

January 10, 2017 Joint VNC Board & Discussion Forum Committee Meeting

Discussion Generator

Since it is the beginning of a new one-year DFC term, it is an opportune time to consider options for our work during this coming year.

This will be the topic of discussion at our December 13, 2016 Discussion Forum Committee meeting.

I. One option I would like us to consider is as follows:

The attached [LA Times OpEd](#) – contributed by two individuals who clearly understand the history of US land use and its zoning underpinnings – challenges both the mayor's [Hoover Style Development](#) & the protectionists' [Neighborhood Integrity Initiative](#) strategies for dealing with the current LA Housing Crisis. It has implications for the VNC's LUP and Homeless Committees among others.

The authors of the attached propose the following alternative integrated strategy:

- Instead of trying to preordain exactly what is or isn't allowed on every single piece of land, we should abandon micromanagement and — simultaneously — think big by funding improvements to infrastructure.
- We should begin by eliminating parking requirements and easing up restrictions on commerce in residential areas, which can make neighborhoods more walkable and diverse.
- We should reverse the bans on density that hindered L.A.'s ability to absorb new housing units in the early 1970s, resulting in today's affordability crises.
- We should undo community planning policies that exclude low-income residents from "high opportunity" neighborhoods by limiting where multi-family housing can be built.
- Opening up the city to more small and medium scale projects can empower families, building groups, co-ops and community corporations to become their own developers and city shapers, rather than trying to block change in order to feel heard.
- But such tweaks will only take us so far. If we want a better city, we as a community need to build a framework for productive growth, more equitable access to opportunity, and a more sustainable future. A safer street grid, expanded transit, well-maintained and shaded sidewalks, sustainable water and energy systems, more parks and adequate city services are the real pathways to a city that works for everyone.
- If we focus on public projects that benefit us all, a better city will evolve around them.

This is clearly a 'long-term' strategy. It is the only one that makes sense to me. It is 'urban design' based on 'visions' and it will not be easy to implement politically – but it seems that it could achieve the results currently being sought by the existing political forces but at a much cheaper cost.

I'd like the VNC's [Discussion Forum Committee](#) to explore strategies that could further this urban design approach to LA's land use and zoning laws.

The DFC is well positioned to do this since its mission is:

... to promote a more proactive, collaborative vision for [VNC Committees](#) to include in their deliberations as they formulate recommendations for Board consideration. The intent is to create a working framework of integrated strategies capable of achieving, over time, broader consensus and increased (see listing of referenced [VNC Vision Goals](#) [here](#)).

II. In this context, I'd also like us to consider my below remarks submitted to the board at its 161018 meeting:

Joe Murphy remarks addressing the following 161018 VNC Board Agenda motion 12 of the Mass, Scale and Character Committee:

[The VNC Board shall approve the report from the Mass, Scale and Character committee.](#)

This report continues a 40-year pattern of downzoning which has made it increasingly difficult to build the less-expensive housing in LA residential neighborhoods essential to addressing the current housing/homelessness crises.

It is the Venice equivalent of the citywide [Neighborhood Integrity Initiative](#).

Both seek to protect the physical character of our LA communities in ways which have eroded their social diversity.

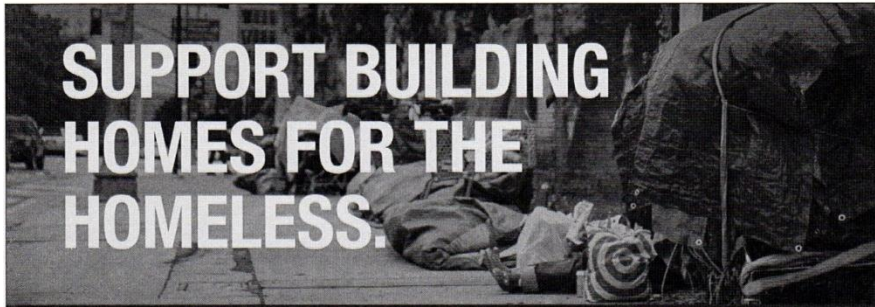
This self-inflicted legal/political framework is confronting us with a variety of short-term proposals which are unlikely to successfully address the long-term problems it has created – problems which prevent us from generating and considering long-term strategies capable of dealing with the complexities of the growing city in which we live.

