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CITY PLANNING**

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April 21, 2021

Budget and Finance Committee
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Honorable Members:

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING - MAYOR'S 2021-22 PROPOSED BUDGET

The Department of City Planning (City Planning) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Mayor's 2021-22 Proposed Budget. Over the course of the past year, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our department, both financially and in the way we operate. I am extremely proud of the dedication from our employees to continue delivering services to the public in the midst of a pandemic which has brought challenges professionally and personally for everyone. We support the Mayor's budget which focuses on restoration, recovery, and equity and justice.

Fiscal Sustainability

We are pleased to see a budget for City Planning that does not include any reductions and lifts the hiring freeze citywide. Restoring staffing resources in our Department will continue to be a priority in the year ahead. We recognize both the freeze and the Separation Incentive Program were strategies to get through the fiscal emergency. For City Planning, those two factors equate to an impact of about 68-70 staff, or close to 15 percent of our Department. This budget allows the Department to begin a recovery by being able to strategically focus hiring in critical areas of need and balancing those efforts with the recovery in our revenues. To that end, the Department prepared and transmitted in December 2020 a comprehensive fee update that will ensure the long-term fiscal sustainability of the Department and will continue to provide services which are critical to the City's overall economic recovery.

Racial Justice, Equity, and Transformative Planning

We are excited to see the core resources provided in the Mayor's budget to establish an office in South Los Angeles, a critical part of our efforts in transformative planning. The opportunity exists to expand this proposal to provide additional neighborhood engagement, land use training, economic development and case management support in line with the Department's focus on racial equity and communities most in need. The addition of one City Planner and \$150,000 for staff training and neighborhood engagement is requested for this priority work program funded by the General Fund.

Wildlife Protection

We would like to note that existing position authorities for the Wildlife Study Pilot were not included in the budget. In addition, these positions have only been funded for one year in FY 2019-20 and remain unfunded. The purpose of the Study is to evaluate the existing biotic conditions within the Santa Monica Mountains, to identify areas important for supporting habitat and movement for wildlife, and to identify potential standards for conserving biological resources through land use regulations within these areas. Without the Environmental Specialist and City Planning Associate, the Department's work on the draft ordinance would be impeded, and the larger study would be delayed. Restoration of these two positions is requested for consideration.

Regulation of Oil Drilling Operations

Regulation of oil drilling operations has been a high priority of the City's elected leadership and the Department plays a lead role in land use approvals and periodic compliance review and corrective operating conditions, where needed. The Department also has the primary role in crafting and preparing ordinances and background studies to consider limits on new oil drilling operations and the amortization of existing facilities. An oil-focused land use code team consisting of one Senior City Planner, one City Planner and one City Planning Associate is requested for consideration. Initial funding from the General Fund would be required for this work program.

Home Sharing Implementation

The Department has implemented the City's Home-sharing Ordinance and successfully created a registry program and online tracking system for home sharing activity. In addition, the Department implemented a per-night fee ordinance to cover City costs and reduce General Fund impacts. Home-sharing and regulation activity workloads exceed the initial limited staffing resources provided to the Department. Revocation hearings overseen by the Office of Zoning Administration will also be required for problematic properties. Supplemental staffing of one Associate Zoning Administrator, and two City Planning Associates are requested for consideration, with funding from the General Fund.

The Department looks forward to being a key part of the City's recovery efforts, and discussing with you how we can do more to serve the City's residents and businesses. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact Kevin Keller, Executive Officer, at 213-978-1272 or kevin.keller@lacity.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vincent P. Bertoni', with a large, stylized circular flourish at the end.

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

CC: Honorable Budget and Finance Committee Members
Matt Szabo, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor
Jeanne Holm, Deputy Mayor of Budget and Innovation
William Chun, Deputy Mayor of Economic Development
Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Richard Llewellyn, City Administrative Officer