



April 30, 2013

Council President Herb J. Wesson, Jr.
Los Angeles City Council
200 N Spring St, Room 430
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Consideration of Motion 13-0478: Edible Landscapes: **SUPPORT**

Dear Council President and Esteemed Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, I write to express our support of Council Motion 13-0478, a motion to increase the availability of local food in communities throughout Los Angeles. The Los Neighborhood Land Trust is a community-based organization whose mission is to create small, accessible urban parks and gardens to remedy the critical lack of green spaces in greater Los Angeles' underserved neighborhoods, and ensure participation of residents throughout the process of envisioning, building and managing these parks and gardens. We have seen the positive impact first hand that local food production can have in communities with poor access to healthy food alternatives. This motion, parallel to our own efforts to inventory opportunity sites for community gardens and parks, is a strong first step for the City to take to become a leader in supporting healthy, green communities. We support your initiative and offer technical assistance to City Departments going forward.

As indicated in the motion, healthy food access is not equitably distributed in the City of Los Angeles. Too often, low-income communities, particularly those of color, struggle to access fresh, affordable, healthy fruits and vegetables that are the core of healthy diet. However, neighborhoods across the city have turned to local community gardens to supplement their diet and have provided a powerful case study about the local food production's vital and important link to healthy living.

Along with the vital importance of increasing access to healthy food, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust requests that the motion request that the assessment also include opportunities for new parks, especially in low-income, park poor areas.

Following consultation with City Departments and community partners, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust secured funding for a project called TILL – Transforming Inner-City Lost Lots. This assessment, to be conducted over the next year, will identify sites within the city's portfolio of vacant and surplus land that could be appropriately re-purposed to provide much needed food and green space access to communities. This assessment will include the development of site profiles indicating each site's unique characteristic relevant to re-use. The development of this assessment can provide a valuable asset to City as it inventories these surplus sites. We look forward to collaborating with the various City Departments to develop this assessment to address the significant need of providing opportunities to increase access to healthy foods and safe places to play.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alina Bokde".

Alina Bokde
Executive Director



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Council President Herb J. Wesson
Los Angeles City Council
200 N Spring St
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Support for Motion, Council File 13-0478

Dear Council President and Esteemed Councilmembers,

We write you today to express our support for the council motion (Council File No. 13-0478) to increase the availability local food in communities throughout Los Angeles through “Edible Landscapes”. For more than a decade, Community Health Councils (CHC) has been at the forefront of work to eliminate health disparities by expanding healthcare coverage, increasing access to quality healthcare, physical activity, and improving healthy food options in under-resourced communities. Through our work with broad-based coalitions such as the Food Policy Roundtable and the Coalition for an Active South Los Angeles, CHC recognizes the impact of the built environment on the health of individuals and communities. This work has identified the availability of local green space such as community gardens and parks as a critical element in supporting community health. The proposed motion is a strong first step for the City to unlock the latent potential of city-owned vacant surplus property to address pressing health inequities and resource shortages in communities like South Los Angeles. In addition, we respectfully request the City Council amend the motion to include the following recommendations:

1. Expand the assessment of city-owned surplus properties to include consideration of sites that would be appropriate for the development of new parks;
2. Expand the list of Department’s to report back to City Council to include the Harbor Department and World Airports which may have appropriate and under-utilized properties in high-need areas;
3. Include “unmarketable properties” such as oddly-shaped or small properties within Departmental assessments to best utilize all city properties for the benefit of local communities;
4. Include sites where an interim-use and/or sale agreement would be appropriate;

5. Ensure that identified sites are flagged as such when the newly created Economic Development Department consolidates surplus property; and
6. Consult with the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust's Transforming Inner-City Lost Lots (TILL) Project for technical assistance and criteria for selection of potential community garden and park sites.

The City of Los Angeles holds within its possession a considerable amount of surplus vacant properties, including both buildings and land. Many of these properties are located within residential areas, located along aging commercial corridors, and are small, unusually shaped or otherwise less than ideal for commercial or residential development. While these sites may be unattractive for commercial and residential development, they can serve as powerful tools to promote health in communities like South Los Angeles, which suffers from a dearth of healthy food options and an inequitable distribution of parks and open space.

The motion correctly identifies food security as an important issue to be addressed. Limited access to supermarkets with affordable, nutritious food creates "food desert" conditions which serve as significant barriers to healthy eating. South LA has over 1.3 million people and only 60 full-service grocery stores. On average, each store serves 22,156 residents. In contrast, the 57 stores in West LA serve an average of only 11,150 residents each. Furthermore, the over-concentration and abundance of stand-alone fast food restaurants in South Los Angeles is further widening the gap between healthy and unhealthy Angelenos. More than 71% of restaurants in South LA are fast food in comparison to just 40% in West Los Angeles and 47.7% countywide. This lack of access to healthy food outlets has contributed to disproportionately negative health outcomes in South Los Angeles including: the highest rates of adult obesity (35 percent), childhood obesity (29 percent), adults diagnosed with diabetes (12 percent), and hypertension (29 percent) in the county.

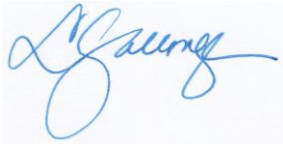
Making land available for community gardens and local farms can address these issues by dramatically augmenting the availability of commercial food systems within food-desert communities. Existing community garden sites in Los Angeles provides ample evidence that families with little access to healthy food are augmenting their diets with food they have grown for themselves. The City's efforts to support community gardens and local food systems by utilizing properties within the City's real estate portfolio in this regard will go far to address the health disparities mentioned above.

In addition to the lack of healthy food in South Los Angeles, families struggle to access safe and quality places to play. Numerous studies have documented the inequity in open/recreational space in communities of color in Los Angeles. A 2009 Department of Recreation and Parks Needs Assessment concluded that the City lacks the appropriate levels of neighborhood and community parks that are close to homes and that the parks that do exist are not equitably distributed. Strikingly, residents in the South Los Angeles Planning Area have access to approximately .52 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents while city residents outside of the plan area have access to 5.62 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Additionally, residents countywide have access to 75.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, much of which exists far

outside of South Los Angeles and/or is only available to South Los Angeles residents by vehicle or transit. Lack of access to open space and parks limits opportunities to be physically active and contributes to the current health crisis in South Los Angeles. Given the critical need for new physical activity resources including parks and open space the city's limited ability to develop these resources on its own, a review of potential park sites within the city-owned vacant land portfolio is an important step to identify strategies to increase much needed access.

Again, we thank you for your consideration of this letter and recognize the Council's leadership to prioritize work to increase the availability of local food and green space in Los Angeles. To discuss this letter or other matters related to our work on healthy eating and active living, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 323-295-9372.

Respectfully submitted,



Lark Galloway-Gilliam
Executive Director

Cc: City Clerk