



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH

citywide edition

January 23, 2006
Volume 4 Issue 3

CityWatch Today—Neighborhood Councils offered up yet another of those magical empowerment moments at the Special Education and Neighborhoods Committee meeting last Friday. Twenty-plus NC reps persuading the Committee, some passionately, that they shouldn't be made to wait any longer.

Jason Lyon has spearheaded this proposal from the outset. He helps Sara Epstein write today's lead on this page.

We share with you some of our sit-down with new City Council President, Eric Garcetti. His thoughts on another Inclusionary Zoning ordinance, new E&N Chair Alex Padilla and more.

Inside, we look back at former Council President Padilla's legacy ... or lack thereof.

This and more. Today's CityWatch. We hope you find it useful.

--Editor

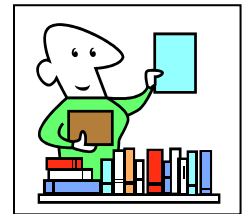
E & N Special Meeting Follow-up

NCs Persuade E & N Committee; File # Issue Finally Goes Forward

By Jason Lyon and Sara Epstein

After months of delay, the proposal that would allow Neighborhood Councils to request Council File Numbers finally came unglued from the Education and Neighborhoods Committee and headed for the full City Council. It now goes to the Rules and Elections Committee.

A group of 20-plus Neighborhood Council board members and stakeholders ...with no small assist from an eloquent Janice Hahn ... persuaded a reluctant Committee Chair, Bill Rosendahl, that the idea deserved to be heard by the full Council and that the matter had been put off long enough. Most provided impassioned support for allowing original NC recommendations to be assigned a Council File Number, which gets their issue, or motion or program into the public record and assigned to a committee. The Committee voted to forward the matter to full Council without recommendation. It was yet another example of citywide Neighborhood Council advisory influence prevailing.



In addition to the NC representatives present at the E & N Special Meeting, 43 councils had submitted supportive Community Impact Statements for the record.

See Page 8. "Council File Numbers"

Perspective

A Few Minutes with the President

By Ken Draper

New City Council President, Eric Garcetti, sat with the CityWatch NC Action Committee last week. Here are some of the impressions and answers to questions we left with.

We thanked Garcetti for getting Council meetings started on time. And, for nudging his colleagues to listen when the public is speaking. We asked for a third consideration: Give Neighborhood Council representatives ... when they're speaking to the Council or council committees ...on behalf a board action or stakeholder consensus, or on behalf of a coalition of NCs, a bigger chunk of speaking time. Not unlike other city agencies. It's not reasonable, we argued, to expect NCs to effectively speak for their neighborhoods, restricted to two minutes or less, in Public Comment time.

Garcetti told us that even for other city agencies, it's not a right that buys them talk time at City Council. Usually, they get extended speaking opportunities because a Council member requests or arranges it. Not, he says, a bad way for NCs to go. In the meantime, he will give our suggestion some thought.

See Page 8. "Perspective"

Say What?

"It used to be, a mayor would prepare a budget, the City Council would approve it and that would be that.

Today, it's different. You are a part of the process and the budget will reflect your priorities."

**--Councilman Dennis Zine
Budget Day
Reported in Daily News**



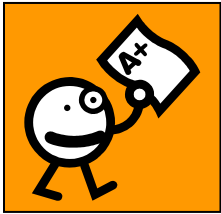
CityWatch Op & Ed

Opinion

For Padilla, It was about Perception

The City Council paid its respects to former Council President Alex Padilla last week. It must have taken an hour or more. We were struck by the fact that most of the accolades and memories had to do with Padilla the person and for things unrelated to his performance as Council President. Perhaps that is as it should be. Much of Padilla's Council President Legacy is about perception as opposed to substance.

Looking back, one is hard pressed to think of anything ... short of his stand-in for the Mayor after 9/11 ... memorable he did as Council President. He was incredibly young, when he became President. He provided a calm, off-times monotone, voice for the council ... as he did for the city after 9/11. Some of his committee appointments were political. Some were punitive. Despite comments to the contrary, there was nothing creative or exceptional about his performance here.



Padilla could be selective in his movement of an agenda. As he was with Neighborhood Councils. The Rules Committee that he chaired still sits on a dozen or more improvements to the Early Notification System, recommended by a special NC committee and approved and supported by the Education and Neighborhoods Committee.

