

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:

At the suggestion of my neighborhood group founder in 2006, I requested an application. Since then, attending meetings, hearings and reviewing documents convinced me that my experience and outlook could help serve our community to move forward – not against an “onslaught of rampant development” but for the principle of a community working toward a common good. My first year with LUPC has galvanized this belief.

- 2) Have you served before on the LUPC or other planning and land use related committee? If so, what committee and when?

This is my second such effort, having served on the 2007 LUPC.

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

As a native of Washington, DC (until 1972), who spent a summer working in Congress, a summer in the Office of Economic Opportunity and a summer in the Civil Service Commission, I learned how government works – from signature machines to diversions of highway funds, while learning what it was like to live in a community with no representation.

As a member of a film crew covering Chicago area community activities in 1975, I gained further experience in the practical promotion of community activity and representation before local government hierarchies.

As a computer consultant whose primary client since 1983 is a major Los Angeles corporate design firm, I have gained valuable understanding of the many aspects of building, from code-specific design issues to the vagaries of plan checking, to the importance of adequate transaction records among the various contractors, inspectors and clients. My combination of analytical skills and real-world experience with systems, community and the building industry has proved invaluable for my LUPC work this past year.

As a Venice stakeholder since 1997, I have enjoyed the experience of learning about local codes (including typical variances and de facto exceptions), reading and

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discussing the Venice Specific Plan and learning first-hand why my friend who, upon seeing the house I eventually purchased, called me to say “but *you* would love it here.” Venice is a good home for me.

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

In addition to items mentioned in my answer to question (3), I have been active in my local community organization, the Venice Walk Streets Association, since 2004.

I campaigned for two presidential candidates in the 1970s, and did related service in “get out the vote” telephone banks.

Lastly, I have been an active contributor for many years to many social and charitable organizations. Pertinent examples include the Southern Poverty Law Center, C.O.P.S., KidWish, Firefighters Charitable Foundation and Habitat for Humanity, Greenpeace, NRDC, et al.

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

After a year on LUPC, my opinion is unchanged: the most pressing local planning issues are all related to increasing density. Three examples are:

Keeping Venice from becoming thoughtlessly overbuilt (see MDR Peninsula, W Hwd, failure of City to apply Mansionization Ordinance study to Coastal Zone, etc.).

De facto neighborhood redlining, as redevelopment forces some inhabitants out. Commercial redlining, with the multi-toothed parking issue, threatens both the business and residential communities.

Weakness in the face of the encroaching status quo – the City’s continued inability to plan and enforce well are divisive and erosive threats to today’s Venice. Examples abound (Playa Vista, parking, Lincoln Blvd planning, disconnect with CCC, SLSO Ordinance, ignoring and stalling on VCZSP).

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?

Based on my experiences before and during a year with LUPC, I can’t currently agree with any proposal I’ve seen to grant exceptions to the Venice Specific Plan or

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other LA City Planning Codes. Any variance must be based on an applicant's special physical or medical needs and/or proven, measurable and regularly monitored offsetting *community* benefits, particularly if such a variance could be provided with an enforceable sunset clause, and with consideration to condition the variance to run with the specifics of the applicant's situation (rather than simply with the land). Mitigation is not enough – all detriments must be offset with equal community benefits.

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

It's a great start. As a technical document, it needs review and more specific detail. As a community-specific document, it needs better attention by the City. As a governing document, it needs more power.

The Venice Coastal Zone Specific Plan is indispensable. Without it, the Venice which is both our home and a powerful resource for municipal Los Angeles would rapidly erode, both as a stable income generator and as a cultural mecca for artists and tourists alike. The Venice Specific Plan is critical not only to our existing community but also for keeping the City from “shooting itself in the foot.”

Our community has a broad base of knowledgeable and passionate activists, many of whom helped draft the Venice Specific Plan and are willing to help revise it as needed. Updating its content will help to govern new development and to parry rhetorical challenges which dilute its spirit and threaten to subvert its intent.

All the editing in the world will be wasted without active governance. As stakeholders, we are each and all obliged to empower the Venice Specific Plan to serve the residential and commercial community as a unified whole.

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

The Land Use and Planning Committee is a public planning committee. My job as a member is to help interested parties plan their use of local resources – according to the spirit of rules governing public planning.

Any private transaction(s) involving me and any entity with business before the committee would necessitate my recusal from voting on that business. In addition, consideration should be made as to the appropriateness of my participation in any business which that entity might bring before the committee during my term.

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9) What is your Vision for Venice?

Venice has been called a “Fantasy by the Sea” and the “Coney Island of the Pacific.” Our community’s history, in word and fact, represents the best and worst American dreams – not only those of Venice’s visionary developer, but also dreams of less visionary developers, and of hippies, accountants, young families, corporate headhunters, hobos, celebrities, prostitutes and elected officials alike. Historically, each of these groups, upon arrival in Venice, was welcomed into an incredibly diverse community, fiercely independent and resistant to encroachment by the urban “status quo.”

Venice is on the brink of losing this individuality – some is already gone, and more “vanillafication” is pending, and likely inevitable. Modern communities *can* retain their character. Currently, Venice is at risk of losing hers.

I understand that our elected officials have very full plates, with little time to do more than graze the highest peaks of our communities’ specifics.

My vision for Venice is not much different from that of its founders - a respite, an enterprise, a sometime paradise of play – but, above all, an example of what fun we can have by working together, with each other and not against. I dream of a Venice which reminds the outside world that Community works.

Thank You for Volunteering to Help Our Community!