

My name is Charles Brown and I live in the mid City area near La Brea and Wilshire.

I am here to urge you to adequately budget City Planning so more employees can be hired to address issues of neighborhood preservation and the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

My neighborhood is seeing the rapid development of multiple oversized houses that are out of scale for the neighborhoods, have no consideration of context and are being built with total disregard for surroundings. They are considerably larger than other houses in the neighborhood, block light, take up much of the lot, etc.

My house is next to one of the earlier of these monstrosities – where there used to be an adjacent driveway, allowing plenty of southern light into our home we now have almost all sunlight blocked and have needed to put up a fence because of trash cans and yard refuse that was casually discarded with minimal respect for lot lines.

My wife and I, with our children, have lived in a wonderful urban neighborhood for almost 30 years and believe it is important that neighborhoods all over the city be permitted to maintain their family character while accommodating reasonable growth. These pressures that are destructive to the community are not unique to my neighborhood. I ran across a statement from Maria Cabildo of ELACC just week indicating that the same destructive trends we see in our west side neighborhood are happening on the east side.

We need a sufficiently funded and staffed planning department to help achieve the goal of maintaining the liveability of neighborhoods and integrating growth, infill and rehabilitation to the existing fabric of the city.

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May 13, 2014

City Council Budget and Finance Committee:

Hon. Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair

Hon. Councilmember Bob Blumenfield

Hon. Councilmember Mike Bonin

Hon. Councilmember Mitchell Englander

Hon. Councilmember Paul Koretz

CC: City Council President, Herb Wesson

RE: Planning Department Budget Request for additional staffing

Honorable Councilmembers:

I would like to add my voice of strong support for the Planning Department's request that you include \$380,000 in the City's final 2014-2015 budget to fund four staff positions devoted to conserving older and historic neighborhoods. Although this is a personal letter, I have been asked to assure you that West Adams Heritage Association (WAHA), for whom I am the longtime Editor and recent Board member, also supports the Planning Department's request.

I have lived in West Adams for 31 years, and have witnessed the major improvements to the community's period character and historical neighborhoods during this time. One of the most important reasons that these neighborhoods have been able to transform from neglected (and sometimes truly blighted) pockets to beautiful enclaves has been through the efforts of the historic preservation activists and their successful advocacy to create multiple designated historic districts within the larger West Adams District.

These same neighborhoods have been experiencing the negative impact of the current backlog due to understaffing; and at the same time many other discrete neighborhood pockets have been back-burnered in the effort to designate them.

My own neighborhood, Angelus Vista, along with the adjacent Arlington Heights neighborhood, cannot move forward with any sort of HPOZ designation effort because the Planning Department's staffing shortage. This despite having been surveyed by SurveyLA and also despite a major collaborative project between West Adams Heritage Association (WAHA), the local neighborhood council (The United Neighborhoods of the Historic Arlington Heights, West Adams and Jefferson Park Communities Neighborhood Council, or UNNC) and the Planning Department itself to acquire and archive the more than 6,000 original/historical building permits also required for an HPOZ designation. We need the additional staff.

There are numerous other examples in West Adams. The University Park HPOZ has already surveyed a six-block “orphan” section of the University Park neighborhood to expand the HPOZ boundaries and include this small area within the protections that a designated historic district affords. But without staffing the Planning Department has not agreed to move forward. One Victorian cottage was demolished this year because there are no protections or even review required. It would have been a Contributor to the expanded HPOZ.

I sit on a UNNC-appointed “HPOZ Task Force Committee” for the Jefferson Park HPOZ which covers over 2,000 properties, because Jefferson Park has not been allowed to have an actual HPOZ Board (in violation of the HPOZ ordinance) due to the Planning Department’s staffing issues. We do the best we can, but our recommendations technically mean nothing and the neighborhood is urgently in need of a true HPOZ Board.

Arlington Heights has approximately 1,200 unprotected character residences, the vast majority of which would either be Contributors or Contributors, Altered, if only the Planning Department had the staff to start moving forward on an HPOZ.

West Adams Heights is a “historic district” but not an HPOZ; it cannot be converted until and unless the Planning Department has more staff. So not only do these neighborhoods remain generally unprotected and thus irreplaceable resources are being lost every month that we delay, but to the extent that the Historic Resources Surveys have already identified certain individual properties as historic, technically those owners must comply with all the rules but are ineligible for the benefits and incentives, such as tax savings with a Mills Act Historical Property Contract.

All because the Planning Department is short-staffed.

I and other concerned, knowledgeable historic preservationists are even now occasionally tasked with writing preliminary/draft staff reports when we are trying to move initiatives forward, since there are not Planning staff members with “free” time to do the work, which would otherwise be delayed.

For all of these reasons, please do approve the Planning Department’s budget request to fund these four positions.