Padilla stepped down from the Council Presidency so he could devote sufficient time to his run for State Senate. A recent poll, published by Goodwin Simon and posted on an LA blog, shows Padilla with a considerable lead over his opponent, Assemblywoman Cindy Montanez (35%-23%), attributable by the pollsters to a name recognition advantage. However, "After voters learn more about both candidates ... Montanez takes a 21 point lead. In other words, perception is 95% of the battle.

And, that applies to Padilla's turn at Council President. Leaves a good image, if you ignore the details. With Alex Padilla, it's about perception. That is likely to be his Council President legacy. --CW

GuestWords

Alex Padilla Legacy: Take Two

By Jim McQuiston

As of January 1, the City Council lost its President and gained a replacement. Although Councilmember Alex Padilla may have time left on his term, his decision to run for State office will saddle him with the burden of campaigning.

Padilla is a product of fine training: MIT. His quiet, but firm, manner and the economy of his words are products of that training. An imposing figure, yet disarming, one always benefited from his comments and his line of questioning.

The Council President assigns Councilmembers to committees. Padilla had the gift of assigning sensibly. The result was a Council that worked collegially and productively.

On occasions when Padilla engaged a witness in dialogue, one had to marvel at this skill in exposing faulty logic, without histrionics and without berating or ridicule. His questioning lately, in Council Chambers, was representative and outstanding in this regard.

See next column

CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

January 23, 2006
Volume 4 Issue 3

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□□□

From previous column

If he is elected to the Senate, just as the City Council looked to him for leadership soon after he joined, so will the State legislature. Padilla is a person to follow. (Jim McQuiston is a longtime community activist and a member of the East Hollywood Neighborhood Association.) ■

Budget Day Follow-up**NCs Almost Evenly Divided
on Budget Priorities Citywide
... but Not So Regionally**

By David Lowell

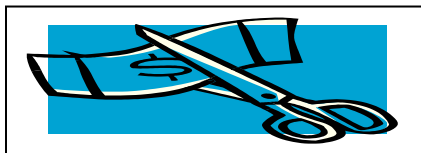
The Mayor threw another budget party Saturday and, according to the DONE GM, Greg Nelson, 150 or so Neighborhood Councils showed up to talk numbers.



Councilman Dennis Zine promised the crowd, "You are part of the process and the budget will reflect your priorities."

Deputy Mayor Larry Frank assured everyone that their participation "is not a waste of time" and that their input really is important.

Assistant Finance Director Ben Ceja pulled the curtain on the NC Budget Survey results which revealed that



the city's councils are pretty much evenly divided on the Budget Priorities: Livable Neighborhoods (30%); Improved Traffic Flow (25%); Economic Development (23%) and Homeland Security/Public Safety (23%).

Roughly 27% of LA's Neighborhood Council board members responded to the survey. Almost 60% of the City's certified Councils provided their input.

Some of the more interesting survey results can be found in the differences in the regional input. For example, 41% of the respondents from the North Valley Area favor raising fees by \$7 to help pay for trash collection. In South LA, 25% support the \$7 fee.

Nest step in the Mayor's Budget Process: NC Regional Reps meet with the Mayor sometime in February. The Mayor's budget is due in City Council in April.

(CityWatch will provide a complete report and analysis of the Citywide and the Regional survey results in the January 30 issue.) ■

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**CITYWATCH
DayPlanner****City Council**

January 24 (10 a.m.)

City Hall (Council Chamber)

◆ Prohibiting vigilante actions

◆ Ending prohibition against subway tunneling

January 25, 27

City Hall (Council Chamber)

Education & Neighborhoods

February 14 (9:30 a.m.)

*(Tentative)***BONC**

February 7

*Location to be determined***Public Safety**

January 23 (10 a.m.)

City Hall (Rm 1010)

Audits & Efficiency-Special

January 23 (10 a.m.)

City Hall (Rm 1050)

PLUM

January 24 (1 p.m.)

City Hall (Rm 350)

Affordable Housing Commission

January 26 (noon)

Garland Building (Conf Rm-9th fl)1200 W 7th Street**Planning Commission**

January 26 (8:30 a.m.)

Braude Service Center

6262 Van Nuys Blvd (1st fl)**San Pedro NC Committee on Port Security**

January 24 (6 p.m.)

Port Complex (Boys/Girls club)

100 W 5th St, San Pedro**Central Region High School #14****Community Meeting**

February 8 (6 p.m.)

