



# Venice Neighborhood Council



## Questions:

*Please limit your answers to the 9 questions below to 200 words or less each.*

1) Please explain why you wish to serve on the LUPC: As an architect who both lives and works in Venice, I am aware of the issues that are important to Venice residents as well as the issues of designing and building in Venice. In particular, I feel that the Venice Specific Plan may be well intentioned, but it was not tested before being fully implemented and some of the results have been a surprise to all. There is a desperate need to clarify the vision for Venice's future, close the loopholes, and craft a set of guidelines that is fair, consistent and clear so that developers know what to do and residents can be confident that development will be desirable.

2) Have you served before on the LUPC or other planning and land use related committee? If so, what committee and when?  
No.

3) Please state your professional qualifications or related experience relevant to this position:

I have been a licensed architect since 1996, and I am member of the American Institute of Architects.

My firm has worked on 10 projects in the Venice area ranging from artist lofts, to craftsman bungalows, to "creative office space. We have also done several projects in Santa Monica which faces similar issues and which has much stricter regulations on development.

I have been President of the Board for 11 years of CRSP, the non-profit organization behind the Los Angeles Eco-Village ([www.laecovillage.org/](http://www.laecovillage.org/)), a project working to demonstrate lower impact and higher quality living patterns.

I am on the board of the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (<http://www.labikecoalition.org/>) which seeks to improve the quality of life in Los Angeles by making it safer, easier and more fun to get around on bicycles in our beautiful climate.



- 4) Please list your previous and/or current neighborhood or community involvement:

Before the VNC, I was involved with the Rosa Avenue Working Group. Since the VNC came into existence, I have attended LUPC meetings on critical development projects, especially the Sunset Bus Depot hearings.

- 5) Please list the three most pressing planning issues you feel are facing the Venice Community:

1. The Venice Specific Plan requires that the "Venice Coastal Development Project is compatible in scale and character with the existing neighborhood", yet "character" is never defined. We need to clarify how "character" is determined, and when "character" is worth preserving and when the "character" could use some improvement.
2. We need to review all projects that have come before the LUPC, identify the aspects of the LUPC that are causing problems and come up with policies for addressing them. Re writing the VSP to correct its deficiencies will take time and we need interim policies in the meantime to address those deficiencies.
3. The committee needs to continue to educate itself and the community about development issues by looking at what other communities have done and by bringing innovators in to speak and share their ideas. Fortunately, Venice has a high concentration of architects, designers, planners and urban visionaries, but we need to find the forum to engage them and the broader public in a much needed discussion about what we can be. We can have it all, can't we?

- 6) Under what kinds of situations do you feel it to be appropriate to grant exceptions or variances to the Venice Specific Plan or other LA City Planning codes?

There have been a few projects recently that have not fit neatly into the VSPs categories, or which have brushed up against conditions that the VSP never considered. After due consideration, it may be appropriate to grant exceptions to such projects.

If there is a beneficial trade off to be made in granting an exception, one that would benefit the neighborhood or the community, then I think it is reasonable to grant an exception.



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## 7) What is your opinion of the Venice Specific Plan?

The Venice Specific Plan was never tested to see what kind of projects it would produce.

The Venice Specific Plan started with the concerns of residents about development issues in Venice, but within the planning department it got handed from planner to planner as they all tried to get transferred to other positions. What was finally published was full of holes if you looked closely, but probably looked OK to those giving it a cursory glance. For example, the initial issue of the VSP talked about a "varied roof line" allowing for additional height, but never defined what a "varying roof line" was. That has been fixed (if 2:12 can really be considered as "varied"), but there are still others. I have already mentioned, there is the word "character" used in the VSP which is not defined anywhere. This has led to extremely contentious discussions in front of the LUPC.

There is also a conflict between the parking provisions and the desire to have pedestrian oriented streetscapes and it is the parking that seems to win out over pedestrian orientation. I think the LUPC needs to look at the parking requirements and make sure that Venice does not end up with just cars at the ground floor level and all the people stuck up on top of their garages - we will gain parking for Venice, but lose the character of Venice in the process.

## 8) How do you view your role in private interactions with developers who have projects proposed before the Land Use and Planning Committee?

As an architect, I couldn't say that I would never have a private interaction with a developer. Any interaction in private should be limited to sharing a committee member's understanding of the requirements of the VSP, and clearly, the committee member should not be making any representations as to what the committee will do regarding that project as that is up to the committee as a whole. Committee members should report to the LUPC that they have had such a meeting and what the nature of the discussion was.

## 9) What is your Vision for Venice?

I see Venice as a vibrant, socially, environmentally and economically healthy community that will be a model for other communities. I would like to do a community sustainability audit that would look at Venice's air, water, energy, transportation, economy, etc. and develop neighborhood specific incentives and



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programs for making improvements. For example, I would like to see Venice become energy independent, or less reliant on imported sources of energy. I was thinking of combining Venice's purchasing power with some support from the VNC to negotiate for neighborhood wide photovoltaic and solar hot water installations from contractors. This will benefit the physical, environmental and economic health of the community.

I would like to see an evaluation of how storm water moves through our community, how to reduce contamination of that stormwater as it flows to the ocean, and how to start retaining that stormwater to help reduce our dependence on imported water.

I would like to see an audit of Venice's street trees and come up with a plan to protect, maintain and augment that much ignored resource.

While many people already get around on bicycles in Venice, I would like to look at what improvements can be made to make it easier, safer and more fun for even more Venice residents and visitors to get around by bicycle.

**Thank You for Volunteering to Help Our Community!**