I urge you to vote against this motion.

III. And further, I'd also like us to consider the relevance of the below information to the proposed urban design focus of the Discussion Forum Committee:

Joe Murphy reflections on the relevance of the following information extracted from the pamphlet distributed at the October 23, 2016 Democrat of the Year Awards dinner:

DEMOCRAT OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2016




SUPPORT BUILDING HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS.

VOTE YES on PROPOSITION HHH on November 8, 2016

VOTE NO on the NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRITY INITIATIVE on March 7, 2017

Proposition HHH builds homes for the homeless. The so-called "Neighborhood Integrity Initiative" bans virtually all new housing, and will make it impossible for Proposition HHH to work.





United Way of Greater Los Angeles
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council AFL-CIO
So. California Association of Non-Profit Housing
Midtown Los Angeles Homeless Coalition
Inner City Law Center

WE OPPOSE THE NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRITY INITIATIVE!

Skid Row Housing Trust Downtown Women's Center Climate Resolve Miracle Mile Democratic Club Los Angeles County Assessor Jeffrey Prang L.A. City Councilmember Joe Buscaino L.A. City Councilmember Nury Martinez L.A. City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield L.A. City Councilmember Gil Cedillo L.A. City Councilmember Mitchell Englander	L.A. City Councilmember Paul Krekorian L.A. City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell L.A. City Councilmember Curren Price Jimmie Woods-Gray, L.A. Fire Commissioner Mike Fong, LACCD Board of Trustees Casey H. Robinson, Elected CDP Delegate, AD50 Marilyn Grunwald, Secretary of the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley
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Visit www.GoesTooFar.com for full endorsement list and the facts!

Paid for by Coalition to Protect L.A. Neighborhoods and Jobs, a team of businesses, homeless advocates, renters, and homeowners. Major funding by CH Palladium, LLC and Westfield DD&C, LLC., 777 S. Figueroa St., Ste. 4050, Los Angeles, CA 90017. Additional information is available at ethics.lacity.org.

For the first time, to my knowledge, a clear distinction has been made between the negative impact of downzoning (the **Neighborhood Integrity Initiative**) on efforts to address the LA housing/homelessness crises (**Proposition HHH**).

And even more important, politically, is that this distinction is recognized by over 50% of the members of the Los Angeles City Council.

Is this an opportunity to formulate strategies capable of replacing the current land-use framework (which facilitates gentrification and the resulting erosion of economic diversity) with something better?

If so, what strategies would you recommend?

Sincerely,

Joe Murphy, Chair
Discussion Forum Committee
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IV. I recently arranged the following meeting as a way to respond to several inquiries about our upcoming 12/13/16 DFC Meeting. I'd also like us to consider the below questions in our 12/13/16 DFC Meeting discussion.

I hope we can focus, at this meeting, on long-term urban design matters and set aside the typical short-term discussion topics which seem to suck air out of such long-term discussions by shifting focus to distracting sidebars of “here's why you can't do that” or “here's what you should be doing now instead of talking about that” - the “you're wasting our time” sorts of arguments.

I hope we can also set aside the presidential election and its impacts on us individually and as a nation.

I'd like to start with introductions since I believe no one, including me, knows everyone.

But I believe it would help if I clarify why I've called this meeting.

I've been focusing attention on the *Venice Neighborhood Council's Discussion Forum Committee* which I chaired since its inception in May 2012 with its stated orientation to the 2009 VNC-adopted **Vision Goals** (all but one of which I drafted). The monthly DFC discussions of these **Vision Goals** sparked the recent idea of focusing the DFC on Urban Design - especially since its focus since July 2014 has been almost entirely on the **Diversity Vision Goal** - a focus which has led inevitably to consideration of the current LA housing/homelessness Crises: their causes and possible strategic solutions. In doing this, it has been impossible to ignore the various legal and political impacts of the land-use laws and their implementations - and I believe Urban Design is an inescapable part of the mix.

In my prior email, I explained why I included you as an invitee - so I won't repeat that information here.

I'll introduce myself further at the meeting and I hope you will do likewise.