Arlington Hts Elementary School

1717 Seventh Ave

New school update, sight selection to relieve overcrowding at Dorsey High

Black History Month

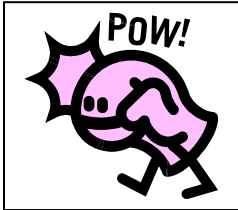
February



The Other Wal-Mart Story**Valley Shootout Follows
Wal-Mart Pull Out**

By David Lowell

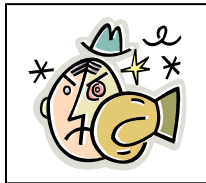
The Wal-Mart folks did a 180 last week and pulled out of its plan to build a big-box store in Northridge. The fact that the conditions were buy right made the decision even more unique. But, intriguing as the Wal-Mart decision is, it's the back story that has people talking out in the northwest valley.



The decision also ratcheted up a few notches an apparent long-festering feud between Councilman Greig Smith and the Northridge West ... or, at least, some of its board members ... Neighborhood Council.

No sooner had the Wal-Mart announcement been made than the Valley shootout began. A war of press releases between Smith and Jim Alger, the Northridge West President.

Both agreed that the pull out was unexpected and that the trigger for Wal-Mart was a demand for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). From there the heat turns up and the stories take different forks in the road.



Smith says that he demanded the EIR from Wal-Mart. Alger says that that is malarkey and offers a quote from his Vice President, Sherry Ramstead, "The Neighborhood Council demanded an EIR when the Councilman was willing to accept a mitigation fund. We filed a 50 page response, hired an attorney and forced the hands of the political structure."

Smith says that he "negotiated a stringent mitigation package ... and established a traffic mitigation trust fund in partnership with the City's Department of Transportation and the local Neighborhood Council."

Smith tells us he conducted several meetings with local residents "and determined that the mitigation packages still wasn't enough."

Alger says that the community didn't want the Wal-Mart deal and "I took the battle to Washington DC, Chicago and back and am pleased we have succeeded."

The LA battle has been simmering for some time, between Smith and some members of the Neighborhood Council board. In particular Alger and Ramstead. At one point, Alger claims, Smith threatened to sue him and Ramstead.

See next column

We've Got Mail**To Congress or not to Congress**

The opposing opinions of the LANC Congress expressed in the Jan. 16th CityWatch by NALEO and Karl Fenske are indicative of the range of opinions about this newly formed group. An NC that ratifies the Congress Charter not only retains all of it's individual rights to publicly express their opinion to any City Council member about any community or City matter it, in fact, gains the impetus of a large group of NCs working together. They are not mutually exclusive and some people just don't get it. Mr. Fenske is President of the DWP MOU Oversight Committee, a group of NCs banded together to oversee important City wide DWP issues. To me this is a flip-flop and possibly just a bit hypocritical.

--Jacque Lamishaw
Winnetka NC Stakeholder

What WAS the Subject Now?

Mr. Garrigues' comments (CityWatch-January 16- "We've Got Mail) would have had more relevance had he dealt with the subject instead of going off on a rant attacking the writer.

--Keith Bright
Hancock Park

Student Graduates

Thank you for the Planning 101 series (CityWatch-January 9 and 16). Zoning Administrator Perico explains things very clearly and I feel better prepared to at least approach land use matters in our community. I'm hoping my council has read the article as well. They could use the help.

--Devon Gardner, Stakeholder
Van Nuys

Note

(Opinions expressed are not those of CityWatch. Some letters are edited for brevity and/or clarity.

Send comments to: Editor@CityWatchLA.com.)

From previous column

Now comes the fight over who gets the credit. Both seem to agree, it was a community effort. They differ on who led the charge. The question now is: With Wal-Mart out of the picture, what will the Councilman and the Council Neighborhood have to fight about now? ■

In Case You Missed It, Chief**Idea for LA: Another City to Treat Gangs as Terrorists**

OKLAHOMA CITY - **Gang activity could soon be prosecuted as a terrorist act under legislation authored by State Rep. Thad Balkman.**

"This Bill recognizes that gangs are a growing problem throughout Oklahoma and they use terror as a weapon," said Balkman, R-Norman. "It's time the law treats gang members like the terrorist thugs they are."

House Bill 2115, by Balkman, would broaden the definition of 'terrorism' in State law to include acts of violence carried out to coerce civilians.

Currently, a terrorist act is defined as an act meant to coerce a government. Anyone convicted under the proposed law would face an automatic increase in prison sentence and some homicides would become death-penalty eligible under the proposed statute.

House Bill 2115 is modeled after a New York state law approved after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The law is currently being used to prosecute 19 alleged members of a Bronx gang.

