

SOUTH LOS ANGELES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S FORUM

February 5, 2013

Los Angeles City Council
200 N Spring St
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Council File 08-3050: Establishment of an Economic Development Department

Dear Councilmembers,

The South Los Angeles Executive Director's Forum and the undersigned organizations write to you in recognition of the City Council's work to date to create a vehicle and strategy to promote economic development following the loss of the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA). With the loss of the CRA/LA, communities are at-risk for continued under-investment in vital infrastructure, businesses, and quality of life improvements that yield tangible economic benefits at the individual, community and regional level. The City of Los Angeles risks further disenfranchisement of communities such as South Los Angeles and Boyle Heights from future economic opportunities without a progressive vision and implementation of forward thinking economic development activities that address more than 50 years of public and private divestment and only marginally successful redevelopment. The current proposal for the creation of an Economic Development Department (EDD) and Citywide Economic Development Non-Profit (CEDN) leaves far too many questions unanswered and has not been sufficiently vetted within the broader stakeholder community. It is with this aim that we request the council delay action on this item for no less than 60 days to allow for greater community review and input.

Economic development must be more than land management and must speak to building and sustaining a higher quality of life for all residents. This should include job creation that provides financial security in communities with the highest rates of chronic unemployment; industries that not only contribute and reinvest in the local economy but also protect against environmental risk to local communities; investments that leverage federal, state and private capital to create new opportunities for small business development; and the active participation of local stakeholders in the development and implementation of a long term economic strategy.

While we support the concept of coordination and consolidation of activities across city agencies involved in the various aspects of economic development to increase efficiency and reduce redundancy, the impact of the proposed realignment on the economic vitality of the communities of greatest need has not been thoroughly analyzed particularly as it relates to concerns for equity and potential loss of critical services and programs under the Community Development Department. The lack of specificity around the nature and use public funding is unsettling. While we understand the challenges and barriers to development in Los Angeles over the past decades, the City's effort to cede public authority to private control remains troubling and warrants greater public review.

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The City's engagement with the public regarding the creation of the EDD and CEDN has been woefully lacking from what is required to begin a major new initiative to facilitate city-wide economic development using public funds. With far-reaching consequences to communities with a chronic lack of resources, it is critical that community stakeholders be involved with the development of this work. Involving communities from an early-stage of these efforts is a down-payment on the dividends to be returned later thanks to organized community groups in support of work by the EDD and CEDN. Any work to create an EDD and CEDN must incorporate a public process and accountability standard to insure that the interests of the community are being undertaken by the EDD and CEDN.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We are available to provide additional information and assist the city in the development of the EDD and CEDN that will meet the parameters outlined above. Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact Lark Galloway-Gilliam, Executive Director of the Community Health Councils directly at (323) 295-9372.

Sincerely,

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