



## Lighting the Way: Experiencing a Glowing, Foil-Wrapped West Adams Christmas

by Emily Green

Not long ago, I spent my first Christmas in Los Angeles. So I was not prepared for the appearance of the tin foil on the palm tree outside my house. I blinked, as a farmer might at a crop circle. But there it was, this shiny belt. Looking up and down the street, I realized that every palm on the street was swathed with a glittering cummerbund.

It was doubtful that this was the work of kids, at least the short kind. All the bands were fixed at a uniform height.

One thing was sure. Somewhere a supermarket was running low on Reynolds Wrap. Our street has a lot of palms, most put in by the original Craftsman builders. Moreover, though the houses are pretty much unchanged during the last 100 years, the palms have grown four and five stories tall and achieved almost primeval girth. A box of foil, I reckon, would collar three, four trees tops.

Not long after the bands appeared, they were followed by big red bows. This time, for some reason, the precision was lacking. The bows faced no particular direction. One was directed at traffic, another at a pedestrian on the sidewalk, another drooped forlornly. Quite a few simply hung askew. Yet by next time I looked, the bows were all

pert and perfectly aligned.

Aha. Mystery solved. Wally, my incorrigibly sweet and ultra-fastidious next-door neighbor on 24th Street, had clearly been sneaking around tweaking the gift-wrapping of the palm trees.

Soon I learned that this was Wally’s gang’s way of cuing the street:

“Show time!”

Wally hosts our monthly block club meetings, and our block club takes Christmas decorations very seriously. Why? Lord knows. But it happens. Boy, it happens.

Though the trees are a hint, the season officially opens when Wally and his lodger, Bobby, do their house first. Light up date: Dec. 1 (though there are some post-Thanksgiving tech-runs).

The tan bungalow is first draped with icicle lights. Next come the evergreen garlands, wreaths and bows. Then hedges are draped with nets of more white lights.

His house decked out last year, Wally casually inquired if I would mind some lights on mine. He and Bobby waited as I hopped on my bike and cycled off to a drugstore to buy some. The ink on the receipt wasn’t dry before Wally had Bobby up a ladder draping them along my gutter.

At dusk, we poured cocktails and stood out front getting a bit lit ourselves as we prepared for the illuminations. Bang! Our houses glowed and twinkled. To my eyes, the crayon-bright strings in blue, yellow, green and red were utterly delightful.

But Wally wasn’t satisfied. He squinted critically at my house. “You need some around the windows upstairs,” he said.

Next day, they were there, gently fixed with bag ties instead of staples so as not to damage the paint. Several days later, he appeared with a wreath.

Up and down the rest of the street, either drafted

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**WAHA Hosts A Sumptuous Buffet Dinner**

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**Perspective by Ken Bernstein**

***A Look At Neighborhood Councils***

The Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) is currently circulating a Draft Plan for the establishment and certification of the city's new neighborhood councils, slated to start next July. As a long-time community leader in the San Fernando Valley, Board member of the Studio City Residents Association, Board Member of the Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley, Vice-President of the American Jewish Committee's Los Angeles chapter, former City Council Planning Deputy, and current staff member for the Los Angeles Conservancy, I feel that I bring a wide array of relevant experiences and perspectives to the current neighborhood council debate. However, my comments here are my own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of any organization.

I commend the Commission and the staff of DONE for the months of hard work and community outreach meetings that have gone into the development of the Draft Plan. The coming months represent a defining moment for neighborhood participation in Los Angeles City government. I therefore wanted to provide some detailed suggestions and critiques, offering a vision for neighborhood councils that differs significantly from DONE's current direction. I offer these comments as a supporter of charter reform and a longtime proponent of neighborhood councils. It is precisely because I so firmly believe in the potential of well-organized neighborhood councils that I am so concerned about the basic direction of the current proposal.

The current Draft Plan proposes a neighborhood council system that will consist of a network of free-floating neighborhood organizations — what I might call "homeowners-groups-plus." While they will be more inclusive than most neighborhood organizations, they will not yield a well-organized, systematized network of grass-roots representation that truly integrates citizens into the City governance and decisionmaking structure.

The Commission and staff of the Department, heeding the calls of many to create an "organic" and "grass-roots" network of neighborhood councils, have made the overall system far too loose. DONE appears to be attempting to appease many vocal advocates by appearing open to any and all models of neighborhood councils, proposing a system that, on its face, appears inclusive, flexible, and neighborhood-friendly. But the Plan's unstructured "Let a Hundred Neighborhood Councils Bloom" approach will actually doom any meaningful,

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***Rob Glushon Responds: Flexibility is Best Policy***

The differences in views over what kind of regulations should be enacted for the creation and function of Neighborhood Councils has been as diverse as the City of Los Angeles itself. Some have called for more structure and a set of detailed rules as to how membership and a governing body must be selected - specific kinds of issues that the Neighborhood Councils can provide input to decision-makers - and an "operations manual"; which would require all Neighborhood Councils to function in the same manner. Others have urged a more flexible structure of limited regulations in order to allow for independence so that each Neighborhood Council can decide for itself how it will operate - select its own governing body - and determine the issues and method by which it will provide input before decisions are made.

