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H C N C
Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council



HISTORIC CULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
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HCNC Urban Design & Land Use Committee

August 11, 15

City Planning Commission
200 N. Spring Street, Room 272
Los Angeles, California, 90012

RE: Planning Department's Proposal of a Hybrid Industrial Zone

Dear Planning Commission Members

Request

Please consider this letter as a formal request by the Historical Cultural Neighborhood Council (HCNC) of the City of Los Angeles to: (1) reject the plan proposed by the City of Los Angeles Planning Department to create a new Hybrid Industrial Zone for the City of Los Angeles and (2) to instruct the Planning Department's staff to properly prepare a new land use ordinance specifically for the Arts District of Downtown Los Angeles that will both complement and enhance the inherent creative values of the Arts District.

Background

In early 2014, staffers of the City of Los Angeles Planning Department were assigned to reach out to the stakeholders of the Arts District to review a City-inspired proposal to create an Arts District Interim Ordinance that would allow the construction of ground-up live/work lofts. The stakeholders were told that this Ordinance was the City's attempt to stop the practice of spot-zoning, which had alarmed the community when projects like Mura, Savoy, and One Santa Fe were developed.

What appeared to be an honest initial attempt to respect and protect the artistic and architectural character of the Arts District, quickly evolved into what felt like an assault against responsible development that was apparently orchestrated by a number of large-scale real estate developers and their respective land use consultants to alter the unique fabric of the Arts District by allowing the continued construction of thousands of ill-conceived wooden apartments sitting atop token retail space on the ground floor.

When the Arts District's stakeholders were finally able to review the first draft of the Planning Department's original ordinance in mid-2014, it was clear to the stakeholders that, despite the sincere feedback the local community provided to City staff regarding its unique needs, notwithstanding the promises that City staffers in turn made to the stakeholders, the Ordinance they created did little to incorporate such needs and desires of the local community. In short, the needs of the very stakeholders, who were responsible for the continued growth and success of the Arts District, were largely ignored.

Action

As a result of the City's actions, the community mobilized quickly, and after a joint effort by highly trained local professionals in the fields of urban planning, land-use, architectural design, and real estate development, the community drafted an alternate Ordinance for the Arts District that is supportive of responsible development. That Ordinance, attached, was forwarded to the City's planning staff, the Director of the City's Planning Department, and

**Planning Department's Proposal of a Hybrid Industrial Zone
August 11, 2015**

other City government representatives for their review in early 2015. To a great degree, the future envisioned by members of this community is far more thoughtful and creative than the one envisioned by current City staffers currently assigned to this endeavor. In fact, the philosophical tenets of the community-inspired Ordinance, complements the conclusions derived by local residents and business owners in the Arts District who participated in multiple, widely publicized and attended local planning charettes commonly referred to as Uncommon Ground that was held at SCI-Arc in 2013 and 2014. Here are links to the two most recent charettes: <http://ladadspace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/UncommonGround-4.pdf> and http://hcncla.org/hoodarts/UG3_Final.pdf.

Result

It has been brought to our attention by several publicly elected members of HCNC, that the techniques and methods employed by the City when creating their version of this new Ordinance, were not as open and transparent as one would have expected from a public body responsible for creating an Ordinance that would have such a far reaching effect on the overall City. Specifically, the Planning Department, without engaging the Arts District in any meaningful discussion beforehand, recently announced that this new Ordinance, that had previously targeted the Arts District for implementation, would now be implemented Citywide. Since it is believed that the Arts District is one of the only Industrial neighborhoods in Los Angeles that would be impacted by this new "citywide" ordinance, right or wrong, the Arts District's stakeholders interpreted this move as a diversion, intended by the City to obviate the City's need to seek out and respond to the Art's District's continued input.

Although one would think that the effort to create a new City-wide land-use zone should be shared with the group most affected by such a change, it has become very clear to members of the community that significant pressure is being applied to the planners and politicians from a group of real estate developers with significant property interests in the Arts District. It appears that they are demanding, and the city planners are providing them, with the tools they need to financially exploit the community to its detriment.

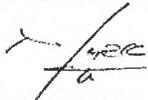
This new strategy adopted by the city's Planning Department is catastrophic for the Arts District, which will now have to become the watchdog for every project in the area that is requesting a zone change under this new Ordinance. Conversely, the unintended consequence of this Ordinance from the developers' perspective is their complete lack of certainty from government representatives with respect to the final entitled outcome of their development. As we all know, seeking a zone change for a project is time consuming, expensive, and highly discretionary from a political perspective. It is fraught with the potential for political conflicts of interest and corruption, all of which should not be part of this process.

