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CITY PLANNING**

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April 21, 2026

The Honorable City Council
City of Los Angeles
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: Budget and Finance Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING – MAYOR’S 2026-27 PROPOSED BUDGET

Thank you for providing an opportunity for the Department of City Planning (DCP) to highlight key restoration requests in response to proposed reductions to the Department’s budget. The Department must express concerns regarding the on-going reductions reflected in the Proposed Budget. The proposed reduction of 19 positions is especially challenging in light of the Department’s significant cuts previously implemented in the difficult 2025-26 budget year. Working collaboratively with elected offices, layoffs were averted and core work programs and positions restored in line with Council priorities. The Department appreciates the Committee and City Council’s leadership in this restoration. The Department has responsibly managed these resources, and today continues to operate on razor-thin margins.

The Proposed Budget eliminates 19 positions, approximately 3.7% of current positions. Taking the prior budget year reductions into account, this would result in an overall reduction of 83 positions over two years (18.7% of positions). This reduction further reduces capacity, and results in a staffing level with vacancies below the required salary savings level, requiring ongoing attrition and staff depletion over the forthcoming year. For the City Planning Department, this is not a budget that maintains existing services, it reduces them over the fiscal year.

The requested restoration of 17 positions will allow for maintained service levels. The Department is appreciative of the ongoing support received from this Committee and the City Council as it continues to accelerate housing production and deliver investments in jobs and economic development.

Budget Restoration Priorities

The proposed reductions in the budget would significantly compromise DCP’s ability to deliver on its core responsibilities. The Department requests restoration of the following positions and resources.

1. Housing Delivery (Restoration of 6 Positions - \$698,069)

DCP requests restoration of six positions essential to maintaining our baseline housing policy work program: two CEQA positions (one City Planner and one City Planning Associate), one OHR position (one City Planning Associate) to sustain Housing Element implementation and SB79 compliance, one Systems Analyst for housing policy applications development and maintenance, one Management Analyst for contract administration, and one Public Relations Specialist to assist with communications and outreach publications. These positions are funded by a mix of special funds (Planning Long-Range Planning Fund 52F, Planning Case Processing Fund 52D, and City Planning Systems Development Fund 588) and General Fund.

Without these restorations, the City risks delays to housing project approvals, compliance with state housing regulations, and expands exposure to Builder's Remedy claims. These delays will result in impacts to the Palisades rebuilding efforts, the ability for the City to maintain local control over project approvals, and missed implementation opportunities for additional project streamlining to support housing production. More specifically, a department failure to act on proposals within specified timeframes due to depleted staff resources will result in the City losing control and projects being "deemed approved" without review. At the same time, there will be delays in the Department's ability to timely evaluate and implement new state bills. The Department relies on design, systems support and communications to achieve compliance with state housing law, and continues to use the CEQA Policy positions to achieve streamlined environmental review for housing projects. The CEQA Policy positions are also slated to lead the Coastal Zone Biological Survey portion of the Palisades Long Term Recovery Plan to enable streamlined recovery, and without them the Department cannot achieve this deliverable.

2. Economic Development and Job Growth (Restoration of 7 positions - \$820,503)

DCP requests restoration of seven positions in the Major Project Section and Expedited Processing Section (EPS) that provide staffing capacity for processing regionally-significant projects with associated EIRs as well as the expedited review and approval of entitlements for small business, infrastructure, commercial and industrial development. Specifically, this includes restoration of one City Planning Associate in Major Projects and six EPS positions consisting of one City Planner and five City Planning Associates. These cost-recovery positions would be funded by the Planning Case Processing Fund 52D. The Department also is seeking restoration of \$150,000 in contractual services and \$250,000 in overtime into the base budget.

Without these restorations, the City will lose its capability to facilitate business investment, provide job-generating uses, and expand the tax base of the City's business environment. Notably, both Major Projects and EPS play an instrumental role in facilitating the construction of new entertainment and production studio uses, as well as the expansion and modernization of historic entertainment studio lots through its land use entitlement processes. These developments are typically well-connected to job centers and public transit and support business growth particularly in the entertainment/studio and tourism industries throughout Los Angeles.

Major Projects is currently managing several entertainment and production studio projects totaling over 5.6 million square feet of proposed development, with individual projects ranging from 120,000 square feet to over two million square feet of floor area. Other entitlement requests for smaller production studio projects that do not trigger the need for an EIR have taken advantage of the Department's expedited processing services which guarantees a scheduled public hearing within three months of the project's deemed complete date. The Expedited Processing Section has processed a total of 1.3 million square feet of entertainment and production studio uses as recently as 2023. Elimination of seven positions will impair the Department's ability to meet land use entitlement turnaround expectations of the entertainment industry.