As pointed out by the recent options report prepared by the League of Women Voters, there are choices which must be made to establish a citywide system of Neighborhood Councils. However, if the Neighborhood Council Plan is to

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## News Flash!

## A Holiday Gift for West Adams: South Seas House to Begin Reconstruction Shortly

The contract is signed for the Renovation/Restoration of the Joseph Dupey Residence/South Seas House, our neighborhood's wonderful (if dilapidated) fantasy Victorian on the corner of Arlington and 24th Street.

Architect Michelle McDonough is officially on board to oversee the project, as of November 30.

We'll follow with more details in your next newsletter!

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## Through My Eyes Only

### The Two Gentlemen of Virginia

By John B. Deaven

One of my pleasures from joining the WAHA Board of Directors so far has been attending our delightful monthly meetings at various locations. At each session, Treasurer Jim Meister offers us a well-organized financial report, and I'm always impressed with how efficient he is. In August, eleven of us were congregated around Jim's elegant dining room table enjoying large quantities of Chinese food. While I was having my third helping of chop suey, I decided that Jim and his partner Allan Eriksen should be the subject of this column. Graciously, they allowed me to return for an interview.

Jim was born in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and Allan was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In time, Jim moved to Dallas, Texas. While there he was sent on a business trip to Minneapolis, where he met Allan. The first time they came to Los Angeles, they lived in Country Club Park for one year. They went back to Minnesota for another six years before moving back to L.A. a second time. This was in 1994, and they bought their current home in LaFayette Square, West of Crenshaw, between Washington and Venice Boulevards.

They made friends with Richard von Ernst and Thomas Castaneda in the neighborhood at the time, who introduced them to both the Lafayette Square Homeowners Association and the West Adams Heritage Association. Jim and Allan became active members quickly in both organizations. In November '94 Jim was elected Treasurer of the Lafayette Square Homeowners Assoc. In December '94 Jim and Allan were the kitchen captains for the WAHA Holiday Tour's "Dessert House." In November '95 Jim joined the WAHA Board of Directors as a member-at-large. Two years later Jim became WAHA's Treasurer.

In Dec. '95 Jim agreed to be the Chairperson for the WAHA Holiday Tour. Despite how difficult that assign-

ment was, Jim agreed to be the Chair again for the '96 Holiday Tour. That was the first time I met Jim since our Fourth Avenue home was on that tour along with neighbors Cat Slater and Woody Woodward's, Kent and Donna Washington's, and Dave Raposa and Ed Trospers. Allan, of course, was recruited to work those two tours, and both men volunteered to work the Holiday Tours of '97, '98, and '99. I vividly remember seeing them both really hustling at the Milbank Estate, the "Entree House," on Country Club Drive in '98. That was a busy two-night experience they'll never forget! Nevertheless, fortunately all of this hard work in WAHA has not been overlooked. Jim was the recipient of WAHA's highest honor, The Bob Bortfeld Memorial Award, for his exceptional commitment to preservation.

Speaking of preservation, let's address their house. I first saw their stunning home, located at 1620 Virginia Road, on the 2000 Lafayette Square Tour. As described in the tour's program text by researcher Mitzi March Mogul, the style of Jim and Allan's house is "Italian Renaissance Revival, with all the vocabulary of the classical canon: Palladian windows, turned pilasters connected by an arched lintel leading to entry, decorative medallion, and wrought iron balconies. The house evokes a villa estate." The house's exterior is stucco of Mediterranean pink (or rose, or coral). I found out, along with others on the tour, that the pink color was added into the final coat of stucco, thus not painted on afterwards. I clearly remember my first impression when I saw their gorgeous home on that April tour. I was in awe of every exquisite detail. The rooms were showcase magazine-perfect.

In the living room is a 1920 baby grand piano that they are long-term baby sitting for a friend with less space. I should have such a friend! The

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## Through My Eyes Only

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upstairs master bedroom has a five-piece set, made in the 1920's in Milan, Italy. It includes a kingsize bed (made from two twins), two end tables, a dresser, and an enormous armoire, with three clear and flawless mirrors mounted on it. The bedroom set, found by Jim and Allan locally, and the house are a perfect match together.

The house currently has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and two separate sleeping porches. Jim and Allan recently enlarged their kitchen by using the additional space of a 4th bedroom downstairs. They used old original kitchen cabinets in the butler's pantry to have perfect reproductions made. They also used old original tile to match new tile in the kitchen, maintaining the 1920s look of box cap tiles in blue and white period colors.

The original owner was Alfred A. Michelletti, who constructed the house at the cost of \$12,000 in 1923. The house was later sold to Superior Court Judge Henry M. Willis and his wife Clyda, who had been a well-known singer in San Francisco. Clyda had a gaudy weakness for gold, and she had the fireplace and wall light fixtures painted solid gold. Needless to say, with Allan and Jim as the current owners, they aren't like that anymore! However, the front entrance gate still bears the judge's initials: H.M.W.

