

## **Saving Jobs – Saving Services**

**A White Paper with Recommendations to Decrease the L.A.  
City Budget Deficit in a Time of Economic Crisis**



**Prepared by the NCBA 2010-2011**

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL BUDGET ADVOCATES

2010-2011

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Los Angeles 2011-2012 Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates have prepared this report to offer proposals to help balance the city's budget. The recommendations offered in this report are the result of careful analysis of city budget data, vetting of recommendations by city personnel, coupled with a pragmatic application of government and business budget principles.

As city officials prepare to tackle a projected budget deficit of more than \$400 million dollars, we, as appointed delegates of the Neighborhood Council system, have actively engaged in a systematic analysis of the City's sources of revenue, management of departments, pension programs, collection processes, and a host of other factors that could potentially help contribute to narrowing the budget deficit. As a result of this analysis, we have come up with specific recommendations to help save the City money or in certain situations, help contribute to an increase in revenues to the City. These budget proposals have been guided by four principles: (i) Increasing Efficiency; (ii) Generating Revenues; (iii) Structural Changes; and, (iv) Reducing Expenses.

It is the intent of the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates to critically review our City's financial condition and to offer a new set of recommendations for solutions to our budget deficit problems. It is the belief of the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates that the application of some or all of the proposals contained in this report can help save the city millions of dollars while avoiding the disruption of essential services to the residents of the city.

## II. EFFICIENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

In looking for ways to bring the City one step closer to closing the budget deficit, we looked at the processes and departmental structures that the city already has in place to determine whether alterations in the way these function could improve them to help increase efficiencies and possibly generate more revenue.

After consulting with various department heads and evaluating proposals from the controller, as well as relevant literature, the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates have agreed on the need for the city to adopt the proposals listed below to improve the way city government functions and conducts business, so that redundancies and inefficiencies can be minimized.

- Support and implement in a timely way the audit recommendations of the City Controller.
  - Controller's Office estimates that there were thirty-eight completed audits in the last twelve months that have not been acted on by City Council, resulting in a loss of at least \$300 million.
- Mandate that businesses must maintain valid business permits and must pay for such permits in a timely manner or be subject to suspension and/or revocation.
  - Amend City Ordinance so that permits may be suspended or revoked by the city after 30 to 45 days of non-payment and hearings.
  - Create a Board of Permits and Licenses with representatives from CAO, Office of Finance, LAPD, PW, CA, DOT, and LAFD (EMS).
  - Combine hearing efforts of Office of Finance, City Attorney, and CID (LAPD).
  - Make revoked permits subject to ACE citation.
- Aggressively reduce primary and secondary collection periods for all licenses, permits, fees and fines. Although C.O.R.E. has recommended seven months for primary collections, we recommend a shorter collection period not to exceed 120 days.
- Implement portions of the *C.O.R.E. Blueprint for Change*, including, but not limited to:
  - Research the value of creating the post of Inspector General for Revenue

& Collection/Efficiency.

- Take immediate action on C.O.R.E.'s upcoming report with recommendations for reforming and fixing the problems of the Parking Occupancy Tax.
- Support a central billings and collection department that focuses on increasing efficiency and accountability.
- Require that all purchases of equipment and software citywide include all components necessary for proper operation, including those components required for maintenance and upgrades.<sup>1</sup>
  - Moreover, the city should invest in cost saving technologies such as:
    - New software/management system for Personnel Department's Workers Comp Division, which will replace an antiquated 1985 LINX system.<sup>2</sup>
- Institute strict management accountability.
  - Create a system that holds GM's directly responsible for reducing liability claims and employee civil suits in their departments.<sup>3</sup>
  - Establish or revise enforceable departmental measures and standards.
  - Support interdepartmental efficiency and flexibility using methods such as the CAO's "cluster group" plan to foster cooperation among departments.<sup>4</sup>
- Require the City to do an inventory of all unoccupied city owned property with the goal of moving city office/departments out of private rental properties and into city properties.

### III. REVENUE GENERATORS

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<sup>1</sup> An example of where this has not occurred is with the LAPD. GPS systems were purchased for squad cars but the required software to operate the GPS systems was not purchased, thus making the GPS systems inoperable.

<sup>2</sup> The cost of \$3.4 million to replace the aging software is expected to come from the Personnel Departments savings.

<sup>3</sup> The LAPPL estimates that \$20 million has been paid out to settle internal grievances.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Increase communication and cooperation among BOSS, DWP, and DOT to manage projects.

In addition to looking into areas where efficiencies could be improved, we looked into possible ways that the City can generate revenue to further narrow the budget deficit. While examining the City's current sources of revenue, we found some programs that could be expanded and propositions made by other City entities that can possibly create new sources of revenue.

The following are proposals that we have vetted and deliberated on after careful research and discussion:

- Implement the City Attorney's Administrative Code Enforcement (ACE).
- Hire properly qualified commercial parking lot operators to run the City's parking facilities.
- Enforce the current permit/fee structure for city owned and operated facilities such as parks, and implement a two-tiered fee system for many city services.<sup>5</sup>
- Improve support for business growth.
  - Expand tax relief incentives.
  - Encourage the occupancy of distressed or vacant commercial property for both large and small business owners.
  - Reactivate the Mayor's Business Development deputies. Encourage B.I.D.s to inventory all vacant ground level commercial space and target for infill.
- Support the CAO's efforts to study Los Angeles specific branding opportunities through LA, Inc.
- Immediately enact an ordinance to require veterinarians to check for proper licenses and sign-up appropriate animals for licensing.
- Create corporate sponsorship options to help support City services and maintain facilities in need.<sup>6</sup>
- Promote the "Shop L.A." campaign and recruit more corporate sponsors.