3. Development Service Center Reductions (Restoration of 4 positions - \$453,553)

The Department's four Development Service Centers directly serve our communities and provide guidance and intake for all types of development projects. The Department has also staffed the Palisades Inspection and Permitting Support Center, using existing resources. DCP requests restoration of four City Planning Associate positions to continue to service its Development Services Centers.

These positions are critical to the City's development service intake and information service, with Planning being an essential Department for onsite service provision and geographic representation, especially in South Los Angeles and with ongoing Palisades recovery efforts. Additionally, in recent years, the Development Service Center has led the implementation of specialized work programs of citywide importance, including Transportation Communication Network (TCN) and Convention Center clearances, and will serve as the Department's lead on interdepartmental Olympics 2028 coordination. Removal of the currently filled staff position assigned to the South LA Development Service Center will require closure or significant reductions in service at the South LA office.

Three of these positions are fully funded by Planning Case Processing Fund 52D, with the South LA position being general funded.

New/Continuation Request

4. One-Stop-Shop Zoning Services - Zoning Integration (16 New positions - \$2,526,024)

Following the successful transfer of 42 Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) positions in the FY 2025–26 Budget, LADBS and DCP have worked collaboratively to identify three smaller requests that require activation to fully effectuate the transfer. These positions were collectively developed working with LADBS and will allow the full transfer of all over-the-counter zoning review activity, which was not included in the prior FY 2025-26 transfer.

DCP has requested funding for 16 positions to fully operationalize integrated zoning review services:

- *Over-the-Counter Plan Check*: 2 Architects, 4 Architectural Associate IIIs, and 6 Architectural Associate IIs (12-month funding: \$1,363,651)
- *Zoning Information Counter Services*: 1 Architect, 1 Architectural Associate II, and 2 City Planning Associates (12-month funding: \$460,903)
- *Operational expenses* (software licenses, overtime): \$701,470

An interim budget request has been cleared through all Council Committees and is pending final Council approval (Council File 25-0572-S2) and DCP is requesting to have these resolution authorities added/continued in FY 2026-27 with funding. There is no General Fund impact, funding is from the Building Enterprise Fund 48R.

Without these resources, over-the-counter zoning plan check services (smaller projects) will remain at LADBS, while submitted plan check (larger projects) is now reviewed by DCP, creating two systems again and adding to delays.

Current Organization Chart

In FY 2025-26, DCP re-organized and launched the Development Services Bureau, completing the transfer of zoning review from LADBS to DCP. A current organization chart is enclosed.

The Department of City Planning welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the City Council during the final stages of budget development, and remains committed to advancing the City's goals of expanding affordable housing and fostering neighborhood economic development. For questions or additional information, please contact Executive Officer Kevin Keller at 213-978-1272 or via email at kevin.keller@lacity.org

Sincerely,



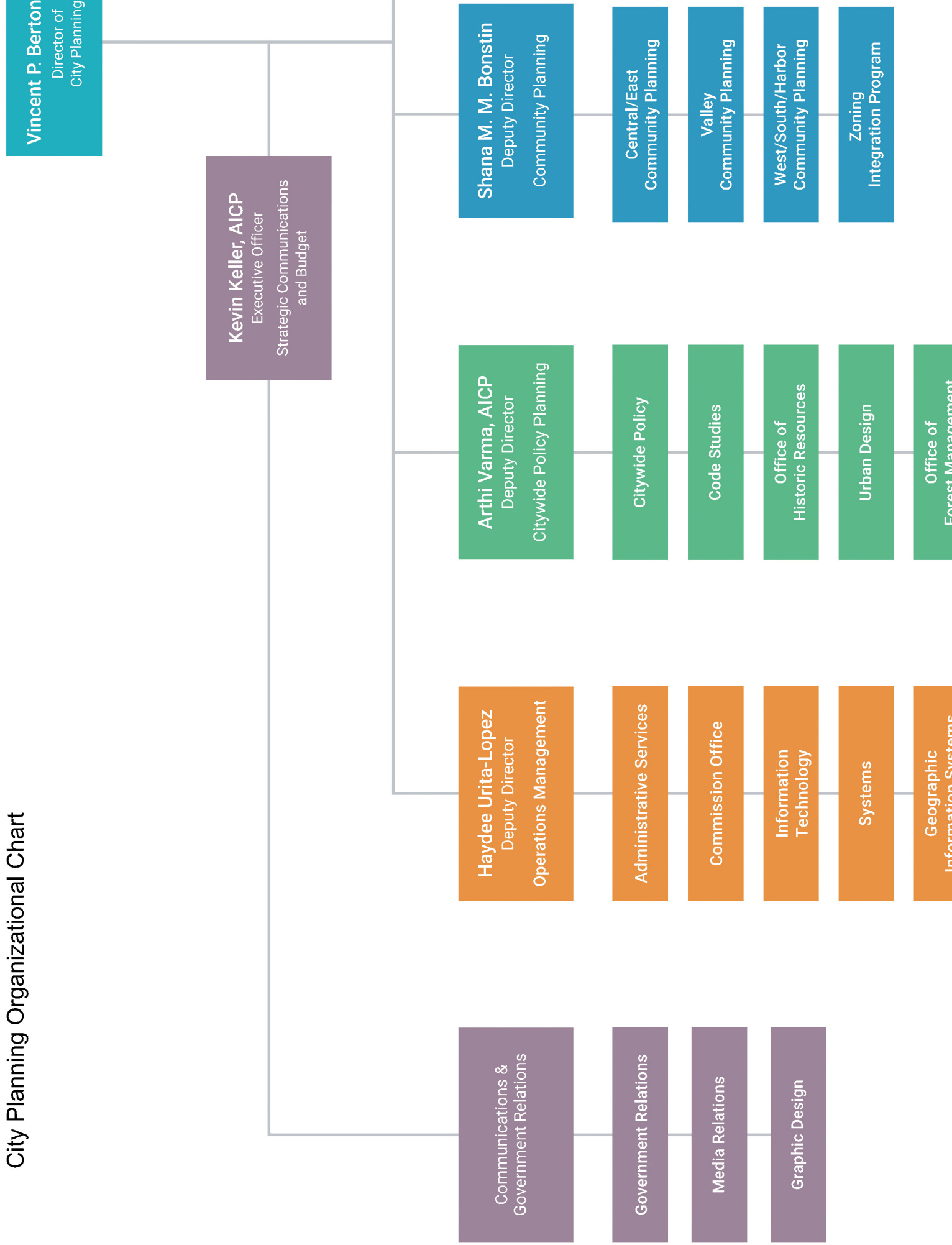
VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