Sincerely,

Joe Murphy
310-305-1444
joedmur@gmail.com

PS-The Canal Club, 6pm, next Tuesday 11/22/2016

November 22, 2016 JDM Urban Design Advisory Meeting Discussion Generator

1. I am puzzled by the apparent political alliance between the downzoning/protectionist forces and low-income/homeless people when their objectives appear to be diametrically opposed to one another.
 - o Low-income/homeless people would benefit greatly from increasing the supply of less-expensive homes which they can afford to purchase or rent. Downzoning/protectionist efforts reinforce the very gentrification which undermines efforts to encourage the supply of the housing which low-income/homeless people need.
 - o Are the downzoning/protectionist forces primarily wealthy home-owners?
 - o If so, what is it that creates this awkward political alliance between less wealthy low-income/homeless people and wealthier downzoning/protectionist forces?
 - o If not, what drives low-income/homeless people into this awkward alliance?
2. My perception is that ‘urban design’ is intended to create human settlements which encourage the long-term objective of socially enriching families with children regardless of economic diversity or racial/ethnic differences. If so, what are the urban design elements which could accomplish this objective? And what hasn't worked up to now?
3. Former President Hoover introduced zoning based on the assumption that there was abundant vacant land where new ‘cities’ could be created – ie, suburbs, primarily. My reading suggests that this is the framework around which LA land-use laws and regulations were shaped and are being applied today. If so, are there alternative frameworks which might be used to shape LA's future? And if so:
 - o What are they?
 - o What strategies would make efforts to implement such an alternate framework politically viable?
4. If you had four typical contiguous blocks of an existing LA residential neighborhood to ‘urban design’ – perhaps as a ‘model’ for use in other residential neighborhoods – what would that neighborhood look like? How would it differ from the existing selected four typical contiguous blocks of the existing LA residential neighborhood you started with? What would the (presumably changed) ‘urban design’ framework and its associated laws and regulations look like? What would you identify as the key differences between them?
5. **A ‘meta-question’ I’m adding today (12/1/2016): What changes to the current land-use laws would discourage the discouragement and encourage the encouragement of construction of homes in existing residential communities which would become, over time, within the economic reach of ownership by our less wealthy residents?**

JDM Caveat: I'm not sure that I've raised all or any of the ‘right’ assumptions or questions in what appears above.

V. A further JDM attempt to raise the 'right' assumptions/questions in preparing the agenda for our upcoming 170110 DFC Meeting:

In thinking about the agenda for our January 10, 2017 *Discussion Forum Committee* meeting, I started with the last page of the December 13, 2016 meeting's Discussion Generator which ends with the following 'meta-question':

What changes to the current land-use laws would discourage the discouragement and encourage the encouragement of construction of homes in existing residential communities which would become, over time, within the economic reach of ownership by our less wealthy residents?

My recent efforts to further broaden this 'meta-question' are reflected in my following replacement question:

What changes to current laws would discourage the discouragement and encourage the encouragement of efforts to provide more less expensive 'homes' in residential communities in a way which would become, over time, within the economic reach of ownership by less wealthy residents – 'homes' where they and their families would feel they 'belong' to a 'community' without the fears common in 'ghettos' – a systemic approach which would create & then maintain a housing supply/demand balance in all residential communities in which diversity could more naturally evolve?

I consider answers to the above 'meta-question' critical to developing any strategy capable of implementing the **intent** of the **Diversity Vision Goal** which reads as follows:

Consider strategies that encourage & facilitate realistic recommendations designed to increase economic diversity, including [affordable less expensive*] housing, etc.

[* Clarification inserted November 24, 2014 by Joe Murphy]

By generalizing the question and calling it a 'meta-question', I'm hoping that it will make our DFC discussions more deliberative – more likely, as intended by the Board in its Venice Neighborhood Council Vision Goals:

... to promote a more proactive, collaborative vision for VNC Committees to include in their deliberations as they formulate recommendations for Board consideration ...

and to thereby implement its

... **intent** ... to create a working framework of integrated strategies capable of achieving, over time, broader consensus and increased ... **[Focus on Children, Participation, Walkability, Diversity, Creativity, Collaboration, Brainstorming]**

I consider the above a **DRAFT** of my recommended strategy for DFC consideration at its January 10, 2017 meeting and I would appreciate suggestions.