#### IV. STRUCTURAL CHANGES

<sup>5</sup> The two-tiered system would be similar to the one currently in place in City Golf courses, which charges individuals different rates based on whether or not they are residents of the City of Los Angeles.

<sup>6</sup> An example would be implementing a program similar to "Adopt a Highway" to help pay for street repairs. Another example comes from Huntington Beach's \$6.7 million, twelve year agreement with a soft drink company to exclusively sell that company's product on city property. (Kopytoff, Verne G., "Now, Brought to You by Coke (or Pepsi): Your City Hall", New York Times, 1999)

While the current economic climate coupled with the City's fiscal emergency requires swift financial responses on the part of elected officials, it also allows for elected officials to foster structural changes in its bureaucracy. In accommodating for structural changes, the City has a rare opportunity to implement programs that can cut bureaucratic redundancies that contribute to wastefulness, stagnation, and loss of potential business.

The following proposals are being made after careful consideration of how city departments function, recommendations by department heads, and examinations of overlapping roles among the City's departments:

- Consolidate all City police departments into one department under the leadership of the LAPD with a single Chief.<sup>7</sup>
- Merge departments that can easily be combined, achieving both cost reductions and efficiencies.<sup>8</sup>
- Minimize the impact of across the board budget cuts by considering a department's revenue generating potential.
- Implement ordinance changes to allow the City to sell services where feasible, including training services of the LAPD. In addition, any newly created revenue by any department should be reinvested into the department to enhance its services to the people of the City.
- Use best practices to measure all outputs of City provided services against outside contractor services; require city departments to bid against outside contractors.
- Document and enforce that all sales of City owned real property must be at documented market rate. Stop special treatment given to individuals who pay below market prices for property.
- Support, encourage, and promote the use of the Controller's "Whistle Blower Hotline".<sup>9</sup>

## V. REDUCTION IN EXPENSES

<sup>7</sup> Currently, the city has five separate police departments that report to different department heads. Having one single agency can help contribute to the safety of the city while lowering costs associated with having overlapping responsibilities. (Please add to this)

<sup>8</sup> An example is merging the Treasury and Office of Finance, and the possible merging of BOSS with DOT and Engineering.

<sup>9</sup> Consider a 'Whistle-Blower Protection Ordinance' which provides economic incentives and rewards to employees whose report of fraud, waste, or abuse yields demonstrable economic savings to the City.

The final set of recommendations comes as a result of the City's dire need to reduce its expenses. The single largest expense after payroll is its pension benefit obligation which now undermines its ability to sustain itself financially. The bulk of the changes identified below are related to the salary, pension and benefit programs that the City offers to its employees:

- Immediately create a Citizen Commission on Public Employee Pension and Benefit Review.
  - A citizen's Commission would provide a balanced review of this contentious and complex issue.
  - The composition should be comprised of objective experts from academia, business, city government and labor, as well as informed citizen representatives from the general public and Neighborhood Councils.
  - Begin work as soon as possible to assemble and analyze data from Los Angeles as well as other cities around the nation. Look for realistic solutions that may have been missed in the current negotiating climate.
- Vigorously pursue immediate employee concessions and policy changes such as:
  - The healthcare co-pay should be raised to \$20 (below market rate), thereby saving the city an additional \$1.75M. (\$20 co-pay results in \$3.5M savings.)<sup>10</sup>
  - Require current and retired employees to pay a reasonable market rate for dependent healthcare coverage.
  - Create Tier 2 for new civilian hires with recommendations contained in a resolution prepared by Councilmember Rosendahl.
  - Implement tiered cuts in salary for both sworn and civilian personnel to achieve a \$200 million reduction in payroll, not including pension and benefits. Suspend COLA adjustments as they should not be used to offset salary reductions.
  - Eliminate furloughs. When considering dramatic changes in employee compensation it is imperative that those changes result in financial

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<sup>10</sup> Raising the healthcare co-pay from \$10 to \$15 has already been negotiated, but an additional raise will save the City a considerable sum of money.

sustainability that will not require more changes in the near future.

- Immediately pursue the possibility of shifting LACERS' administrative costs for city employees.
  - LACERS administration is not a core function of the City and should not be funded by taxpayers.
  - The nearly \$10 million of annual administration costs should be funded by a surcharge to LACERS beneficiaries.
  - If necessary, this change should be mandated by electoral process.
- Increase all employee pension contributions to 11%.
- Create a program in which potential law suits can be settled in the field by LAPD supervisors and /or managers, similar to the program utilized by LA County Sheriff Department.
- To increase transparency, all City Council districts should be required to report all income streams and detailed expenses in an online real time manner.

As representatives of the City's Neighborhood Councils, we wish to focus on and preserve city services. We also recognize that city employees are our friends and neighbors and wish to offer them job security and benefits.