Enclosures

Organizational Chart

cc: Rachel Freeman, Deputy Mayor of Business and Economic Development
Matt Hale, Deputy Mayor of Finance, Operations and Innovation
Elyse Matson, Budget Director
Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Matthew W Szabo, City Administrative Officer

City Planning Organizational Chart



FY 2026-27 City Planning Work Programs by Bureau & Division

Strategic Communication & Budget - Kevin Keller, Executive Officer

- Communications & Government Relations - Principal City Planner
 - Government Relations
 - Media Relations
 - Graphic Design Team
 - Performance Management

Operations Management Bureau - Haydee Urita-Lopez, Deputy Director

- Administrative Division - Chief Management Analyst
 - Budget Development & Implementation - Fiscal Management
 - Contractual Services: \$183,189 for cellular equipment and monthly usage, copier leases, facility maintenance, public meeting facility rentals and interpreter services
 - Commission Office
- Information Technology - Director of Systems
 - Systems applications and infrastructure support
 - Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
 - Contractual Services: \$2,735,521 for IT application developer and support, software subscription and software maintenance

Citywide Policy Planning, Arthi Varma, Deputy Director

- Citywide Policy - Principal City Planner
 - General Plan Updates - Senior City Planner
 - Housing Policy - Senior City Planner
 - Housing Element Implementation - Senior City Planner
 - Contractual Services: \$30,000 Housing Element Implementation
 - Mobility Team - City Planner
- Code Studies - Principal City Planner
- Office of Historic Resources - Principal City Planner
 - Urban Design - Senior City Planner
 - HPOZ - Senior City Planner
 - Contractual Services: \$140,000 Mills Act Program Inspections
- Office of Forest Management - City Forest Officer

Community Planning - Shana Bonstin, Deputy Director

- Central/East Community Planning - Principal City Planner
- Valley Community Planning - Principal City Planner
 - Contractual Services: \$200,000 for Van Nuys Specific Plan
- West/South/Harbor Community Planning - Principal City Planner
 - Venice Local Coastal - City Planner
- Contractual Services: \$711,110 for environmental studies for active community plans
- Zoning Integration Program - Senior City Planner

Project Planning - Lisa Webber, Deputy Director

- Central/East Project Planning - Principal City Planner
- Valley Project Planning - Principal City Planner
- West/South Project Planning - Principal City Planner
- Citywide Projects - Principal City Planner
 - Major Projects - Senior City Planning
 - Contractual Services: \$150,000 for environmental review services
 - Expedited Processing Services - Senior City Planning
 - Environmental Policy- Senior City Planning
 - Contractual Services: \$19,588 for CEQA screening, impact analysis, laws and regulation guidelines and template updates

Development Services - Craig Weber, Deputy Director

- Office of Zoning Administration - Chief Zoning Administrator
- Development Services Counters - Principal City Planner
- Zoning Review - Principal City Planner
- Specialized Services - Principal City Planner
 - Homesharing - Senior City Planner
 - Contractual Services: \$1,406,896 - Homesharing Platform
 - Case Management - Senior City Planner
 - Housing Services - Senior City Planner
 - Entitlement Review - MViP & BESt Programs - Senior City Planner
- Contractual Services - \$223,945 for municipal planning and land use fee studies