

Application for LUPC
Marc Castleman

1. I am a native Los Angelino and a resident of Oakwood for the past 7 years. It is truly my home and I am afraid that the diversity and eclecticism that makes it such a great place is at risk as gentrification continues to occur. I believe that Venice is not Santa Monica and that although development is inevitable, we, as citizens of Venice should act to make sure that it helps the people who are already here and have been a part of making Venice what it is today.

I believe my professional work in the past 10 years working with low-income tenants, landlords and property developers makes me very well suited to represent the people of Venice on this committee

2. I have not been on any committee's previously.
3. I am a graduate of the American University in Washington D.C. and the University of Denver, College of Law. I worked as an attorney for the Fair Housing Institute. The institute was under contract with several cities and Counties to provide services related to preventing housing discrimination and educating the public on real estate issues. After leaving the organization, I went into private practice and continued to provide the same services to my clients including Redondo Beach, Oxnard and Ventura. My work included holding free legal clinics, centering on landlord/tenant issues including rent control, housing discrimination and evictions. I also led seminars for property owners to educate them on the details of housing discrimination law.

Four years ago, I obtained my real estate broker's license. Since receiving the license, I provide brokerage services to my clients. I have represented buyers and sellers in dozens of transactions. I have advised clients on the basics of the Venice Specific Plan and LA Planning codes and have a very good understanding of what they allow and how they work.

5. To be perfectly honest, my community involvement in the past few years has been very minimal and I look forward to the opportunity to give back and be more involved.
6. The three most pressing planning issues are Affordable housing, parking and maintaining the character of the neighborhood. We all know that it has become harder and harder for tenants living in Venice to stay where their family, friends and work are. An effort must be made to ensure that new development does not eliminate the current housing inventory without adding new units at a price current residents can afford.

As for preserving the character of Venice, I believe it is extremely important that Venice does not turn into Marina Del Rey or Santa Monica. Venice should continue to be a community where people know their neighbors and interact with them in day to day life. New construction should allow builders to make a sizable profit but not at the expense of community.

7. I believe that whenever there is a standard plan for every property it is inevitable that there will be occurrences which might be unduly stringent in a minority of situations. If a property owner or developer is able to show that minor variances will make the property better for him or herself or for the neighborhood at large it would be wrong of the city or this committee to not listen to the case. I believe every case is different and the property owner should have a right to explain why a variance should be allowed. If the owner is able to show that a variance in his or her specific situation would not adversely affect the neighbors nor set up a slippery slope for every other property, it would be wrong to force that owner to stick to the specific plan.
8. The Venice Specific plan is an essential tool in keeping Venice from turning into an overbuilt, congested city for the rich only. I believe its most essential pieces are its parking requirements and maximum heights. That being said I still believe that it is unfair to consider it as a perfect plan that can never be changed or altered. Situations do arise that merit variances and should be considered with an open mind.

The plan also acts as a tool for property owners to use so that they know what they should be able to build when they decide to purchase a property. If a particular building or development's plans are within the Specific plan, I do not believe the Council or neighbors should try to stop the development from happening. Builders should have the right to know the rules they are working under and feel confident that they can build what the law allows.
9. If I had any personal relationship with a specific developer I believe it would be my obligation to disclose that fact and not be in any way involved with discussions or recommendations on that project. I know Venice can be very small and incestuous, however the decisions should be seen as fair and based only on the merits of the property. Even an appearance of unfairness could do great damage to the image of the council and its future. Every effort should be made to ensure the integrity of the committee.
10. Venice's eclectic and integrated character is a fantastic asset that is on the verge of being lost. Unfortunately, Venice's fantastic attributes are what is jeopardizing the city's future. There is no doubt that people want to live and work in Venice. Its popularity has led business people from all over the city to come to try to make a buck but it is imperative that the spirit of Venice prevails. LUPC has the power to help make sure this happens. LUPC must act as a middleman between the

community and the developers. Development will continue to occur; there is no way to keep Venice a sleepy town of small bungalows any more. However, it is LUPC's obligation to insure that the communities' voices are heard and their needs are met. This can be done by working with developers instead of against them. Developers should look at LUPC as an asset to help them understand what can be built and what the community will endorse

This can be done by insuring

- a. that affordable housing remains an important aspect of future developments
- b. that all developments have enough parking for all their residents and customers
- c. development is with in the requirements of the Venice Specific plan and perhaps more importantly the spirit of Venice.
- d. working with developers instead of against them