"For many Oklahomans, the threat posed by local gangs is every bit as dangerous as the threat posed by a terrorist in Afghanistan," Balkman said. "There is no doubt that gangs use terror as part of their arsenal and this law would simply acknowledge that fact."

--OKLAHOMA LEGEND
January, 2006

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NC Watch**GGPNC 31st to Join Congress;
Granada Hills #88 Certified**

Greater Griffith Park became the 31st Neighborhood Councils to ratify the Proposed Charter and join the LA NC Congress. President Charlie Mimms was named the GGPNC official representative to the NC Congress.

The LANCC formation committee met for the final time on January 14. **The first official meeting of the newly formed Congress is set for February 4 (10 a.m.) at the LADWP building at Hope and First Streets.**

(See next CityWatch ... January 30 ... for complete review, status report and preview of first official meeting.)

•••

On another front, **Granada Hills South** became the 88th certified Neighborhood Council.

They were approved, after lengthy debate by the Commissioners, on January 17. The number of certified councils in Los Angeles could return to 87 in late February when the BONC considers the decertification of the Old Northridge NC. DONE has already recommended decertification.

•••

Sylmar Lawsuit Update-The Sylmar Neighborhood Council has been sued by one of its board members, a first in the LA NC brief history.

Reportedly, the judge has dismissed some counts but, for the moment, allowed some to stand.

According to one source, it was discovered that the litigant had a history of frivolous law suits and is not permitted to file again without the permission of the court.

A contempt hearing is set for the litigant for January 25 (8:30 a.m.) in Chatsworth, Department 46. ■

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Mayor's Statement**Bin Laden Taped Threat**

(Former US House Speaker, Tip O'Neal provided us with the now overused, "All politics are local." That now applies to international terrorist attacks. In case you missed it, this is LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's statement after a new taped threat surfaced last week from Osama Bin Laden.)

"I have been fully briefed on the threat made by Osama Bin Laden and remain in close contact with the LAPD and other law enforcement agencies.

At this time there is no known direct threat to Los Angeles, but as always we remain vigilant and encourage our residents to do the same.

As a precautionary measure, the Los Angeles Police Department has deployed additional resources at LAX and posted signage indicating that bomb sniffing dogs and searches will occur frequently. A more visible police presence is also posted at LAX. The Port of Los Angeles and the Department of Water and Power have also been notified and will take additional precautionary measures as well.

We are fortunate to have strong relationships between local, state and federal agencies through the Joint Terrorism Task Force, and I am confident that law enforcement is coordinating and communicating information to detect and prevent terrorism here in Los Angeles."

--LA Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa

CityWatch Future Assignments

◆ The Missing South LA NC Voices

Has the Empowerment Congress ... once leaders in the NC movement ... lost its way without Ridley-Thomas?

**Serious issues. Serious questions.
Report in the next CityWatch**

**Next CityWatch: January 30 ...
...ON A COMPUTER NEAR YOU!**

CITYWATCH I-TRAC

(New motions/issues that may interest NCs and the city.)

06-0002-S4—Denounce Iranian President—Motion by Zine asking that the City condemn Iranian President Ahmadinejad's remarks calling for the destruction of Israel.

06-0125—Guest ID & Nuisance Hotels—Motion by Zine asking for an ordinance requiring, among other things, that hotels/motels require guest ID, maintain records, train employees on Municipal Code.

05-0002-S205—Ending Prohibition on Tunneling—Request for the CLA position on the revised bill (HR 4653-US Congressman Waxman) that ends the prohibition on tunneling in parts of LA for subway lines.

06-0002-S3—Insurance Rates by Zip Code—Greuel motion to oppose a Mercury Insurance proposed voter initiative. Greuel wants Mercury to stop Zip Code profiling.

05-1914 & 06-0116—Power Outages—Request for report from DWP on the September 12, 23 and October 11.

06-0109—Expanding Sex Offender Limits—Smith asking for expansion of limits on where sex offenders (where minors were involved) cannot live within a quarter mile of an elementary school.

06-0110—Authority for Building & Safety inspectors to clean up unsafe and unhealthy properties.

06-0111—Changing the Boundaries of Mar Vista

(The number in bold that leads the paragraph is the Council File Number assigned to the motion. Read the complete motion by: 1) visiting the City Website (www.lacity.org) ... 2) clicking on "Council File Number" at page right... and, 3) enter the File Number.) ■

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Perspective-From Page 1

Then there was the matter of the Padilla anointment to chair Education and Neighborhoods. Is there anyone who doesn't know, we offered, that Alex Padilla is not a big fan of Neighborhood Councils. Garcetti nodded, "I thought through that. (Janice) Hahn and (Jose) Huizar are Council friends. I appointed Janice Vice Chair," and he felt that would more than balance out for NCs. The selection of Padilla wasn't punitive, he assured us.

