



LUPC APPLICATION

Contact Information:

Qualifying Stakeholder Address (*Dirección*):

<u>Print Name/Nombre et letra de Molde:</u> James Murez,		
Street address / Dirección	City / Ciudad	State / Estado Zip/ Código Postal

Mailing Address (if different):

same as above		
Street address / Dirección	City / Ciudad	State / Estado Zip/ Código Postal

Phone (Day) / Teléfono (día) james.murez@venicenc.org	Phone (Evening) / Teléfono (tarde)	Fax Number
<u>Email/ Correo Electrónico(very important)</u>		
Contact Numbers:		

I hereby certify, that I wish to serve on the Land Use and Planning Committee of the Venice Neighborhood Council and I am a Stakeholder within the boundaries of the VNC area.

Stakeholder Signature/ Firma _____ Date _12/6/2012._

Note: Stakeholders that did not registered as a VNC Stakeholder in one of the last two elections should register with the Secretary of the VNC at the December 18, 2012 Board of Officers Meeting. Please bring proof of stakeholder status with you to register.



Please answer all these questions and limit your answers to 200 words or less each. Email to rules@VeniceNC.org and Chair-LUPC@VeniceNC.org.

Questions:

Please explain why you wish to serve on the LUPC.

As a native of West Los Angeles, I have memories of watching the 405 freeway under construction (the first time), the Fox movie theater in Westwood Village being the tallest building west of downtown, electric trolley buses that ran throughout our neighborhoods on wires suspended overhead and visiting Pacific Ocean Park to go on the rides and get scared in the haunted house.

I have seen a lot of change over the years and, although our community leaders have always said it was good change, I have learned that too much of it was done from a political point of view which ultimately eroded the quality of life. I feel that land use and planning is more about the positive evolution of our environment without all the overtones of politics.

I have a keen ability to comprehend complex matrix of issues and extract interpretations that illustrate conditions that are not obvious visions to many people. I feel that this, along with my historic recollections and the desire to participate in the community in which I live, empower me with an obligation to apply to this committee.

- a) Have you served before on the LUPC or other planning and land use related committees? If so, please provide some detail.

In the late 1980's, Councilwoman Galanter asked me to serve on a committee she created for Venice to give her community advice on development projects. This was prior to the Venice Coastal Zone Specific and Land Use Plans' existence, both of which I was very actively involved in formulating. In the late 1990's when the City Charter was being revised, I became very engaged in supporting the concept of Neighborhood Councils as a way to decentralize the downtown government that had always ruled our community from afar.

I participated in helping to form the Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council, which later morphed into dropping the "grass roots" and being known as the VNC. I have served on the Land Use and Planning committee ever since.

Furthermore, I have served on the Los Angeles City Community Forest Advisory Committee, which is mandated by City Council to watch over our care for our urban trees. Additionally, I served on the following committees: Direct Marketing Advisory Committee for the State Department Agriculture, the Venice Family Clinic Artwalk



Steering Committee, the Venice Chamber of Commerce. the Ballona Lagoon Marine Preserve and the Venice Action Committee.

- b) Please state any qualifications or related experiences relevant to this position.

I am a California Licensed Contractor, but not a professional developer; I've designed, drafted (CAD) and constructed homes for my own use and taken them through the entire plan approval process with both the City and the Coastal Commission. Therefore, I have a good idea what it is like to be on the opposite side of the table.

Furthermore, as an early visionary in the microcomputer industry, I have many years of experience with automation. This has enabled me to conceive and develop a record keeping system tailored to the needs of case tracking from a neighborhood council perspective. This tool is located on the Internet at www.Cityhood.org and is currently tracking over 30,000 development permits citywide

Additionally, in the early 1990's I received an environmental enhancement grant from the California Department of Transportation. The funds were used to mitigate the adverse effects that improving Venice Blvd. had on the local community. This work allowed me to plant about 1400 trees throughout Venice. along our sidewalks, in our parks and public schools. During these ten years of tree planting and care, I got to know hundreds of volunteers and property owners that allowed these efforts to plant trees in front of their homes.

Lastly, as the manager of the Venice Farmers' Market for the past 25 years, I am exposed to many people whom I've gotten to know on a weekly basis. I hear their community concerns and issues, which gives me insight into what is happening around our town.