Thank you,

Laura Meyers

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Specializing in Historic Homes of West Adams

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Hon. Councilmember Mike Bonin

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CC: *City Council President, Herb Wesson*

RE: Planning Department Budget Request for additional staffing

Honorable Councilmembers:

I strongly support the Planning Department's request that you include \$380,000 in the City's final 2014-2015 budget to fund four staff positions devoted to conserving older and historic neighborhoods. There are strong economic and neighborhood improvement justifications to support the increased staffing which is sorely needed to reverse the already understaffed and backlogged condition.

As a 30-year West Adams resident and business owner, I firmly believe that continued understaffing of this Department will be a significant deterrent to increased private economic investment in the Mid-City/West Adams/Jefferson Park/Leimert Park neighborhoods. With three decades of involvement in real estate in these areas, I have seen the dramatic positive economic impact of properly functioning historic review panels and programs (Mills Act for example) which provide incentives for quality investment. Specific and immediate impacts include: increases in jobs for neighborhood tradespersons, increase in property asset values for homeowners, and resulting increase of property tax revenues to the City.

Our neighborhoods are already experiencing the negative impact of the current backlog due to understaffing; please see a few specific examples below.

I sit on the University Park HPOZ Board. We have already surveyed a six-block "orphan" section of the University Park neighborhood to expand the HPOZ boundaries and include this small area within the protections that a designated historic district affords. But without staffing the Planning

Department has not agreed to move forward. Neighbors are frustrated; historic resources are being lost or damaged.

I own a landmark property, the Starr Dairy Farmhouse – HCM No. 865, within the Jefferson Park HPOZ which covers over 2,000 properties. Jefferson Park has not been allowed to have an actual HPOZ Board (in violation of the HPOZ ordinance) due to the Planning Department's staffing issues.

I have real estate clients who are interested in historic homes – my specialty – who do not know if or when their historic neighborhoods, such as Arlington Heights (initiated for HPOZ status in 2002 and still waiting), Wellington Square (ditto), and the already-surveyed former Community Redevelopment Area Normandie 5/"Halldale" neighborhood will become HPOZs, since the Planning Department cannot move forward without additional staffing.

Not only do these neighborhoods remain generally unprotected and thus irreplaceable resources are being lost every month that we delay, but to the extent that the Historic Resources Surveys have already identified certain individual properties as historic, technically those owners must comply with all the rules but are ineligible for the benefits and incentives, such as tax savings with a Mills Act Historical Property Contract. All because the Planning Department is short-staffed.

Please do approve the Planning Department's budget request to fund these four positions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Raposa". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

David Raposa, Broker/Owner



TO: City of Los Angeles Budget and Finance Committee
 FROM: SEIU 721 Research and Policy Department
 RE: Bureau of Street Services, Tree trimming and hidden costs in outsourcing
 DATE: 5/12/2014

As a supplement to the Coalition of LA City Unions presentation, we would like to provide an empirical example of the hidden costs of outsourcing City work, looking at tree trimming bids submitted to the Board of Public Works November 20, 2013. ***We see a clear fact pattern showing how when a public agency loses its capacity to deliver core services, private bidders will take advantage and mark up rates. This fact should be taken into consideration when deciding how the \$4 million slated for tree trimming will be allocated.***

We reviewed bids from five contractors for four project areas,

1. Sycamore Ave from Olympic Blvd to San Vicente Blvd
2. Homer St from Ave 43 to dead end
3. Walgrove Ave from Dewey St to Morningside Way
4. Sylvia Avenue from Vanowen St to Dead End

Tree Contract Bids	Project 1 CD 1, 14	Project 2 CD 10, 15	Project 3 CD 11, 15	Project 4 CD 3, 6
City Estimate	\$436,400	\$415,400	\$408,200	\$393,600
Mariposa Landscapes Inc	\$435,676	\$851,570	\$877,630	\$739,968
West Coast Arborists	\$960,080	\$743,566	\$791,908	\$885,600
Thrifty Tree Service Inc	\$999,356	\$951,200	\$934,778	\$688,800
Trimming Land Co. Inc	\$763,700	\$851,570	\$851,570	\$688,800
United Pacific Services Inc	-	\$639,716	-	-

ONLY BID ONE CAME WITHIN COST RANGE OF THE CITY ESTIMATE. The other bids show cost mark ups ranging from 54% to 129%, with the majority coming in above 75% of the City's estimated cost.

Tree Contractors Bid Mark Ups	Bid Excess Project 1	Bid Excess Project 2	Bid Excess Project 3	Bid Excess Project 4
Mariposa Landscapes Inc	0%	105%	115%	88%
West Coast Arborists	120%	79%	94%	125%
Thrifty Tree Service Inc	129%	129%	129%	75%
Trimming Land Co. Inc	75%	105%	109%	75%
United Pacific Services Inc	-	54%	-	-

This budgetary and policy problem is best addressed in a working group with our line workers who can identify efficiencies in partnership with the City. Thank you for your attention to this issue.