Garcetti supports Council File Numbers for NCs, but wants some number of co-signers. As reported elsewhere in CityWatch, the File Number issue is headed for his Rules committee and our sense is, it's in good hands.

He also promised his support on a Neighborhood Council Emergency Preparedness Network and said he understands our concerns about the forthcoming 912, or Review, Commission.

When will an Inclusionary Zoning plan be resurrected? In the next three or four months, Garcetti predicted. He suggested that a new plan might be tested in one or two areas before an ordinance or plan is finalized.

Rhodes Scholar, jazz pianist, Council President, Eric Garcetti is a listener, intelligent, non-evasive and refreshing. It would appear that the City Council is in good hands. And that, perhaps, Neighborhood Councils are as well. ■

Council File Numbers-From Page 1.

Hahn spoke eloquently in support of the proposal and was prepared to vote to move it forward. Rosendahl had reservations. He had earlier offered his vision: let the upcoming 912 Commission deal with it or leave it for newly appointed E&N Chair, Alex Padilla, to handle. The crowd groaned. Rosendahl called for more discussion with the NC reps. The NCs and Hahn prevailed.

Rosendahl has issues with the Charter definition of Stakeholder and has used that as a reason for leaving consideration of the File Number matter until after the Commission reports out. As one NC representative pointed out, that report could be as much as two years away. And, the idea that a Neighborhood Council recommendation can continue to be stonewalled or shelved, only demonstrates the need for File Numbers for NCs.

There was no public opposition of note. Jim McQuiston, East Hollywood Neighborhood Association, said that File Numbers should be left for City Council use and advised that NCs should use the SEIU347 Suggestion Box for their ideas.

The proposal now goes to the Rules and Elections Committee, which could also be a sizable hurdle. When he became Council President, Eric Garcetti forwarded the File Number proposal to Rules, which he chairs, signaling, some think, that he takes the matter seriously and that he believes it has practical difficulties to be worked out.

It is this committee that will likely determine details such as whether and how many co-signers an NC will need, what the steps will be, and what, if any, standards will be set for the submission of recommendations. Garcetti has added this issue to his 11 Goals for NCs, an indication that he supports the concept. Council File Numbers could be on Garcetti's Rules Committee agenda sometime early next month. (*Council File Numbers for NCs, also called "Non-Community Impact Statements" and "Neighborhood Council Initiatives," has a Council File Number [05-0575]. To see the entire proposal, visit www.lacity.org and click on "Council Index."*) ■



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Planning 101—NCs CAN Improve Quality of Life

Planning Department Handles Small Part of LA Building. For 90%, By-right Rules Apply

By Jon Perica

The Planning Department has 327 authorized positions. About 2/3 of those staff are professional planners and the others are graphic, computer, and administrative support. There are three Deputy Directors beside the Director. A typical entry planner has a Masters in Planning and two to three years work experience in a smaller jurisdiction.

Back Story

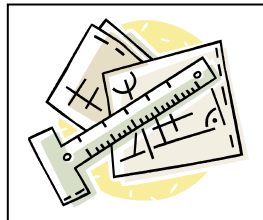
Planning issues dominate many NC agendas. Yet, few NC members understand much about the how Planning Department or Land Use works.

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

The Planning Department is divided into two main division, case processing and general planning. The case processing staff work on subdivisions, Zoning Administrator cases, and public counter functions at the Van Nuys and Downtown counters. These efforts help implement the “General Plan” on a project by project basis. The general planning staff work on updating various General Plan elements and create new plans as needed.

Currently, about 2,000 different cases are processed by the Planning Department each year. 75% of the cases are Zoning Administrator cases,

15% are subdivision and 10% are Citywide Planning Commission cases. In the last 5 years, overall case filings with the department have increased about 50% due to an improving economy. An “Expedite” unit has been created to allow for applicants to pay an additional fee of \$5,000 for a quicker than normal processing of an application for a subdivision case. In the future, other planning cases will also have an expedited option for processing.