What's missing?

Mature Leadership. The lack of mature leadership in city government is glaringly evident when an engaged and experienced community, with a highly successful urban story, is not openly embraced, recognized or heard when a critical, far reaching, city-wide land-use policy is being crafted – a policy that should be forward thinking and hopefully implemented as a model for other parts of our great city. The Arts District community, which is an important part of the HCNC, has significantly researched, prepared, and presented a well-organized proposal that enjoys wide-spread support at both the constituency and professional levels. Its proposed Ordinance should be taken seriously.

HCNC would like to work together with the Planning Department in creating an Arts District ordinance that would be a source of pride for the City of Los Angeles and our very passionate, engaged community for the foreseeable future.

Sincerely,
Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council



Mark Alan Rothenberg, AIA, NCARB
Chair, HCNC Urban Design & Land Use Committee

MAR/mr
cc: HCNC UD/LUC, file

From: PRICE LATIMER AGAH

City Planning Commission
200 N. Spring Street, Room 272
Los Angeles, California, 90012

RE: Planning Department's Proposal of a Hybrid Industrial Zone

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

It is my understanding that the Planning Department (PD) will come before the Planning Commission for a hearing on August 13th to discuss a new zoning proposal. It is further my understanding that the Planning Department will introduce a new Hybrid Industrial (HI)-Zone in its presentation. I find this extremely troubling. As you may or may not be aware, Arts District Leadership commissioned an Arts District Land Use Ordinance. The document was professionally crafted incorporating Arts District stakeholder input. This was submitted to the Planning Department in March of 2015. The community's proposal was completely and utterly ignored.

The PD's new HI-Zone proposal retains most of the problematic elements that existed in the Planning Department's initial draft, dated to July 2014. The PD began the process by publicly stating that they were embarking on creating a local (geographically defined) ordinance. We agree. The Arts District is a unique neighborhood that requires a unique set of Land use solutions.

To our surprise, the Planning Department completely reversed course. Instead of proposing an Arts District solution, they are now proposing a new city wide HI-Zone. This approach ignores the Planning Department's promise to Arts District stakeholders both in letter and spirit. Their new draft is a result of back room negotiations designed to ignore the will and best interests of the community and to completely circumvent it to serve the narrow interests of a small group of developers. These developers invested heavily on highly speculative real estate investments in the Arts District and now wish to change the rules so they may maximize profits. Their narrow interest directly contradicts that of the community, of public good and best practices.

The developers are promising "fitting" their building to the neighborhood. But the HI Zone will in fact allow them to build type III & type V apartments. These types of buildings will harm the availability of productive and creative space, will impact the neighborhood character, ignore existing rules and destroy the unique nature of our community which is the prime reason these developers were attracted to this area in the first place.

Our proposal had input from a broad range of community stakeholders; both individuals and organizations. These include property owners, residents, business owners, local and experienced real estate developers, artists, architects and planners, the Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council (HCNC), Arts District

Community Council (ADCCLA), and Los Angeles River Artists & Business Association (LARABA). The result is a consensus that reflects the will of the many diverse members of the neighborhood and a proposal that does not ask to stop development. In fact, our proposal encourages development. We are simply asking that such development be thoughtful, respect and adhere to the unique nature of our community.

I am asking this body to compel the Planning Department to explain the rationale behind dismissing our proposal. I would like a line by line justification for ignoring the will of the public and choosing instead the wants of a self-selected, small group of developers.

Further, I am committed to rejecting the HI-Zone and fighting its implementation in the Arts District. I ask that you send the Planning Department's proposal back to the drawing board, compel them to properly review the community drafted Arts District Ordinance and work with the Arts District leadership without the influence of self-interested developers.

Sincerely,

Name: PRICE LATIMER AGAH

Signature: 

Date: 08/09/15

Email: PRICE@PIZZANISTA.COM

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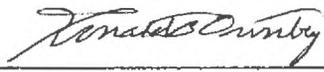
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Sincerely,

Name: Ronald B Ownbey

Signature: 

Date: August 10, 2015

Email: rownbey@sbcglobal.net