



# 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:

I love Venice and it would be an honor volunteering to help my community. I have been a resident of this community for 10 years, and have been coming to Venice Beach since I was in junior high school in 1980. When I bought my house in 1997, my coworkers tried to talk me out of it because of all of the bad things for which Venice was notorious. However, I decided to become a home-owner and part of this community for all the beautiful characteristics I knew about Venice: the beach, the colorful Ocean Front Walk, the pedestrian-oriented environment, and most importantly the Bohemian residential areas as well as the diversity of the community overall.

Venice has changed a lot in the last decade due to the influx of people who, like me, discovered the beauty of it. The wild real estate cycle of the last 15 years has also made an impact on our community. Those two factors have contributed to what some residents may simplistically labeled as “wild growth”

I strongly believe that the combination of my cultural, economic, academic, and professional background renders me a good candidate to represent the community’s perspective on new development and provide a rational and informed discussion of planning issues in this community as a LUPC member.

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

While doing my post graduate studies in architecture in Venice (Italy), I was a member of a student body that provided research and planning analysis for the city of Grisignano di Zocco in northern Italy. The goal of the committee was to provide an overview of were the city was in their planning phase and the best way to approach the future growth.

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

I am currently a co-founder of a development company, The Pygmalion Group.

Before forming The Pygmalion Group, I managed multiple multi-family affordable housing projects for Mercy Housing California. My duties for this nonprofit affordable housing development organization involved supervising and managing projects from their inception through the end of the construction process. After leaving MHC, I joined forces with a group of foreign investors and a design team in order to develop and operate tourist-industry developments, primarily overseas, under the auspices of The ADMB Group.

I began my professional career as an architect after obtaining a BA in Architecture from UC Berkeley and a Doctorate in the History of Architecture from the Venice Institute of Architecture in Venice, Italy. Upon returning to the US, I began working as a Designer and Project Liaison for KMD Architects. My experience as an architect persuaded me that I could have more impact on the built environment working as a real estate developer than as an architect. Therefore, I resumed my studies and obtained a Master of Real Estate Development (MRED) degree from the USC's School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

I obtained retail development experience during my tenure at Acqua Bella Corporation. In my capacity as a Real Estate Developer Assistant for that company, I identified potential sites for retail developments, prepared feasibility analyses for sites, negotiated with sellers on behalf of the company, and performed leasing and development management for acquired sites.

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

I am a Board Member of the Venice Community Housing Corporation, which provides housing and social services to low income households in the Venice area. I was the first Chairperson of that organization's Housing Development Committee and continue to be a member of that committee.

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

I feel that the most pressing planning issue our community is facing is the rising traffic congestion. The unusually dense network of narrow streets of our community was not designed to handle the demands of modern traffic. One contributing factor of the traffic issue is the development that has already impacted our community in the last 15 years. In addition, the potential development of both big traffic-generating multi-unit housing projects on commercial lots along the major thoroughfares and the expansion of the Marina



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Freeway into southern Venice may worsen the problem. However, I want to make it clear that I am not stating that the answer is a simplistic antidevelopment approach.

The other two major issues are housing and parking. We have to make sure that the gentrification that has taken place in the last decade is balanced by providing/preserving affordable housing for the working class, our senior community, and the homeless. Gentrification is not bad. It has provided many benefits to our community; we just have to learn to keep in mind why we love Venice in the first place.

Parking is an issue that affects not only our residents but our visitors as well. The need for parking structures for visitors for the weekend and holidays would make on-street parking for our residents easier.

- 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?

The variance procedure is designed to permit adjustments to the zoning regulations when there are special or extraordinary circumstances applying to a parcel of land or building which prevent the property from being used to the extent intended by the Venice Specific Plan or other LA City Planning codes. Variances/exceptions should definitely be granted when the physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of a property result in a particular hardship to the owner, not a mere inconvenience or desire to make property development less costly.

However, as an experienced professional and stakeholder of the community, I would analytically consider whether individual developments deserve variances/exceptions due to any special benefits the developments bring to the community and weigh those benefits against the effect on density, parking, and height.

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

I am a developer and have had the experience of developing in Venice. Although my development has not been approved yet, my experience with the Venice Specific Plan has been a positive one. I believe the plan is not too restrictive and allows for generous redevelopment and still preserving the pedestrian-oriented scale in the residential and the medium density neighborhoods.

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

As I mentioned above, I am a developer myself. Therefore, if I had a proposed development before the LUPC, I would excuse myself from the committee during that review. Conversely, I would not have any ventures, partnerships, or private interactions



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with developers who have proposed redevelopments before the LUPC to avoid any conflict of interests.

## 9) What is your Vision for Venice?

Venice should strive to continue to be a pedestrian-oriented community with housing opportunities for a diverse population that includes all the ethnicities of the city, working class families, senior citizens, and its Bohemian community. And it should also attract and welcome new residents including more notable residents and businesses.

I believe that history is important because it tells us where we come from and the mistakes we have made in the past so that we can learn from them and improve our future. Our community has learned from the 1961 city's misguided attempt to tear down all of Venice's 1600 structures and get rid of the recalcitrant hippie population. Thankfully, the city's dream of building high-rise hotels and apartments like Miami Beach was thwarted back then.

However, we have to acknowledge that Venice will be impacted by development; but we have to manage it instead of it managing our way of life.

Thank You for Volunteering to Help Our Community!