**Neighborhood Council 2011-2012 Budget**

Whereas the City of Los Angeles is in financial crisis

Whereas the Neighborhood Council System encompasses more than 1600 volunteers for the City

Whereas the Neighborhood Council System represents more than 4,000,000 constituents as prescribed by the City Charter,

Therefore, the Budget Advocates propose the following budget for Neighborhood Councils for fiscal year 2011-2012:

Item	2010	2011
Elections	\$1,900,000.00	\$ 800,000.00*
NC Funds	\$4,095,000.00	\$4,185,000.00**
Congress	000.00	\$20,000.00
Total	\$5,995,000.00	\$5,005,000.00

Net Savings: \$990,000.00 or \$ 10,645.16 per N.C., a 23.6% reduction per N.C.

**Roll Over Funds:**

Policy: Roll over funds that are **allocated** but unspent ( No Demand Warrant yet issued) should remain with the neighborhood council. Any funds not allocated or spent should be used to hire additional support staff at DONE for the purpose of hiring a grant writer to supplement the NC funding system.

**Background:**

In 2010, the City Clerk was allocated more than \$1,900,000.00 to fully run the NC elections. It was originally anticipated that the Clerks office would do all outreach as well as administer the elections.

In order to have the NC system participate in the reduction of the budget gap, it is proposed that each neighborhood council would administer its own election, with the help of the City Clerks office who would appoint one person as the independent election administrator at each election site. It is anticipated that the cost per election would not exceed \$1,500.00 per neighborhood council.

Each Neighborhood Council would be responsible to hold its own elections. A citywide system of ballots would be put into place, and a committee set up to formulate how the elections are to run and be administered.

In the 2011 budget, it is anticipated that the election costs would not exceed \$ 800,000.00. The balance of the requested funds would be used to fund the charter mandated annual congress (20,000.00). It may be an additional recommendation to postpone elections for two years, to allow NCs to work with the city to develop a sustainable election system. This would save the city the \$800,000.00 recommended by this group above.

This represents a net savings to the City of \$ 990,000.00; a significant contribution that also empowers the NC system to take back and administer its own elections and to fully fund the charter mandated NC Congress.

In addition, in the past 12 months, the NC system has come to the table with:

- 1) By Laws Committee volunteers charged with working directly with NC's for By Laws issues
- 2) Peer Mentoring Committee: NC members whose charge is to work with NC's who have questions or issues within their councils, thereby supplementing DONE staff with peers.
- 3) Volunteer Committee: A committee of NC volunteers who will work with the NC's for their volunteer needs. In addition, the volunteer committee will be taking the lead in holding the 2011 Neighborhood Congress.
- 4) An election task force was assembled and recommendations are forthcoming to the City
- 5) Congress committee: Charged with organizing and implementing the 2011 NC Congress, as mandated by the Charter.
- 6) Volunteer treasurer committee working with DONE to ensure proper financial reporting and accountability by all NC's.
- 7) 70 percent of NC board members have complied with the ethics requirement (more than 250 percent increase over two years) demonstrating that NCs are being more accountable.

In addition, the NC's have worked together with BONC and the Department by:

Lobbying the Board Of Neighborhood Commissioners to create policy on the following items:

1. Financial oversight - NC Treasurers must present an up-to-date financial statement (including P-card expenditures) at each NC Board meeting for approval by the Board before reporting it to DONE. This removes the ability of a single individual to create and submit financial reports and makes the entire Board fiscally responsible. APPROVED
2. Bylaws - the creation of a city-wide Table of Contents to be used for all Neighborhood Council bylaws. This will make it easier for DONE and City Attorney review. APPROVED
3. Ethics - creating consequences if NC Board members fail to complete the mandated Ethics Training. If a Board member fails to complete the training within 60 days of being elected - they lose their right to vote until they get in compliance. APPROVED
4. Election Fundraising - if candidates for NC Board positions are allowed to fundraise for their campaigns, there must be guidelines for disclosure.
5. Grievances - the creation of a city-wide Grievance Procedure that all NCs will adhere to. It will create regional panels to hear grievances against NCs, rather than NCs being able to hear them in-house (which usually creates a conflict-of-interest situation).
6. Factual Basis Language - strategies to guide NCs on how to prevent Special Interests from using the current factual basis language to "take over" NCs by soliciting voters who don't have a real stake in the neighborhood. It's becoming known as the "buy-a-cup-of-coffee" rule.

In addition to the above, it is estimated that there is a volunteer pool supplementing, in many cases, city council office staff, working for the city for free, for a better quality of life.

Below is the estimate of number of volunteers and the hours estimated overall, along with a "Living Wage" calculation to show how many hours and how much labor is expended on behalf of the city, all at no cost to the city:

# Of Board Members: \_\_\_\_\_ 1800 \_\_\_\_\_

# Of Volunteers \_\_\_\_\_ 1200 \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Hours per: \_\_\_\_\_ 10 month \_\_\_\_\_

Total Estimated Hours \_\_\_\_\_ 360000 \_\_\_\_\_

Living Wage per hour \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 11.55 \_\_\_\_\_

Total donated dollars \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 4,158,000.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Donated Dollars by median Wage of a city worker:  
\$24.00 per hour equals \$8,640,000.00\*\*

\*\* Does not include benefits and pension

Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates  
Committee 5: Aging, Animal Services, Cultural Affairs and Disability

**Department of Animal Services**  
221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 500  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Friday, January 10th, 2014 at 11 AM

**Participants:**

Brenda Barnette, General Manager, Department of Animal Services  
Erick Morales (Committee Chair), Budget Advocate  
Susan Reimers, Budget Advocate

The Department of Animal Services serves the city of Los Angeles by working on its mission to “to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of animals and people.” Animal Services takes on numerous responsibilities in order to do so. These responsibilities include the operation of six shelters throughout the city, the deployment and usage of their own officers to protect animals and people, the licensing of pets and providing vouchers to those of a certain economic status so that they can spay-and-neuter their pets, among other responsibilities. Within the purview of Animal Services is not only the typical dog and cat, but also horses, bears, coyotes and other animals that may not be the jurisdiction of the state and federal governments.