As a parent of two offspring, I have the personal experience of knowing what it is like to raise children in today's world. I required them to attend the public school system, as my wife and I had. Both Andi and Zak attended Venice High School and graduated with honors and have since become accomplished and respected leaders in their worlds. Andrea is presently a senior at Stanford on a pre-medical track and Captain of the women's swim team, and Zak, who graduated from Yale with dual majors, is now at UCSD, working towards a Ph.D. in computer science.

- 2) Please list the (2) most pressing planning and land use issues you feel are facing the Venice Community today. What would you like to see done in order to solve, manage, or improve these issues?

As a stakeholder who owns land in Venice. I recognize how much my property value has appreciated, but understand that this has come at a cost which I feel is directly related to



the success of the community business districts. The balance between commercial development and residential quality of life is key to me. This balancing act comes in many forms, from metered parking on business streets and the effects it will have on free parking in the surrounding neighborhoods, to the issues of character, scale and mass and how our guiding regulations don't seem to reflect what some in the community feel is desirable.

However, at the top of my list is getting more people involved in the process. I want to make it as easy as possible to let people know that there are issues on the calendar that may affect them. To this end, I plan to continue to develop software that engages people to participate in the Land Use and Planning Committee.

- 3) Under what kinds of situations do you feel it to be appropriate to grant exceptions or variances to the Venice Coastal Zone Specific Plan or other LA City Planning codes? *(Note the findings regarding these entitlements are listed below)*

Exceptions to the VCZSP and other guiding codes are very hard for me to grant, in particular when it comes to issues like parking or purchasing in-lieu spaces rather than providing what is required, or when a developer of a large scale project says something like, "Providing affordable housing on site is economically infeasible" These allowances can not come at the expense of the neighbors or the general population of the community. We have rules to give everyone the same set of standards and there needs to be something very out of the ordinary to justify supporting a developer's desire to push the envelope past the limits.

- 4) Please review the Venice Coastal Zone Specific Plan and the Venice Land Use Plan (which was certified by the California Coastal Commission) and comment briefly on both your knowledge of and your opinion of each.

I participated in the development of both of these documents. I have written amendments to them that have been adopted by the VNC and submitted to the City as future revisions. I have appealed several projects to the Coastal Commission for not adhering to the rules described in the LUP and won in nearly all instances.

I would like to say I know these documents inside and out, but there always seems to be someone who comes up with a new slant. Just a few months ago, for instance, for the first time, I realized what I believe is an error in the definition of building height in the Central Venice Walk-Street area, which allowed a flat roof to exceed the height of a sloped roofline. Clearly, the workshops of the 1980's that defined the community's desire for this issue had a much different idea in mind. But this raises a bigger problem: how to revise these documents in the public arena in a timely fashion. Perhaps the answer is through strong policy statements published by the Venice Neighborhood



Council, because if we wait for the City to fix the flaws, you will all grow as old and gray as I have become before they are implemented.

Thank you for your considerations at this time and for allowing me in the past to serve on this important neighborhood committee.

Access VCZSP at <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/specplan/pdf/NenCoastal.pdf>.

Access Venice Land Use Plan at <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/othrplan/OPARENENLUP.HTM>

VARIANCES AND SPECIFIC PLAN EXCEPTIONS

Sec. 562, Los Angeles City Charter

The Area Planning Commission may permit an exception from a specific plan if it makes all the following findings:

- (a) That the strict application of the regulations of the specific plan to the subject property would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the specific plan;
- (b) That there are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the subject property involved or to the intended use or development of the subject property that do not apply generally to other property in the specific plan area;
- (c) That an exception from the specific plan is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right or use generally possessed by other property within the specific plan area in the same zone and vicinity but which, because of special circumstances and practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships is denied to the property in question;
- (d) That the granting of an exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements adjacent to or in the vicinity of the subject property; and
- (e) That the granting of an exception will be consistent with the principles, intent and goals of the specific plan and any applicable element of the general plan.

Los Angeles Municipal Code, CLAMC)
Chapter L General Provisions & Zoning,
Article 2, Sec. 12.27, Variances

D. Findings for Approval. The decision of the Zoning Administrator shall be supported by written findings of fact based upon evidence taken, written or oral statements and documents presented, which may include photographs, maps and plans, together with the results of any staff investigations.

Consistent with Charter Section 562, no variance may be granted unless the Zoning Administrator finds all of the following:

1. That the strict application of the provisions of the zoning ordinance would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the zoning regulations
2. That there are special circumstances applicable to the subject property such as size, shape, topography, location or surroundings that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity;