

# February 14, 2017 Joint VNC Board & Discussion Forum Committee Meeting

## Discussion Generator

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MOTION: Request VNC Board support of the Discussion Forum Committee's commitment to generate and submit to the Board, for its review and approval, a set of recommendations capable of implementing the following Strategy Objective:

Develop and present to the board a set of policies and laws which would encourage private and public efforts to provide more less-expensive 'homes' in existing LA residential communities in a way which would become, over time, within the economic reach of ownership by less wealthy residents – 'homes' where they and their families would feel they 'belong' to a 'community' without the fears common in 'ghettos' – an approach designed to create & then maintain a systemic housing supply/demand balance in all of LA's residential communities.

- **VNC Context**

The above Strategy Objective addresses the below **Diversity Vision Goal**:

**Consider strategies** that encourage & facilitate realistic recommendations designed to increase economic diversity, including [affordable **less expensive\***] housing, etc.

[\* Clarification inserted November 24, 2014 by Joe Murphy]

And it also addresses the broader intent of the **VNC Vision Goals**:

... to promote a more proactive, collaborative vision for VNC Committees to include in their deliberations as they formulate recommendations for Board consideration, the **intent** [being] to create a working framework of integrated strategies capable of achieving, over time, broader consensus and increased ... [**Focus on Children, Participation, Walkability, Diversity, Creativity, Collaboration, Brainstorming**]\*

- **DFC Chair's Personal Orientation**

My personal orientation has become to address the issue of homelessness in a way that enables 'disadvantaged' people to become as 'advantaged' as similarly (less) wealthy people by enabling them to make choices of the sort that their 'advantaged' counterparts have available to them.

In my mind, **ghettos** constitute, by definition, 'disadvantaged communities' in which the choices available to those who live there are not comparable with the choices available to the similarly less-wealthy people who live in – or grew up in – 'advantaged communities'.

To understand this complex systemic problem, I recommend that you read [Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform \(2016\)](#), by [Tommie Shelby](#). It makes the case that **ghettos** have survived all efforts to get rid of them – for reasons related in many subtle ways to race-based tactics.

The same can be said of the persistence of the lack of 'less expensive' housing and its consequent homelessness. Despite all past efforts to correct this deficiency, the state's housing director recently stated (January 3, 2017) that [California's housing affordability problems are as bad as they've ever been in the state's history](#).

These are 'stubborn facts' confronting those who wish to improve the lot of homeless people over the long-term.

The DFC proposal will not solve the short-term – or many of the related social – problems facing homeless people – and it would be a mistake to assume that such is intended. If this proposal is approved by the Board and subsequently proves successful, it could significantly and permanently erode a key underlying cause of the long-term homelessness crisis and its associated race-based '**ghetto-creating-and-maintaining**' cycle. It could do this at a cost which would be relatively minimal compared to the combined costs of current efforts.

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## Urban Design Considerations

The attached [LA Times OpEd](#) – contributed by two individuals who clearly understand the history of US land use and its zoning underpinnings – challenges both the mayor's [Hoover Style Development](#) & the protectionists' [Neighborhood Integrity Initiative](#) strategies for dealing with the current LA Housing Crisis. It has implications for the VNC's LUP and Homeless Committees among others.

The authors of the attached propose the following alternative integrated strategy:

- Instead of trying to preordain exactly what is or isn't allowed on every single piece of land, we should abandon micromanagement and — simultaneously — think big by funding improvements to infrastructure.
- We should begin by eliminating parking requirements and easing up restrictions on commerce in residential areas, which can make neighborhoods more walkable and diverse.
- We should reverse the bans on density that hindered L.A.'s ability to absorb new housing units in the early 1970s, resulting in today's affordability crises.
- We should undo community planning policies that exclude low-income residents from “high opportunity” neighborhoods by limiting where multi-family housing can be built.
- Opening up the city to more small and medium scale projects can empower families, building groups, co-ops and community corporations to become their own developers and city shapers, rather than trying to block change in order to feel heard.
- But such tweaks will only take us so far. If we want a better city, we as a community need to build a framework for productive growth, more equitable access to opportunity, and a more sustainable future. A safer street grid, expanded transit, well-maintained and shaded sidewalks, sustainable water and energy systems, more parks and adequate city services are the real pathways to a city that works for everyone.
- If we focus on public projects that benefit us all, a better city will evolve around them.

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### November 22, 2016 Urban Design Advisory Meeting Questions

1. I am puzzled by the apparent political alliance between the downzoning/protectionist forces and low-income/homeless people when their objectives appear to be diametrically opposed to one another.
  - Low-income/homeless people would benefit greatly from increasing the supply of less-expensive homes which they can afford to purchase or rent. Downzoning/protectionist efforts reinforce the very gentrification which undermines efforts to encourage the supply of the housing which low-income/homeless people need.
  - Are the downzoning/protectionist forces primarily wealthy home-owners?
  - If so, what is it that creates this awkward political alliance between less wealthy low-income/homeless people and wealthier downzoning/protectionist forces?
  - If not, what drives low-income/homeless people into this awkward alliance?
2. My perception is that ‘urban design’ is intended to create human settlements which encourage the long-term objective of socially enriching families with children regardless of economic diversity or racial/ethnic differences. If so, what are the urban design elements which could accomplish this objective? And what hasn't worked up to now?
3. Former President Hoover introduced zoning based on the assumption that there was abundant vacant land where new ‘cities’ could be created – ie, suburbs, primarily. My reading suggests that this is the framework around which LA land-use laws and regulations were shaped and are being applied today. If so, are there alternative frameworks which might be used to shape LA's future? And if so:
  - What are they?
  - What strategies would make efforts to implement such an alternate framework politically viable?
4. If you had four typical contiguous blocks of an existing LA residential neighborhood to ‘urban design’ – perhaps as a ‘model’ for use in other residential neighborhoods – what would that neighborhood look like? How would it differ from the existing selected four typical contiguous blocks of the existing LA residential neighborhood you started with? What would the (presumably changed) ‘urban design’ framework and its associated laws and regulations look like? What would you identify as the key differences between them?

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## JDM Observations regarding **Measure S** (aka Neighborhood Integrity Initiative)

Selected Extract from the  
late January 2017

### **Vote NO on Measure S** **Campaign Flyer**

L.A. City Councilmember Herb Wesson  
L.A. City Councilmember Joe Buscaino  
L.A. City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield  
L.A. City Councilmember Gil Cedillo  
L.A. City Councilmember Mitchell Englander  
L.A. City Councilmember Paul Krekorian  
L.A. City Councilmember Nury Martinez  
L.A. City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell  
L.A. City Councilmember Curren Price

### **Mike Bonin is not listed**

Jay Handal, Treasurer, West Los Angeles Neighborhood Council  
Carol Newman, Secretary, Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council  
Luke Klipp, Los Feliz Neighborhood Council  
Hector Huezco, Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council  
Patti Berman, DTLA Neighborhood Council  
Amber Maltbie, DTLA Neighborhood Council  
Miguel Vargas, LA-32 Neighborhood Council  
James Baeza, President, Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council  
Brian Vassallo, Vice President, Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council  
Kathy Leal, LA32 Neighborhood Council  
Eli Lipman, Commissioner, Board of Neighborhood Councils  
and member of Palms Neighborhood Council  
Jackelyn Valladares, Echo Park Neighborhood Council  
Melanie Freeland, Highland Park Neighborhood Council  
Scott Plante, Architect and member of Silver Lake Neighborhood Council

### **No VNC Board Members are listed**

The October 23, 2016 Democrat of the Year Awards dinner pamphlet identified the negative impact of downzoning (**Measure S**, aka Neighborhood Integrity Initiative) on efforts to address the LA housing/homelessness crises (Proposition HHH).

At that time, 8 LA Councilmembers were listed as opposed to Measure S and that number has since increased to 9 LA Councilmembers.

As indicated in the adjoining extract, board members of many Neighborhood Councils have also registered opposition to Measure S.

Is this an opportunity to formulate strategies capable of replacing the current land-use framework (which facilitates gentrification and the resulting erosion of economic diversity) with something better?

If so, what strategies would you recommend?

Sincerely,

Joe Murphy, Chair,  
Discussion Forum Committee  
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