Animal Services has officers that are deployed usually after the department receives complaints that could include animal abuse, dog fights, loose dogs, and other events. Animal Services also works with a number of departments, such as the LAPD, in completing its mission (i.e., Animal Services may be contacted if a dog is found abused at a crime scene). It came to the Committee’s attention after the meeting that numerous neighborhood councils contributed approximately \$27,000 to a fund to train volunteer reserve animal control officers. Presently, the City is limited in its number of animal control officers and the response time to complaints can take several months. Consequently, the City may be losing revenue from the licensing, fines and fees that are falling through the cracks. Moreover, there are likely animals that are in danger and certainly there are people in danger of animals. As Los Angeles magazine editor Mary Melton recently pointed out when extolling the virtues of living and hiking in Los Angeles, “Just moments from your office you could encounter a snake, a deer, or maybe that fabled cougar, P22.”

Animal Services manages six shelters, working with non-profits to make sure that these shelters are properly functioning. Ms. Barnette did note that three temporary clerk positions are allowing for the smooth operations of the shelters, but fears that a loss of these positions could force the department to close a shelter. Ms. Barnette estimated that the number of non-profits that work with the department on all issues is more than two-hundred. These non-profits range from small to large. The shelters also recruit and train volunteers. However, these volunteers are limited by what they may and may not do by agreements that the department has with its unions.

The shelters operated by Animal Services are not yet no-kill, but Ms. Barnette states that the goal for the department is to be no-kill by the year 2017.

As seen with so many other city departments, Animal Services is plagued with the problem of deferred maintenance with the usage of 2000-era software. Ms. Barnette did say that most of the department's infrastructure was, at a minimum, of decent quality, due to Proposition F passed during the mayoralty of Richard Riordan. However, it should be noted that the brief pass-through the Department's office showed that there are a number of empty desks being used for mere paper storage. Such papers could be scanned, archived and shredded and the unused office space either reduced or shared with another, smaller department.

Like the LAPD and LAFD, Animal Services has a foundation that is set up to support its operations. Through this foundation, people may donate to their favorite shelters or participate in unique fundraising opportunities such as "Adopt-a-Cage."

Animal Services has only one person on its staff that can take care of marketing responsibilities, and this is the same person who takes care of the web site and other media responsibilities. Therefore, the department does work with non-profits and wealthy individuals to assist with marketing needs.

Ms. Barnette does have ideas by which Animal Services can increase its efficiency. Ms. Barnette did note that the possibility of having animals micro-chipped at a mainstream scale and providing the animal control officers an app to read the micro-chips would allow for the department's officers to scan animals with smartphones or other portable devices and return run-aways to owners instead of having to bring them back to a shelter and take up space and resources that could be used to save other animals. An RFP would be required to initiate such a process. However, the department has also worked to make the things it can more efficient. For example, a department employee volunteered to analyze how much food each shelter needed after feed ran out. It was after this that the department could send an effective size of feed to last instead of simply sending a one-size-fits-all bag.

Animal Services provides pet owners with licenses that are required for all animals. Many don't own these licenses. It is often preferable that people do obtain the required licenses as it forces them to make a substantial investment in pet ownership. Spay-and-neutering is also an activity that the department strongly advocates for. For people who can prove that paying for a license or spaying-and-neutering would cause financial hardship, the department does provide vouchers that reduce the cost of aforementioned services. In specific for spaying-and-neutering, the vouchers are only valid with certain vendors that have contracts with the city. Animal Services receives one-million-dollars with which to dole out spay-and-neutering vouchers, which is \$400,000 less than the original \$1,400,000 that Ms. Barnette would like back, as she feels this could allow for increased spay-and-neutering.

The City Council-imposed limit on pet ownership is three cats and three dogs, with no interchanging between species for a total of six animals. As previously mentioned, complaints about animals tend to be what drives the duties of Animal Services law enforcement officers. These officers tend to operate by examining the complaint, and if the complaint is found to be valid, the officer present will issue a demand to rectify the issue within sixty days or the officer will have to take action to rectify the issue in the name of the department. Punishments may include the confiscation of an animal(s) or appropriate fines.

The officers of Animal Services provide a vital duty to the city, according to Ms. Barnette, who claimed that within the month of July 2013, the department rescued over one-hundred animals in distress, rescued almost two-hundred-thousand strays, and issued over ten-thousand licenses (a small percentage of which went to horse owners and professional breeders).

Ms. Barnette would like to see Animal Services be given a permission to study the effects of a possible wildlife rehabilitation center along with its shelters. Such a plan would have to work with the state and federal departments that also deal with wildlife. However, Ms. Barnette says that a possible wildlife rehabilitation center could serve useful, especially as the department is called out “each time a bear or coyote comes into the city over the mountains.” Ms. Barnette says that such a study could be funded by a one-time capital fund.

