with Neighborhood Councils at least once a year?" Goldberg's answer, "Absolutely."

Watching the Neighborhood Councils mingle with Goldberg after the press conference, Wilshire area's Keith Bright said "it looks like love at first sight."

One of the media members offered some caution, however, "Best we check back in after the honeymoon." ■

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Perspective-From Page 1

While the new President is at it, we would like to add a third item to his cleanup menu: Get control of the number, and time allotted for, the endless parade of presentations that hold up and delay the council's (people's) business. Especially at the Friday Council sessions.

No fault can be found here for the concept: recognizing people, or organizations, who have made contributions beyond the call. But, time away from the people's business to applaud an officer who snatched a small alligator out of a pond is another matter. Perhaps these kinds of PR efforts could best be handled at another time and another place.

Agreed: compared to affordable housing or LAX expansion, these are trivial issues. But, interestingly, service is often longer remembered that the product itself. If President Garcetti can continue to maintain a punctual council, get the members to give the speakers break and reduce the number of frivolous presentations, he will have created, at the least, an appreciated legacy. ■



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Diversity-From Page 1

A Congress of Neighborhood Councils is a critical step in fulfilling the intended vision of citizens actively involved in City Hall. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has committed to unify the city and empower the most disenfranchised neighborhoods in Los Angeles. The proposed Congress faces an extraordinary challenge and opportunity to play an integral role in fulfilling the fundamental purpose of Neighborhoods Councils as intended by the City Charter. But the Congress is not a goal in and of itself. Ultimately, the success of the Neighborhood Council movement must be measured by its work in communities with a poor history of civic involvement.

Citywide Representation

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As the Congress of Neighborhood Councils develops, the planning, organization, and essence of the Congress must hold as its central premise the representation of communities citywide. This means that the Congress must be reflective of the diversity that makes Los Angeles strong and unique. Congress organizers, Neighborhood Councils, elected officials, and all others involved must demonstrate their commitment to diversity and representation and acknowledge that the City and our democracy would be ill-served if this process leaves communities with a poor history of participation behind.

A successful "Citywide" Congress of Neighborhood Councils must be precisely that – representative of all communities citywide. A successful Citywide Congress of Neighborhood Councils will represent the issues faced by the City as a whole and not disproportionately represent the interests of a few neighborhoods. A successful Congress will be a forum for communities from the Valley to San Pedro and from the Eastside to the Westside. A successful Congress will be a medium for all communities to gather and have equal opportunity to voice their concerns and advocate for the issues that are important to them.

Evaluation Commission an Opportunity

The Mayor's Office is currently working to conduct a comprehensive review of Neighborhood Councils. This review evaluates the various components of the



Neighborhood Council process and is a necessary step for the long-term success of Neighborhood Councils. The evaluation will serve as an opportunity to highlight successes, and equally important, will identify the deficiencies that need to be addressed as Congress formation moves forward. An area of much needed improvement can be anticipated: increased and effective

outreach, which should be at the heart of Neighborhood Council activity. Without comprehensive outreach, community representation is impaired and disenfranchised communities remain unacknowledged and unheard.

If the goal of the proposed Congress, as stated in the preamble of the proposed Charter, is to build a "coalition" of Neighborhood Councils, there is much work to be done. We must ensure that we give "each NC equal rights in the coalition, and hold meetings open to ALL stakeholders." It is imperative that we work together to reach out to more communities and create a collective voice of NC's that truly reflects the rich diversity and character of the City of Los Angeles. *(The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials [NALEO] is a non-profit organization whose stated goal is to empower Latinos to participate fully in the American political process. For more info: www.naleo.org.)* ■

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Means.

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Planning 101-From Page 6

In addition, there are plans adopted by other City departments or City support organizations, including 12 Community Redevelopment Agency Areas, 14 Targeted Neighborhood Initiatives and 35 Business Improvement Districts which total 60 additional plans. So, the grand total is over 200 different local City plans which regulate some type of development or of some area of the Los Angeles.

Once you have mastered these different types of plans with their individual requirements, exceptions, guidelines and filing procedures, you need to understand what type of applications are filed for City Planning action.

There are 200 different possible types of applications you can file for specific projects or specific actions.

There are two areas of the Planning Department that process development requests. The Office of Zoning Administration acts on: Zone Variances (exceptions to uses not allowed in a particular zone), Zoning Administrator's Adjustment (small yard, area or height variances), Yard Variances (large yard, area or height variances), Zoning Administrator's Determination (specialty types of deviations such as hillside developments or streets), Private use Conditional Uses (alcohol sales, auto repair, churches, mini-malls, equestrian, etc), Plan Approvals (small additions to Conditional Uses or Variances), Coastal, Non-conforming, Subdivisions, Parcel Map (four or less lots) and Revocations (nuisance actions).



The Citywide Planning Commission (Hearing Examiner recommendation) processes the following cases: Zone Changes, Community Plan Amendments required by Zone Change, Plan Approvals, Public Conditional Uses (library, Fire station, etc), Specific Plan Exception, Lot Line Adjustment, and Lot Line Determination. All development requests to the Planning Department undergo an environmental review of some type: 1) most small cases

involving a single family house or addition receive a Categorical Exception because there are no environmental impacts, a Negative Declaration is given for project with some impacts which are deemed insignificant, Mitigated Negative Declaration is given to a project with adverse environmental impacts if they can be mitigated to an acceptable level, and the full Environmental Impact Report is required in about 1/2 of 1% of projects where there are major environmental impacts which may not be able to be mitigated or have cumulative impacts which may not be fully mitigated without significant change in the project design. These EIR's often take a year or more depending on the project.

For information on the proposed NC/Planning Department MOU, visit: www.mouoversight.org

Case processing for easier cases currently takes six to eight months. Major cases, like a zone change and community plan amendment, take 12 to 15 months. All cases have a public hearing except if a variance request has

all the adjacent neighbors in written support and the Planning Department determines that the project would not have an adverse impact on the community and is not controversial. The public hearing can be waived and then only the adjacent neighbors are noticed after the determination is issued.

Most public hearing notification is 500-ft for owners and renters from the site. Lesser yard variances are noticed only to the adjacent neighbors. Appeals for Planning Department cases go to one level of review by a citizen board (seven Area Planning Commissions). Approvals of a Zone Variance, due to the

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significance of this major action, can go to a second appeal (City Council). Appeals of a Hearing Examiner action go from the decision body, the Citywide Planning Commission to the City Council.

Cost of various cases range from an over height wall at \$550, a Hillside Area project at \$925 to Zone Variance with hearing \$4,600, Conditional Use alcohol sales \$5,000, all the way to a Zone Change/Community Plan Amendment \$13-20,000 depending on size. *(The preceding was excerpted from a presentation before a gathering of Neighborhood Council Leaders on Dec 3, 2005 by retired Zoning Administrator Jon Perica who acted on 2,500 development cases over a 20 year period with the LA City Planning Department).* ■