

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

HISTORIC HIGHLAND PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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Certified as NC #33 May 28, 2002

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May 19, 2016

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and the Members of the Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: CF 16-0600 – Funding for Neighborhood Councils

The Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council which represents over 60,000 Los Angeles stakeholders who reside, own property, or conduct business in our neighborhood would like to request that the Mayor, the Budget and Finance Committee and the Councilmembers step up and honor City Council President Wesson's commitment in 2015 to LANCC chair Terrence Gomes to increase the ongoing funding of each Neighborhood Council (NC) by \$5,000 to \$42,000 for Fiscal Year 2015-2016 (received and appreciated) and an additional \$2,500 to \$44,500 for Fiscal Year 2016-2017.

The Mayor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 indicates that NC funding will, instead, be *cut back* from \$42,000 to \$37,000.

Many departments are also facing cuts in one way or another in order for the City to balance its budget and cover the additional costs it has taken on including its settlement with its unions and its commitment to resolving the homelessness crisis.

When the City makes cuts to the departments, it also reduces the services that should be available to the stakeholders. Each NC is funded to it can counterbalance these reductions and target specific projects to assist in areas of importance to its neighborhood and to have the operational funding necessary to continue serving its stakeholders.

NC funding was cut by about a third in the aftermath of the economic crisis 8 years ago which affected not only the City but all its stakeholders. The cost of living have increased every year since, further impacting our residents, while monies for the NCs – which can help provide our communities with enhancements for our children, our seniors, and others lacking the ability to help themselves, enhancements that are even more necessary in the current economic conditions – have not.

During the past year, the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council has helped fund: a middle school Robotics Club to challenge students, both male and female, to embrace STEM applications; Recycled Resources which provides services in North East Los Angeles to the local homeless population, a book bike for the Arroyo Seco Library take reading material out into the neighborhood; and a high school film production program which included internships.

This funding has a positive impact not only on the quality of life for those in the programs and their futures, but through them, for their friends and families. The NC also uses its budget for local events which engender community spirit and celebrate the uniqueness of our neighborhood.

This success story for NC funding is multiplied across the City so using the argument that *some* NCs don't spend all their funds is spurious – what about those who do? And those whose stakeholders in this continuing soft recovery, need more help? Since some NCs' budgeted monies, those which are not spent in the fiscal year are returned, the financial impact of an increase will not be as significant in actuality as on paper.

Additionally, while the City budgets one year at a time, it has various mechanisms that allow it to fund and spread costs over multiple years. Shouldn't the NCs have a similar option?

Large projects can have a more significant impact than a number of smaller ones but they can be more complex and take more time to complete the details and obtain approvals. In the past, some of these have had to be abandoned (with attendant costs for some of the parties involved), and people are discouraged from moving ahead on others due to the proven low likelihood for success. That's wrong. And we call on the City Council to make the changes necessary to allow for more flexibility.

In summary, the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council requests that the Mayor and City stand behind the commitment to fund every Neighborhood Council with the full \$44,500 and move forward within the next six months to amend funding policy for the Neighborhood Councils to permit funds that have been approved by the Council board and DONE prior to the end of the fiscal year to be expended in the following fiscal year.

Sincerely,



Monica Alcaraz, President

Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council