Animal Services does make an attempt at working productively with other departments. Animal Services works with the Personnel Department by sharing employees; the Information Technology Agency works with Animal Services by assisting with the submittal of RFPs. LAPD and Animal Services also have a joint Animal Cruelty task force to enforce city laws that violate the rights of animals. Construction needs of Animal Services are often worked out with the Department of Building and Safety; all of the printing for Animal Services comes from General Services. Ms. Barnette said that she is “big on collaboration,” as shown in the work she does with other departments. Under Barnette’s leadership, Animal Services has been awarded two city awards for quality and productivity.

## **Recommendations**

- More fully utilize volunteers. Implementing the plan for reserve animal control officers would capture the licensing, fines and fees that are presently being missed. It would also reduce the back-log of complaints. More importantly, it could save the life of an animal, as well as allow the residents to feel more secure when there is an issue with wildlife. The neighborhood councils believe this has value and has already, collectively, contributed upwards of \$27,000 for this effort. Finally, by training regular classes of animal control officers, the City would effectively be training said reserve officers for a job, providing them with transferrable skills and providing the City a pool of trained and experienced candidates to fill any future open positions.
- Scan, archive and shred the papers that are presently occupying otherwise unused desks. Re-align staff to sit closer together and either rent less space or share the space with another department or sub-lease the remaining space to another animal organization.
- Promote micro-chipping of pets at every shelter and throughout the City. It has proven effective in re-locating a lost animal to its home.
- Provide each animal control officer with an app for smartphone or other device that reads micro-chips so that an animal may be scanned while still out in the field in order to save additional time re-locating the animal to its home and, possibly, saving the life of another animal that has been at a shelter longer. This would take Los Angeles one step closer to reaching its “No Kill” status by 2017.
- Make the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center a long-range goal. Perhaps in partnership with the LA Zoo.

Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates  
Committee 4: LA Zoo, Convention Center and El Centro

**Los Angeles Zoo & Botanical Gardens**

Zoo Director's Office,  
5333 Zoo Drive

Los Angeles, CA 90027

Friday, January 17th, 2014 at 2 PM

**Participants:**

John R. Lewis, Zoo Director

Denise M. Verret, Assistant General Manager

Jack Humphreville, Budget Advocate

Erick Morales, Budget Advocate

Susan Reimers, Budget Advocate

In FY 2005-2006, the LA Zoo received \$10,397,066 from the City's General Fund. By FY 2012-13, its operating contribution from the General Fund had been reduced to \$1,294,894 and in FY 2013-14, the contribution had trickled to a mere \$263,891. Its full operating budget is supported by an Enterprise Fund and revenue from Admissions, Memberships, Concessions and a myriad of other fundraising activities. Nevertheless, from FY 2005-2006 through FY 2013-14, such Admissions and Memberships have dropped, forcing LA Zoo to raise such prices in order to maintain the same budget. In the past 10 years, it has had its staff reduced by 25 employees. Because training and experience is required to handle the wildlife, the LA Zoo is limited in how it can use volunteers.

In an effort to raise the number of Admissions and Memberships, LA Zoo is in negotiations with the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) to take over its marketing. At the time that the Committee met with Mr. Lewis and Ms. Verret, the deadline for the City Council to ratify the Memorandum of Understanding between LA Zoo and GLAZA was March 31, 2014. The Committee understands that the deadline has since been extended through June. The Committee strongly supports such an agreement on the grounds that GLAZA has long been deeply dedicated to protecting the LA Zoo and its mission of animal conservation and education. Further, GLAZA has already secured a \$120,000 grant from Google's AdWords program to replace the \$8,000 per month that was being spent by LA Zoo to run advertisements on the Google search engine platform. Marketing is deemed necessary to alert tourists and to remind residents that the LA Zoo is closer than San Diego Zoo, it is affordable and, moreover, it is *our* Zoo.

In light of reduced staff and budget, the Committee found that Mr. Lewis, Ms. Verret and the LA Zoo staff have done a stellar job of partnering with other zoos to trade wildlife, share education and research, and even connecting with resources within and outside of Los Angeles County to obtain free food for the animals that would otherwise need to be purchased. When asked what would be on the LA Zoo's wishlist, Mr. Lewis's and Ms. Verret's sole response was, "respect." We agree.

**Recommendations**

- Support an agreement for GLAZA to take over the Zoo's marketing so that the Admissions and Memberships can increase as awareness is raised. Such an increase will

generate much-needed funds to continue basic operations of the care and feeding of animals that are, for all intents and purposes, unable to feed themselves. This is *our* zoo; these are *our* animals.

- In the *Report on Animal Services*, the Committee recommended full implementation of a training program for volunteer reserve animal control officers on the grounds that it would provide such volunteers with transferrable skills and providing the City a pool of trained and experienced candidates to fill any future open positions. Such skills may also be transferrable to the LA Zoo as needed.
- Increase the contribution from the General Fund. Flagging \$263,891 for the care and feeding of innocent animals of a major metropolitan zoo is simply egregious.
- Give the LA Zoo due respect. Again, its Director, Mr. Lewis, its Assistant General Manager, Ms. Verret, and its staff have done a stellar job of taking care of what is *ours* in spite of grossly reduced resources.

Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates  
Committee 4: LA Zoo, Convention Center and El Centro

**Convention Center**  
1201 S. Figueroa Street  
Los Angeles, CA. 90015  
Friday, January 10th, 2014 at 1:00 PM

**Participants:**

Bud Ovrom, Executive Director  
Jack Humphreville, Budget Advocate  
Erick Morales, Budget Advocate  
Susan Reimers, Budget Advocate

In 2013, the Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC) was semi-privatized. It is still owned by the City of Los Angeles, but its day-to-day operations are being managed by Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG). Recognizing that hospitality and tourism brings both revenue and jobs to the City, the Mayor and City Council restructured LACC so that its Executive Director works on the bigger picture of coordinating hospitality and tourism, and negotiating the larger conventions, while AEG manages LACC's day-to-day operations and negotiates the smaller bookings. The arrangement may result in the demolition of part of LACC to make way for a football stadium, provided that AEG can lure a team by October 2014. Should that prove unsuccessful, there is a Plan B that calls to "re-skin" LACC and update it.

The reorganization appears to be working. LACC has booked 29 conventions for 2014, surpassing the 22 conventions held last year, and several new hotels are being built within walking distance of it. The Committee was overall satisfied that its current debt was being managed.

One recommendation that did surface during a walk-through of LACC with AEG employees was inspired by its vast amount of blank wall space. In keeping with LACC's partnership with the Dept. of Cultural Affairs, and with Mayor Garcetti's promise of a more cohesive arts policy in which a variety of city departments will be attuned to fostering cultural opportunities for Angelenos while his administration banners L.A. to the world as the city "where creativity lives," it is recommended that the blank wall space of LACC be utilized to display the art of Angelenos of all ages. First, it would provide residents an opportunity for their art to be seen, driving increased attendance of LACC even during periods where there are no conventions (while the doors are still required to remain open). Second, it would provide locals something to do between parking the car and attending an event at one of the venues at L.A. Live. Third, it would provide convention-goers something to do between events. Art could be obtained by honoring a student of each art class enrolled from K-12, the colleges and universities, with selection by their art teachers. Likewise, include the "winners" of local art shows. Treated as a six-month "loan" to the City, the City could temporarily frame each work and thank the artist with a Certificate of Appreciation and rotate in the next group of artwork to keep it fresh for annual attendees. Even if the stadium plans go forward, there remains sufficient wallspace throughout the convention to turn it into a true Angeleno Art Gallery, recognizing and building the esteem of creators.

## Introduction

The financial condition of the Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System ("LACERS") and the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pension System ("LAFPP") are presently the greatest threats to the short- and long-term financial health of our City and Los Angeles's future quality of life.

The size and depth of these retirement funds' challenges are daunting. This year, \$1,013 million - nearly 25% of Los Angeles's general fund budget - is allocated to the LACERS and LAFPP Funds alone for current and future pension benefits. This \$1,013 million allocation exceeds the combined budget for city-wide Building and Safety, City Planning, City Attorney, LAFD, Bureau of Street Services and Bureau of Engineering. Despite claims that the city consistently meets its annual required contribution to both of the Funds, the Funds' unfunded liabilities have skyrocketed. We are now faced with addressing an \$11.5 billion burden, which equates to \$3,000 for every man, woman, and child in Los Angeles.

## Recommendations

Any effective strategy to achieve reform must accept the reality that pension reform is among the most difficult political issues. The facts are complex, beneficiaries are well represented by effective advocates, the general public is largely uninformed and unengaged, and elected officials must make hard political choices. We propose a politically sensitive communications program involving decision-making public officials, pension plan beneficiaries, community leaders, and the general public.

1. Freeze the current defined benefit (DB) plan. Current retirees would continue to receive benefits under the plan. Any employee within 5 years of retirement would have the choice to stay in the DB plan and receive benefits upon retirement or to have the same choices as active employees outlined in point 3 below;
3. Create a new defined-contribution (DC) plan for existing employees and all new employees. All future retirement benefits would be through the DC plan. The employer contribution amounts would have a maximum of the current Tier 2 rates and could be structured as a guaranteed amount and/or employee match;
4. Active employees would have a choice of what to do with their earned DB benefits. This benefit would be calculated based on the employee's payroll contribution and the city's contribution for the years worked, credited with a moderate investment return rate. We would offer them the option of (a) converting their benefits to a deferred annuity, which would be payable upon retirement; or (b) convert their benefits to a cash amount that would be transferred to the new DC plan;
5. The single most important reform for reducing the Funds' current unfunded liabilities is capping COLA at 1.5%. We estimate this will reduce the unfunded liabilities by about \$2.4 billion! The current practice of 3% annual COLAs are, in our opinion, financially unsustainable. In contrast, U.S. Military pensioners receive a COLA of "Inflation minus 1%" on their pensions until they reach the age of 62, and then receive a COLA equal to the rate of inflation. Depending on the age of the retiree and the size of the retiree's benefit, COLAs should be varied. Older retirees with a smaller pension benefit should receive the maximum COLA available. Retirees with a pension in excess of \$80,000 per year should receive the smallest annual COLA. The youngest retirees retire in their 40s and 50s and possess who have 10-20+ working years available in their careers should also receive small COLAs. A "lowest" COLA, for example, might be the annual prevailing inflation rate minus a fixed percentage of 1.5% or 2%.

