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Mike Bonin  
City of Los Angeles  
Councilman, Eleventh District

September 14, 2016

**Council File 16-0763-S1 (Martin Expo Town Center)**  
**Case: CPC-2013-2567-GPA-VZC-HD-CU-MCUB-CUX-ZV-SPR**  
**Environmental: 2012-3063-EIR**

Dear Councilman Bonin:

We commend you on obtaining an agreement for an additional 15% workforce housing within the Martin Expo mega-project. While we agree with your recent push for workforce housing in new projects within your district, you appear to have changed your focus from “put neighborhoods first” (LATimes) to “put developers first” (CityWatch). Mirroring the Planning Department approach, you have failed to undertake a contextual and comprehensive review of the Martin mega-project. In exchange for 77 units of workforce housing, you leave the community with a pathetic amount of open space, tremendously increased traffic, and no plan what so ever of how to make Metro access safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Frankly, we expected better negotiating skills from someone in your position.

“Transit oriented development” (TOD) is all about solving the “first / last mile” problem. Safe pedestrian and bicycle access to Metro stops is required for their success. Indeed, the recent report from Metro<sup>1</sup> found that 50% of Expo riders either walk, bicycle or skate to their stop, which is already far lower than with most transit systems. So why further inhibit it?

What in your Developer Agreement dated September 8, 2016 promotes pedestrian safety and Metro access? Actually ... nothing. Let's examine what in this project, sanctioned by you, inhibits pedestrian and Metro access, as opposed to enhancing it.

1. 150,000 square feet of commercial office space
2. destination grocery store (35,000 sq. ft.)
3. destination live music
4. destination retail space (46,000 sq. ft.)
5. destination restaurant space (18,000 sq. ft.)

Together these will produce >7,000 new car trips daily. Do note that this is a gross underestimate because 1) the number of office workers predicted in the FEIR is up to 80% too low <sup>2</sup> and 2) the effect of regular, live music was not counted.

**Luxury apartments, 403 included in the Martin mega-project, do not encourage the use of Metro.** Persons who can afford these luxury apartments own cars and will not be walking to the Metro, nor anywhere else<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the Martins are so sure that no residents of their mega-development will be walking, that they are requesting a destination grocery store despite that fact that two such stores already exist within an eight minute walking distance and a third within a nine minute bike ride (map links to: [TraderJoesOlympic](#), [RalphsOlympic](#), and [RalphsCloverfield](#)).

**Successful TOD provide safe, walkable environments that increase physical activity and can improve the health of inhabitants<sup>4</sup>.** Apparently your voting constituents need to remind you and your staff that Los Angeles still ranks amongst the most dangerous of cities for pedestrians. According to a recent Los Angeles Times article<sup>5</sup> pedestrians account for 33% of the fatalities or severe injuries, but only 18% of trips are completed on foot. Of these dead and maimed, the elderly and children account for 30%. Perhaps the Martin developers are on to something, "Don't leave the project on foot—you might die!" Again, we feel the need to point out to you that there are a number of schools in the immediate area where we expect children as pedestrians. Our neighborhood in particular has a large proportion of elderly residents. Please ask yourself, "What have I as Councilman and representative of these children, their parents, and the elderly done to increase their safety?"

**Much of Los Angeles is undergoing gentrification, particularly around Metro stops<sup>6</sup>.** You have an opportunity here to go against the flow and provide the community a legacy in the form of a truly transit oriented development. In combination with your stance on allowing second dwelling units in R-01 neighborhoods, these Metro-adjacent mega-projects increase real-estate value and drive families further from the the city and public transportation cores. Indeed, as the Metro light rail expands, overall ridership decreases<sup>7</sup>. Is this because Metro and the City encourage these sort of mixed use projects near stations, but fail to include sufficient affordable housing (and you still do not Mr. Bonin)? Even a decade ago Boston offered development

grants only if a minimum of 25% affordable housing is included in TODs<sup>8</sup>. This development creates more luxury housing for people who do not use public transit. Workforce are also more likely to have cars than are occupiers of low income housing, and thus further diminish the public transit focus of the project.

**I suspect that neither you nor your staff recognize that the pathetic amount of public open space you praise in your Development Agreement is nearly 50% smaller than the area enclosed by the Olympic / Bundy intersection.** How ironic this is for a “pedestrian oriented project”. Despite the Martin mega-project being touted as TOD, the developers themselves state that enhancement or construction of public parks near to the project is not needed because office workers return to their own neighborhoods and use amenities near their homes<sup>9</sup>. Where are the residents to play and exercise on this new mega-project? Unlike similar large projects in Santa Monica (Water Garden, Yahoo! Center) this project gives no usable recreational space back to the community and new residents. Why would you want to put your name on a project that gives so little back to the community that you represent?

