



**NITHYA  
RAMAN**

| Los Angeles  
★ City Councilmember  
| 4th District

April 27, 2022

City Council Budget and Finance Committee  
Attn: Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair  
200 N. Spring St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: The City's FY 2022-23 Budget**

Dear Honorable Chair Krekorian and Members of the Budget and Finance Committee,

Thank you for your important work leading the process of reviewing the Mayor's proposed budget. I am grateful for your efforts and eager to partner with you to ensure that it best reflects the priorities Council has charged our departments to implement.

While I am encouraged by the inclusion of vital new services and projects in this proposed budget such as Tenant Anti-Harassment and Office of Procurement initiatives I have put forward, additional resources are necessary to shore up our city's resilience – both in the short term emerging from the pandemic, and in long-term investments this Council has previously signaled its intent to invest in, like affordable housing and sustainability goals via the Green New Deal.

Outlined below are a number of items I am recommending for consideration by your committee and inclusion in the final budget.

**Provide Staff and Support to Further Expedite Housing Initiatives**

LA continues to face a devastating housing crisis that has led to a rapid rise in homelessness and to the out-migration of residents who can no longer afford to live here. Yet our City remains one of the most difficult places for housing of any kind to be built – especially affordable housing.

I appreciate the continued funding and resolution authority for three City Planners in the Planning Department's Priority Housing Program (PHP) to expedite affordable housing projects Citywide, but we must go further. Meaningful strategies to do just that are making their way through the City's legislative process, including a soon-to-be-issued report back by the Planning Department in response to my office's proposal for streamlining deed-restricted affordable housing projects (Council File 21-0658).

In that report, additional positions will be identified to carry out this critical effort across various departments, including: up to 3 positions based in the Office of the City Administrative Officer to

act as a liaison and project manager between all City departments that provide development services for affordable housing projects; 21 positions in the Planning Department to facilitate shorter staff review time and accelerate 100% affordable project processing; 22 positions in the Department of Building and Safety (DBS) – some of which are identified in DBS's 2022-2023 Budget Program Request – as part of the effort to streamline permits and approvals for 100% affordable housing, thereby reducing assignment time by an additional 35%; 10 positions in the Housing Department to accelerate and augment the work of the Land Use Unit; 7 positions in the Fire Department to increase case management and plan review capacity; and 7 positions in the Bureau of Engineering to facilitate shorter review times, assist in coordinating with developers, and enhance reporting capabilities via the BuildLA project, some of which are identified in their 2022-2023 Budget Program Request.

In addition, I also would like to urge the committee to support the Housing Department's request to add 16 positions in the Construction Services and Prevailing Wage Units, which will improve the payment processes for Proposition HHH-funded affordable and supportive housing projects as further detailed in Council File 21-0981.

We have no time to waste in addressing the affordable housing crisis we face as a City, and that is why these positions should be prioritized during this budget cycle.

### **Fund and Streamline Street Safety and Active Transportation Projects**

In order to meet the City's commitments around Vision Zero, as well as our climate goals, including Green New Deal initiatives, much deeper investments will be required toward street safety and active transportation projects.

Instead, after the deadliest year on LA's streets since 2003, the Department of Transportation's (LADOT) draft budget is seeing no meaningful expansion of the programs most needed to address both the public health and environmental goals of our region. Job vacancy rates are at 21% across the department. Funding for speed humps, a high-demand safety improvement across the city, has actually declined. Bicycle lane construction in Los Angeles has also declined, and new lane miles are anticipated to be less than half of our production total for FY 2019-20.

I urge the Committee to restore 34 positions deleted from the Department of Transportation due to the Separation Incentive Program (SIP), including 19 positions in the signal group doing vital work around improving safety at our 5000+ traffic signals in the City of LA. 18 requested positions for Active Transportation that support the work and funding that BSS received in their resurfacing group will ensure that we build back better by designing streets that work for all when our streets are repaved.