6. Increase use of low cost broad market index and ETF funds. Los Angeles can save over \$10 million per year and reduce the unfunded liability by shifting its current investments from high-cost, high-fee, money management firms or hedge funds to low-cost index funds that closely replicate broader stock and bond indexes. We believe that the Funds can shift their investments to reputable index funds which closely replicate the Funds' portfolio strategy for less than 25 basis points. This reform can be enacted and the proceeds realized in a matter of weeks;
7. Re-certify disability recipients through a medical board;
8. Reduce double-dipping in pensions;
9. Commit resources to a public education program for taxpayers. The City would need to form a communication committee, and bring in public leaders to explain the issue to taxpayers. This could take the form of "town hall" meetings with outside experts, actuaries and City Council representatives that are open to the public, and educational webinars.
10. The City (Mayor or Controller), or some respected nonprofit entity, should set up a public pension reform website with what-if calculators and interactive info-graphics to highlight the issues and benefits for the employees and the general public and generate grassroots support for reform.
11. Form a Pension Reform Commission to analysis all possible ideas for moving forward pension reforms.

## **Conclusion**

We have presented what we believe are principled and fair solutions that preserve financial peace of mind of retirees, limits the burden of taxpayers, and repositions the City of Los Angeles's finances for success. At the heart of our reforms is modernizing the system of retirement benefits provided to our family of city workers, our police and our firemen. To put it mildly, the first cities to truly face the full brunt of their pension problems, such as Detroit and Stockton (California), have not fared well. Los Angeles must take a different path to preserve our quality of life, which will fuel future economic growth.

## **Street Tax**

The Budget Advocates have serious reservations about the 15 year, half cent increase in our sales tax to 9.5% that will finance on a pay as you go basis the \$4.5 billion repair of our failed streets and only 40% of broken sidewalks.

This regressive tax that will average \$300 million per year will hit lower and middle income families disproportionately at the same time DWP is increasing its rates and the federal, state, and County are considering increases in transportation and gas taxes that will cost Angelenos over \$1.25 billion.

The increase in the sales tax to one of the highest levels in the County and State will also have an adverse impact on our economy and retailers, hindering job creation in our City.

A better plan would be for the City to finance the program with long term bonds serviced by the City's General Fund. The source of these funds would be the excess revenue generated by the 20% tax on DWP Power System revenues over and above what is already projected.

The proposed plan does not address the maintenance of our streets and the reconstruction of 350 miles of alleys. It does not consider any of the street plans proposed by the environmental community and city planners.

There are also questions about whether the City has the management team or organizational structure to make sure that the largest infrastructure project in the City's history comes in on time and on budget.

The proposed level of oversight is lacking independence and expertise and does not have the ability to take corrective actions to problems as they arise.

The Street Tax will be a divisive issue. The prospects of receiving two-thirds of the vote is unlikely, especially given that voters do not trust City Hall and that 55% of the voters rejected Proposition A in March 2013.

## **Civilianization of positions in the LAFD and the LAPD**

The Budget Advocates support the increased civilianization of the Los Angeles Fire Department as discussed in the March 4, 2014 PA Consulting report, Fire Department Deployment of Resources Study.

“There are numerous administrative and managerial positions which do not require fire suppression expertise and/or experience, but require specific skills, training and experience and should be civilianized. In order to enhance the effectiveness of its organization, LAFD should strive to appoint the best person qualified for a position by virtue of experience, training and qualifications to any post in the organization, including Division heads. Civilianization opportunities exist in dispatch, fire prevention, air operations, grants, professional standards, employee relations, risk management, fire facilities, supply and maintenance, EMS training and public relations.”

Increased civilianization will allow the LAFD to take advantage of skill sets not available in the department, allow more sworn officers to be on duty, increase its operating efficiency and response times, and even save money.

We also support increased civilianization of the Los Angeles Police Department.

"The City's information technology systems are out of date, varied amongst departments and do not work together. In addition, the related hardware is not up to current standards. This creates an inability to maintain and update the current software and even the hardware.

The City of LA has to and/or should establish reasonable goals for the implementing ERP software (Enterprise Resource Planning). This would enable all departments, regardless of location, to store, manage and use the same information to manage their and the City's operations. It would also enable the City's Stakeholders the ability to track the progress of their requests and all City data. This ERP software would be a vital component of any meaningful attempt to create Performance Informed Budgeting.

The cost of developing and installing such a system in a reasonable time frame would exceed the City's ability to fund it from current operations and therefore it is suggested that such an implementation be funded with a bond issue thus spreading the costs over a period that could be matched by the efficiencies gained from such a system."

# White Paper – Economic Development

## **Economic and Workforce Development Department**

General Manager; Jan Perry

## **Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates**

Danielle Lafayette, Chair NCBA

Ed Novy, Vice Chair NCBA

Derek Waleko, NCBA

Buashie Amatokwu, NCBA

Darlene Atkins, NCBA

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The elimination of the Community Redevelopment Act of the City of Los Angeles, California (CRA/LA) left the city without ready access to many economic development and finance tools that are necessary to revitalize communities, generate economic growth and development, expand the job base within the city and increase City revenues. The Council adopted and the Mayor concurred with various recommendations to establish a new Economic Development Department (EDD). A Request for Proposal (RFP) was to be submitted, creating a Citywide Economic Development Non-profit (EDNP) to provide economic development services on behalf of the City. The RFP identified five areas of services requested to be performed by an EDNP. The five areas are strategic planning and policy development, Business attraction and Retention, Economic Development Property Assets Management, Economic Development Transaction Services and Financing, and Workforce and Business Development. Of critical importance to the City, the EDNP will be requested to assist the EWDD in the development and preparation of a Citywide Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Economic and Workforce Development Department has been established and assigned General Manager Jan Perry, the Economic Development Non Profit has not yet been established. EWDD has consolidated the City's Economic development into one department employing over one hundred and eighty employees.