**What use to the surrounding community are three live entertainment permits handed out at your discretion without the approval of the Neighborhood Council?** Thank you for the live music with no restrictions next to R-01 residences. The noise and traffic impacts of these concerts were not studied. Music concerts at the Santa Monica pier have consistently attained a larger attendance each year. Since concert traffic will be outside of normal business hours, it will be outside of our parking restriction hours. People will park and walk if free on-site parking is not provided. Once we finally fall asleep at the conclusion of the concert, we will be awakened by the patrons walking back drunk and noisy to their cars parked in our R-01 neighborhood. The community is overwhelmingly opposed to this.

**What is the future of Bonin’s WLA?** Giant projects with no height restrictions, trampling of the community plan, increased pedestrian traffic deaths, a few score low income units to replace the many score that are torn down, soaring housing prices, and no new parks. Won’t it be great? We the community support your push for increased affordable housing in new projects, indeed we would support much more than measly 20% you obtained in this project. Yet, the voters who already live here, who already have invested in the area want your promise of neighborhood friendly development. We also want, and demand safe access to our public transportation, not a mega-profit project that decreases our safety. Metro and the City both tell us that they cannot pay to improve our built environment, that we must request the money from developers. Unfortunately, you sold us out on this project for *nothing* in return. *Furthermore, you and your staff left our negotiations with this developer hanging, while short-circuiting the community’s ability to weigh-in on this mega-project by*

*bypassing City Council PLUM.*

**Sadly, your proposed Developer Agreement does little to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, despite the fact that this is a supposed pedestrian oriented development.** All of the negotiated traffic monies to be set aside are going to placing a traffic signal on the project that should have been required by the Department of Planning in the first place. There is 1) no extra money set aside to slow and reduce cut-through traffic in surrounding neighborhoods, 2) no plan or money set aside to make Bundy more walkable, 3) no plan to get bicycles safely through the Olympic intersection, and 4) no plan to get bikes down Bundy. Even the lazy approach to improving safety, reducing traffic overall by reducing the size of the project, was not taken. With the 50,000 sq. ft. reduction in office space combined with the Expo parking we saw only a 100 daily car trip reduction.

In short, it appears that you gave up on us, your community. You got your 15% workforce and we got nothing. We know that you are a more capable negotiator than such results suggest. It is not too late to do the right thing and ensure that this monstrosity of a project does more than provide immense profit to the developer.

**We respectively suggest that you amend your Developer Agreement to include the following:**

1. Preference for workforce housing be for those without cars and those that work within walking distance of this project.
2. Forbid conditional use permits for live entertainment.
3. Annual, unannounced traffic counts, and parking data, the latter preferably via an automated data gathering system, akin to 20th Century Fox Studios.
4. \$100,000 set aside for Bundy triangle park opening and \$40,000 yearly for maintenance in perpetuity.
5. \$350,000 set aside for pedestrian safety enhancements along Bundy and traffic calming measures along neighborhood streets, with no time limit on its use.
6. Reduction of the size of the grocery store to no more than 10,000 sq. ft.
7. Reduction of the commercial to 50,000 sq. ft.
8. Reduction of the retail space to the original proposed 67,000 sq. ft.
9. \$20,000 toward updating of the community plan
10. Permit parking for all surrounding resident blocks that request it and payment of such permits at the expense of the developer in perpetuity

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Xochitl", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Aric Gregson, MD  
Xochitl Gonzalez, MFA  


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<sup>1</sup><http://thesource.metro.net/2016/09/12/customer-survey-of-expo-line-riders/>

<sup>2</sup>Before this project is even started, the average office space per worker in North America will be 151 sq. ft., according to real estate data provider CoreNet Global.

<sup>3</sup>Robin Kniech and Melinda Pollack, Making Affordable Housing at Transit a Reality: Best Practices in Transit Agency Joint Development (Denver: FRESC, 2010), 5, <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/transitagencyjointdevelopment2010.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Community Preventive Services Task Force, Environmental and Policy Approaches to Increase Physical Activity: Community-Scale Urban Design Land Use Policies (Atlanta: Community Preventive Services Task Force, 2011), <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/environmental-policy/communitypolicies.html>

<sup>5</sup><http://luskin.ucla.edu/2016/08/29/gentrification-displacement-southern-california/>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.latimes.com/opinion/livable-city/la-oe-podemski-walkable-city-20160912-snap-story.html> and <http://graphics.latimes.com/la-pedestrians/>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-ridership-slump-20160127-story.html>

<sup>8</sup>Reardon and Dutta, Growing Station Areas, 2

<sup>9</sup>Martin Expo Town Center FEIR, p2-26