The Planning Department rules on only a small part of all the building that is done in the City each year. If an applicant complies with all the requirements for the zone they are in, they only have to go to the Department of Building and Safety for a Plan Check and final inspection in order to construct a project. This by-right situation happens in 90% of all building projects. No public hearing is held by Building and Safety and no special conditions are placed on the project other than following the Planning and Zoning Code requirements. The Planning Department has authority over the other 10% that cannot build by-right and need some type of discretionary approval.

Public hearings occur and specific, extra, mitigation conditions are almost always required if a request is granted. Typically, when a determination is issued, it has 10-15 protective mitigation measures and copies go to adjacent neighbors or people at the public hearing and there is a 15 day appeal period. Only 10% of cases are appealed and only about 10% of staff actions are overturned on appeal. On appeal, conditions are typically added or modified.

See Page 10. “Planning 101”

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Planning 101-From Page 9

The Planning process, once a case is filed, is that a background investigator's report is prepared and a public hearing notice is sent out at least one month before the hearing. The Hearing Examiner or Zoning Administrator will usually make a verbal decision at the public hearing which normally last 30-45 minutes. Final decision actions are sent out in about 30 days for a Hearing Examiner and about 60 days for a Zoning Administrator.

The decisions by a Hearing Examiner and Zoning Administrator are based on Zone Code required "findings" (usually four or five). As an example, a Zone Variance has five findings and all five have to be made for the request to be granted:

- 1) What is the City imposed hardship?
- 2) What is unusual about the particular lot that is different from all other nearby lots in the same zone?
- 3) Has the City granted a similar request in the local community?
- 4) Would there be any adverse impacts that could not be mitigated?
- 5) Is the project consistent with the General Plan? Speakers at the public hearing should address ALL of the required findings. Speakers at the hearings get three to five minutes to talk depending on the number of speakers at the hearings.

The authority for the decision maker is broad. Using the Zoning Administrator example:

- 1) The request can be granted a permanent approval with conditions;
- 2) The request can be granted a fixed (limited) length of approval of typically one to five years;
- 3) The request can be approved permanently or for a limited period with a Plan Approval Review for another public hearing to evaluate compliance with conditions and operations within six months to two years. The request can also be denied and alcohol, dancing, motels and auto repairs which are likely to cause major problems, are the most likely cases to be denied.

The Zoning Administrators are the most experienced technical staff in the Planning Department, usually having worked 20-25 years throughout the department first. Hearings are assigned all over the City so the Zoning Administrator has experience with all areas and with all types of specialty cases such as coastal and equestrian. The Zoning Administrator applies uniform standards so a day care request is given the same conditions in Wilmington as a similar project in Westwood.

Once the Planning Committees of the Neighborhood Councils have a good understanding of all this background information, they need to make sure that they have the most influence on the outcome of the Planning Department determination.

While everyone who attends a public hearing gets the same opportunity to comment, the fact that comments come from not just an individual, but from a person representing 20,000 or more community stakeholders, will influence more strongly the overall assessment of a project at a public hearing.

To be as effective as possible, the following steps should be followed when evaluating and commenting on proposed planning projects:

- 1) Know the overall planning process that the project will go through (the Planning Department web site has a summary of the process for each type of case filed, so try www.cityofla.org/PLN for details);
- 2) Know about the types of cases that can be filed and their findings (the Zone Code is on the city attorney web site and lists findings);

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3) Know the possible mitigation conditions (check with the Chief Zoning Administrator 213-978-1318 and, you can make a copy in room 763 City Hall);

4) Meet with applicants of significant projects once your Neighborhood Council is made aware of the case in your area and constructively review and propose mitigation conditions to reach a compromise that you can support;

5) Send someone to the public hearing or send a letter seven days before the hearing date stating your overall position and your comments on each finding;

6) Discuss your position with your City Council Offices Planning Deputy before the hearing so you might have a joint position;

7) Be fair and balanced in whatever position you decide;

8) Monitor any conditions of approval that are important to your council and report to the Planning Department on compliance as needed.

The proposed MOU with the Planning Department, when finalized, will provide an important tool to educate and provide helpful information about planning projects in your community. The more your neighborhood knows and constructively participates in the project reviews and hearings, the more the Planning Department will respect your positive comments. You can provide site information that the Planning staff may not be aware of or emerging trends that only you know about and this information can be helpful to the department and strengthen your point of view.

The MOU will establish rights and responsibilities for both the Neighborhood Councils and the Planning Department and this will empower you. Better neighborhood input in the beginning of the process means better Planning Department output at the end of the process. The Quality of Life in Los Angeles is something you can influence and improve so get organized, get educated and start participating in the planning process. *(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).* ■