>**Smart Negotiating** - 5% raises every year from 2008 through 2013 for the city workforce were negotiated because leadership thought property values would keep increasing. Upcoming union negotiations should be smarter than past negotiations by factoring in economic conditions. By being steadfast during upcoming negotiations and implementing smart policies to account for down economic times, the City of Los Angeles has the ability to send clear messages to the outside business world that Los Angeles is a smart and fair place to do business.

>**Economic and Workforce Development Department** - The EWDD should be the bedrock on which Los Angeles builds. With the elimination of the CRA Los Angeles has a clean slate on which to build and grow the local economy. High priority and extra focus should be given to grow, shape, and mature the EWDD to give Los Angeles the fighting chance to compete in an ever-increasing global economy.

>**Collaboration** - Avoid competition among Los Angeles's neighbors. The EWDD should have one dedicated personnel that coordinates with our neighbors (Beverly Hills, Santa Monica,

etc) to increase tourism and highlight the benefits of traveling to our region. Increased visitors will create a larger demand for tourism-related jobs. Beginning collaboration efforts for tourism attraction with our neighbors can lay the foundation and be a benchmark for future collaboration efforts in other mutually beneficial industries.

>**Grant-writing Department** – In 2013 California received \$364.9 million in federal grants\*, to which Los Angeles only received 0.36%, \$1.3m\*\*. In 2012 California received \$864 million in federal grants\*, to which Los Angeles only received 0.09%, \$791K\*\*. EWDD should create a new grant-writing department staffed with three professional grant writers paid at national averages coupled with a success bonus structure. This is a low-cost solution to alternative revenue generation. \* <http://www.usaspending.gov/> \*\* <https://controllerdata.lacity.org>

>**2015 Proclamation** - Announce a plan to attract one new fortune five hundred company to Los Angeles by 2015.

>**Green Tape Initiative (GTI)** – "Los Angeles is an unfriendly place to conduct business," is often a recurring theme, citing red tape and high taxes as top reasons. To combat this negative brand, focus should be given to the red tape, as lowering the business tax is an overly suggested/used argument with no real momentum.

The Green Tape Initiative (GTI) is an additional step to simple solutions, like consolidating departments, which would hold city departments more accountable. The GTI would set acceptable time parameters for project approvals, business licenses and permits, and other important needed elements for a business to run, start, maintain, and operate in Los Angeles. The best way to explain is with a simple hypothetical:

A new restaurant would like to serve beer and wine adding allure to it's outdoor dining. A new modern restaurant can revitalize an area, increase foot traffic, and improve surrounding businesses. The GTI would set an acceptable amount of time (7 months or less) for securing a beer and wine license in Los Angeles and an unacceptable amount of time (12 months or more). In addition, a sliding scale would be created to pro-rate a discount to the business owner between months 7 and 12 - against the costs of obtaining the license. If the total cost were \$10,000 to be paid by the business owner, then the GTI policy would dictate: If a department fails to efficiently process business needs in an acceptable time frame, then the sliding scale pro-rated discount to the business will be paid for out of the department's budget.

Month	Business Cost	Department/s Cost
1-7	\$10,000	\$0
8	\$9,500	\$500
9	\$8,750	\$1,250
10	\$6,875	\$3,125
11	\$2,185	\$7,815
12	\$0	\$10,000

The GTI is designed to make departments accountable for processing time. The challenges with such a policy is determining what are acceptable time frames, where responsibility lies during processing, and how to prevent departments from simply budgeting expected losses into the next year's budget. However, despite the challenges, making the general public aware that Los Angeles is having this conversation can start to shift the negative brand of an unfriendly business climate to one that is looking to make real improvements for the business community.

>**International Division** – Foreign direct investment (FDI) brings in capital, technical know-how, organizational and managerial practices, marketing strategies, and new global networks. EWDD should create an international division focused on attracting FDI that works directly with the international team in the Mayor's office.

>**FDI Fund** – City government can play a larger role in attracting both domestic and international companies to open new offices in Los Angeles by providing incentives. An FDI fund run by the EWDD can include direct capital subsidies, subsidized loans, or dedicated infrastructure. It's time Los Angeles stops simply relying on weather alone to attract new business.

>**Clean-tech Corridor** – Invest heavily time and money, into the continued efforts to brand Los Angeles as the premier destination of green technology innovation and renewable jobs. Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) for California are 33% by 2020, with the rest of the United States following suit passing similar legislation, thus creating and growing the clean tech industry. The business community can go to Silicon Valley if they want to create apps, but will flock to Los Angeles for the Clean-Tech revolution with proper support from city leadership.

>**WorkSource** – \$9,015,701 was authorized and allocated in program year 2013-2014 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reserved grant funds for existing WorkSource Center Operators. The City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board (WIB) approved the allocation of these grant funds. The EWDD anticipates that the selected WorkSource Centers will be strategically located in the areas of the City having the highest concentrations of poverty; having the greatest number of long-term unemployed individuals; and having the lowest educational attainment rates. Refocuses the WorkSource Development System (WDS) on developing Career pathways opportunities in high-demand employment sectors moving to living wage employment. The department agreed to Increase service levels for vulnerable populations (e.g., Returning Veterans; individuals with disabilities, English language learners; individuals experiencing homelessness; Mature/Older Workers; and ex-offenders) by mandating minimum service levels. **We recommend adding recent College graduates; individuals living below poverty level to the list of vulnerable populations.** This will by far cause sustainability by giving these individual the experience and resources needed.