There have been a number of tragic traffic-related deaths in my district these past few weeks. We can prevent deaths like this when we have the vision and resources to plan and build safer streets for all. Furthermore, as Council looks to implement the Mayor's Green New Deal directive (Council File 20-0187), Active Transportation and Complete Streets will be essential to achieving these goals. Transportation and equity are inextricably linked, and LADOT should be commended and

provided resources to continue their Universal Basic Mobility program: one full time position, and \$1 million to fund the benefits future participants in the mobility program would receive. Technology challenges both internal and external to the department also continue to grow – funding one position of Chief Technology Officer for the department would be a sound investment.

### **Expand Unarmed Response and Mental Health Services**

I'm grateful to see the expansion of unarmed non-violent emergency response programs, such as CIRCLE, in this budget. But two years after tens of thousands of Angelenos marched for a transformed approach to public safety, budget increases to traditional law enforcement continue to outpace our funding of alternative strategies. Though LAPD leadership has expressed concern that armed officers are overburdened with responsibilities –including homelessness and mental health response –2020 proposals to divert those tasks have yet to be implemented.

As a result, the LAPD budget is proposed to reach another record high, due to salary increases negotiated in 2019 and a large increase to overtime pay, driven by the wide range of responsibilities we've placed upon sworn officers. I strongly recommend measures to divert emergency response resources toward specialized alternatives, particularly with respect to mental health and substance use disorders. This week we learned that deaths among people experiencing homelessness increased by 56% during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, including an 80% increase in overdose deaths. Our budget must be responsive to our emergency.

The City is taking important initial steps to redesign our public safety systems. Last month, the City Administrative Officer released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Unarmed Model of Crisis Response. And the Department of Transportation is currently working with a consultant to develop recommendations for using unarmed, civilian personnel for traffic safety enforcement. We need to set aside money in this year's budget to ensure that the implementation of pilots for public safety alternatives are not delayed due a lack of allocated funding.

In my own district –while I very much appreciate the continued funding of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) serving our Hollywood and Los Feliz neighborhoods with medical, mental health, and substance use support –an additional team is needed to support our Valley neighborhoods, which are in a separate Service Planning Area (SPA) and thus cannot be serviced by our existing MDT.

### **Implement Encampment Sanitation Receptacles Pilot Citywide**

As Los Angeles continues to expand its interim and supportive housing resources –including thousands of new units in this budget –we must also provide meaningful resources to maintain health and safety on our streets. In 2021, our office piloted a program with LA Sanitation to service encampments for people experiencing homelessness across the district with new, higher-quality receptacles and more frequent pickups. The pilot has resulted in cleaner streets and more accessible passageways for both housed and unhoused individuals, and Sanitation has expressed enthusiastic support for expanding the service to a wider area of the city.

In recognition of the success of this pilot, I ask that funding be allocated for the expansion of the program to additional encampments across Los Angeles as detailed in Sanitation's report back in Council File 21-0773. This will require 17 resolution authority positions (1 Refuse Collection Supervisor (4101) and 16 Maintenance Laborers (3112)) and funds to rent and/or procure 6 satellite collection vehicles.

### **Center Racial Equity and Environmental Justice in Planning Processes**

Laying the foundation for an equitable and comprehensive update to the General Plan — which will include targeted climate change, environmental justice, and racial equity priorities and implementation actions alongside meaningful community engagement processes — is an important goal for the City. To ensure our success in this effort, I support the Planning Department's request to include position authority for 1 Senior City Planner, 2 City Planners, and 4 City Planning Associates for its Citywide Policy Bureau, as well as 1 Principal City Planner, 1 City Planner, and 1 City Planning Associate for the Racial Equity and Transformative Planning Unit.

Thank you for your consideration of these items. I look forward to working with you in the coming weeks to ensure that we put forward a budget that boldly meets the demands of this moment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nithya Raman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nithya" and last name "Raman" clearly distinguishable.

Nithya Raman  
Councilmember, 4th District