

Valley VOTE

September 18,2006 Meeting

David DeVoss
Newsletter Committee Chair



Gail Goldberg

Planning for the Future

Gail Goldberg , Los Angeles Director of Planning and featured speaker at Valley VOTE's September meeting, is an ebullient, friendly person who says all the right things. She wants responsible planning, responsive government and zoning that balances commercial activity with residential concerns. “I’ve been told that neighborhood councils are against everything,” Goldberg says with a smile. “With the system in place now that makes perfect sense. Nobody has any idea what's going to happen in his or her community. We need strong city planning so NCs have something to be for.”

Upon her arrival in Los Angeles, Goldberg, by her own admission, found a planning department that was “dysfunctional” and understaffed. Hiring freezes had left 50 vacancies to be filled. “San Diego has a smaller population than the San Fernando Valley,” Goldberg notes, “but it has 150 field inspectors to monitor building permits compared to 30 in the Valley.” More than 30 new people have been hired since she arrived and more are on the way. “Expect to have a full service Valley office within the next few months,” she promises.

Thirty-five neighborhoods within Los Angeles have specific development plans and six more community plans are on the way. Goldberg wants LA to “build wonderful neighborhoods,” but she admits it won’t be easy. “I want my planners to make the best recommendations possible,” she says, “but City Council members make the final decision. Often their decisions are not consistent with our recommendations.”

There's a lot on Goldberg’s plate beside commercial and residential zoning. Affordable housing and transportation corridors are major priorities. So is the development of recreational open space along the Los Angeles River. “We want to preserve the unique character of our communities, but

that requires long range planning,” she says. “A real plan comes with zoning ordinances so developers know what people want and communities know what they are entitled to get.”

Empowering Neighborhoods

According to the city charter, Los Angeles’ City Council is supposed to confer with neighborhood councils before major decisions are made. Today there are 85 NCs and by next year 100 will be certified. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) serves as the interface between City Hall and the neighborhoods. “We’re here to create an awareness because most people don’t know what NCs are,” says DONE Asst. General Manager **Arturo Piña**.

Substituting for DONE’s interim manager Lisa Sarno, who was unable to appear as scheduled, Piña supervisor John **Martinez** and Field Director **Mark Lewis** told Valley VOTE that DONE, now in its seventh year of existence, is recruiting people familiar with policy issues and legislative experience to fill the existing communication gaps. “NCs think DONE is the enemy but our field staff is engaged in this mission.”

DONE has laid out NC boundaries and certified existing councils, but more organization is needed in low-income communities. But even there success stories abound. “The Empowerment Congress North Area Neighborhood Development Council in South Los Angeles near Exposition Park has done a good job monitoring citizen concerns,” says Lewis. “One Saturday each month neighbors are allowed to come and speak without a set agenda.”

A Museum for the Valley

The imminent arrival of the Children’s Museum of Los Angeles is good news for Valley parents with children ages two to 12. Located at Hanson Dam, construction already has begun on the \$53 million facility that is scheduled to open by the end of 2007.

Actually, only \$38 million has been raised toward the \$53 million goal and **Mark Dierking**, the museum’s executive director, says fundraising is “difficult because we’re in the Valley and (people on the other side of the hill) think we’re too far from the center of the city.”

The cornerstones of the museum will be four galleries: kitchen, studio, shop and observatory, each of which is organized around a particular way to relating to the natural world. Workshop activities will help children understand themselves in the larger context of the world through various sensory experiences.

Open around the year except for major holidays, museum development director **Dana Katz** expects the facility to attract 360,000 visitors a year despite the \$8 ticket price. “There’s a heavy environmental theme,” she adds. “Earth, air, wind and fire all will be used in different circumstances.”

Those interested in supporting the Children's Museum should plan to attend the Tree of Life Gala on Thursday, November 16 at 6 p.m. at the Encino-Tarzana Hospital Charitable Foundation. You can meet Antonio Villaraigosa and know the money you spend will go to a good cause. Contact dana@childrensmuseumla.org for more information.

News You Can Use

Denny Schneider, Valley VOTE's emissary to the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) reports that construction continues at LAX on the South Runways, the baggage handling systems and upgrades of the Bradley International Terminal.

At the LAX-Community Noise Roundtable last week, Boeing Corp. presented information about design changes being made to aircraft bodies and engines to reduce noise. See www.LAWA.org under Noise Management for a copy of the presentation. Boeing also has tested a new landing approach system that significantly reduces noise. Unfortunately, the FAA has had its funding deleted for activities necessary to accommodate the new landing techniques. There is still hope, however, that future aircraft will be less impacting.

LAWA has made arrangements with the TSA (Transportation Security Agency) and a private concern to simplify travel for Valley residents. Passengers taking the Van Nuys Fly-away buses can now check bags in Van Nuys for \$5 and never see them again (hopefully) until they arrive at their domestic destination. Ten airlines are participating in this program, says Schneider.

The Master Plan update for LAX is continuing. Another public meeting to discuss the plan will be held in October. Scheduled for debate is an expanded Fly-away program that goes not only to LAX, but Ontario and other sites.

Taxes & Television

Valley VOTE Finance Committee chairman **Richard Bort** says Wendy Greuel, Chair of the city council's ad hoc committee on business tax reform continues to work on reducing the tax categories from 65 to 11 (former goal was six). "We hope it won't take seven years to be achieved, especially since category reduction was part and parcel of the Business Tax Reform Plan approved in 2004.

As for cable television, Time Warner Cable has consolidated the operations of Adelphia and Comcast and now controls more than 95% of cable TV subscribers in Los Angeles, Bort reports.

Valley VOTE has gone on record supporting Video-on-Demand for broadcasting meetings of the City Council, its Commissions, Committees, meetings of those neighborhood councils that wish to be video recorded and press conferences of city officials.

Last week, Councilman Greig Smith announced that his office has produced a program about CD 12 that will be broadcast some four times on Channel 35 about now. We brought to his attention that this would be fine material for broadcasting via VOD, if only the City would require Time Warner Cable to do it. Matt Meyerhoff, Smith's Communications Director, likes the idea and will talk it up with Smith. This is important, says Bort, because Greig Smith drove the use of two-way interactive TV for council meetings, with the Valley participating through the Van Nuys City Hall facility.

NO to Proposition R

Polly Ward, chair of the Neighborhood Councils Committee reminds us that Valley VOTE recommends a NO Vote on Prop. R, the confusing City Charter amendment on the November ballot that deceptively links ethics reform to an increase from two to three in the number of terms a city council person can serve. The city passed the measure with no time for review, ignored City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo and never consulted the ethics commission," says Ward. "The NCs are supposed to provide input before major decisions are made, but they weren't consulted either.

And Finally – It's Party Time!

Be sure to mark Saturday, October 28 on your calendar because it's when Valley VOTE members and civic leaders from throughout the Valley will meet at the Northridge home of Richard Leyner for a garden party. A \$30 donation that goes toward funding Valley VOTE activities gets you through the door. Food, drink and convivial networking are free. Contact Richard at JRLeyner@naicapital.com for directions.

Also upcoming is the Thursday, October 5 Mayor's Lunch, an annual event at the Warner Center Marriott, where you can meet and dine with Antonio . The luncheon lasts from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$40.

The next Valley VOTE meeting will be on Monday, October 16, 2006.

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

Valley VOTE, a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists and organizations is committed to exploring and implementing programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles, including opportunities to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters.

Please forward this Email to interested individuals and organizations. If you would like to be removed from our distribution list please send an Email to javittisr@cs.com. We apologize if you receive more than one notice for this meeting.

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