



Homeowners of Encino

◀ Serving the Homeowners of Encino ▶

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Los Angeles City Clerk
Los Angeles City Hall, Room 360
200 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Subject: Funding Request to Revise City Zoning Code, CF-~~12-0450~~ 12-0460

Homeowners of Encino has had an opportunity to review your \$990,000 Request to Fund A Comprehensive Zoning Code Revision. Please place our comments below in the formal record on this matter:

Description of the 5-year project for which funding is being requested:

"The purpose of this long overdue project is to establish a brand new zoning structure for the City of Los Angeles. The revamped Zoning Code will include clear and predictable language that will offer a wider variety of zoning options to more effectively implement the goals and objectives of the General Plan and accommodate the City's future needs and development opportunities. Updated zoning options that reflect the diversity of Los Angeles will allow each neighborhood to maintain a distinct sense of place, while improving the sustainability, economic vitality, and quality of life for all residents. Over the five-year work program, the Department will produce the following three main deliverables:
Dynamic Web-Based Zoning Code - A clear and predictable Zoning Code that will allow for a customized and interactive on-line experience
Layperson's Guide to Zoning - A series of easy-to-read guides to the Zoning Code that will help people navigate through regulations and procedures
Unified Downtown Development Code - A new set of zoning tools for the revitalization of Downtown effective within the first 24 - 30 months of the program that will ensure it is poised to lead the charge for Los Angeles's economic recovery."

General Comments:

It is absolutely essential that the Planning Dept. maintain two clear and distinct tracks with respect to the Zoning Code revision:

1. Code simplification - Redrafting the language of the Zoning Code into clear simple, understandable English is a ministerial task. Preparation of a series of easy-to-read guides to the Zoning Code that will help people navigate the code and placing an interactive form of the Zoning Code on the web are also ministerial tasks. They do not affect the zoning in the city and are not a form of city-wide upzoning.
2. Changes in the Zoning Code structure and content - The task of making substantive changes in the Zoning Code will impact current zoning levels, land density, building rules, etc. The use of the Zoning Code revision as a set of zoning tools for the revitalization of Downtown, or other areas of the city in order to "lead the charge" for Los Angeles's economic recovery is not a ministerial task, it is substantive.

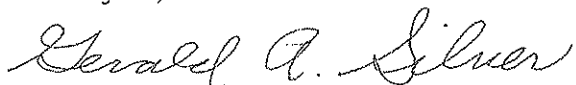
Unless these two distinct and discrete tasks are treated separately, this proposed revision of the Zoning Code carries substantial environmental, CEQA, legal, land use and population density issues. A rewrite of the City's Zoning Code will muster powerful special interest groups with narrow economic incentives to recast the Zoning Code in a manner that will clearly upzone Los Angeles.

Specific Comments:

1. The tasks of Zoning Code simplification and use the Zoning Code as a tool to achieve economic development or recovery should be given separate Council File numbers, hearing dates and implementation. They must not be melded, conflated, nor the distinction blurred in any manner.
2. It is critical that City follow a fair and open public process that includes extensive community outreach, public hearings, and public involvement. The project should implement a Public Advisory Committee made up of individuals that represent the public interest, and not merely advocates for developers or special interests. The City should embark on an extensive series of Public Forums that includes stakeholders and members of the community at every level of the process. This has been one of the failures of City government in the past.
3. The Planning Department documents claim the revised ordinance is designed to create a "dynamic web-based Zoning Code, a clear and predictable Zoning Code that will allow for a customized and interactive on-line experience". Placing the Zoning Code on the web and developing "a series of easy-to-read guides" are ministerial tasks, and must not involve any change in zoning substance.
4. The "development of a Downtown Development Code to improve the quality of development citywide by providing a better framework for analyzing the merits of proposed projects that require discretionary reviews" is in fact substantive and is not ministerial, and should not be treated as part of the revision.
5. We have concerns about the manner in which the city is going about this task because it is not being properly publicized nor vetted by the community, Neighborhood Councils, homeowner and resident associations, and others.. There was not adequate notice or time to allow groups and individuals to analyze, examine, assess these major sea changes in the Zoning Code.
6. The Zoning Code has been in place for many decades. There is no need to rush or fast track this effort. We ask that you allow ample time for residents and community associations to voice their concerns. It is regrettable that the hearing before the PLUM Committee on April 24, 2012 was given limited public notice. No public comment was allow at the April 24th meeting. If this is any indication of the manner in which the public will be involved in the Zoning Code revision, the process is off to a regrettable start.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on the Zoning Code revision funding. Please provide extensive outreach in order to maximize public comment before taking any further action.

Thank you,



Gerald A. Silver
President

Cc: Councilmembers