In closing, Allan strongly feels that if one owns a

historic house, one has a responsibility to the integrity of the property, beyond one's own taste and decorations. Jim also stated that a house becomes a part of the family, and it tells the owners how it wants to be furnished. Their house should be very happy. Just recently, the men added beautiful faux blocks up the entire walls of the front hallway, giving the interior entrance an indoor/outdoor feeling.

Jim currently works as a senior vice president for a finance company in downtown L.A. Allan is the Director of National Merchandizing for Warner Home Video in Burbank. Allan is also the owner of a grand 1952 Bentley, which was displayed nicely in their driveway on the April tour day. While Jim continues being our terrific Treasurer, both Jim and Allan continue volunteering for different WAHA projects throughout the year. WAHA is very fortunate, indeed, that these two gentlemen settled in our area on Virginia Road.

## Glushon's Perspective

Continued from page 2

be consistent with the mandates of the City Charter as well as incorporate the preponderance of public input provided at hundreds of public hearings, learning sessions and workshops conducted in every part of the City, there is an emerging consensus as to certain fundamental features. First and foremost, although self-selected independent Neighborhood Councils have created fear in the minds of many who are, or who have been, part of the City governing process, it is such independence that is both mandated by the Charter and supported by overwhelming public input in all parts of the City. As reflected by the differences in the structure of the existing community councils profiled in the last edition of City Watch, independent - self-selected - and self-governed community groups do work. The fundamental feature of empowerment is to allow people to organize themselves, select their leadership and conduct their own business as they decide subject only to regulations that, as mandated by the Charter, include the opportunity for all diverse interests within a community to participate. The vast majority of revisions being made to the DONE Neighborhood Council Plan are the result of feedback received at the public hearings, learning sessions and workshops. In truth, there is no perfect plan and the likelihood is that whatever final citywide system is adopted, there will be changes as the system evolves.

The reality is that trying to create a system of grassroots democracy in a city of 4 million people poses a difficult and almost overwhelming challenge. But a system that truly empowers people to organize themselves subject to requirements of diversity and open participation - which provides resources for information, communication, training, education and outreach - and which provides for a great voice on issues before decisions are made, is a strong first step in bringing people together within communities to better connect with City government.

*Glushon currently serves on BONC*

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## A West Adams Christmas Continued from page 1

into the mood by Wally and Bobby or slapping up the ornaments under their own festive steam, everyone else got around to it. One neighbor began his display with a deliciously jaunty move: He draped Santa hats on his Halloween pumpkins.

Next door to him an extended family, one of whom works in a toy factory, got out canned snow and every imaginable fixing. Up the street, another family wired their spidery hackberry trees with white lights. And so it went, house to house, right up the street, ending with a sleigh and complement of reindeer.

This year, it is much the same. But as I untangle my colored lights and wonder if they might somehow be made to blink, it occurs to me that I may have gone a touch mad.

Before moving to Los Angeles, I was not a fan of Christmas. I used to volunteer to work during the holiday. Now, I am nosing around the fabric district for the right shade of red velvet for Christmas stockings.

I am thinking that a figgy mince cookie in a slightly leavened dough would be a good offering at the block club Christmas party.

And I am wondering if Wally would be cross if I spiked the egg nog with green food coloring.

Maybe aliens did put that tin foil on the palms and transplant a few personalities while they were at it. Mine included.

But there is another possibility. Maybe my patch of L.A. simply turns anyone who moves here into a gaudy softie. I have been plagued with incipient holiday spirit ever since I got here. When I woke up on my first L.A. Fourth of July, Wally had put an American flag on my porch. At dusk, rather than return it, I jealously furled it up and am going to display it next year.

At Halloween, I needed no prompting. I drove to Ventura in search of what I was determined would be the block's largest pumpkin. This from someone on record countless times stridently reminding readers that it is flavor and water content, not size, that matter in a squash.

Why the change? I am flummoxed. In other regards, you see, I am very much my cantankerous old self.

Could it be some underlying tradition? One might expect such compulsive displays from a homogeneous population. In Scandinavia, or Solvang, for that matter. But we are not all blue-eyed and called Petersen.

Our block club members have no obvious cultural bond. Wally is Japanese American. Across the street, the fam-

ily is Latino. Kittycorner, there is a blond actor, East Coast-born and -bred. Up and down the street, our block has Louisiana Cajuns, Native Americans, an Irishman and Latinos, and many of our core members are African Americans.

Nor could it be some professional quirk. Among our ranks are a postman, a veterinarian, a retired policeman, a delivery man, a minister and a nurse.

The one thing we do share in common is location. We live in inner-city L.A., in a district that Wally insists on calling "historic West Adams" and that the local locksmith calls "South-Central."

Recently I got to wondering if our holiday sparkle might not be just a shade defiant. Sure, there is the classic element, shared by Christmas revelers clear around the northern hemisphere: the desire to push back the night in the dead of winter.

But there is more. Behind our tinsel town tastes, there is, I think, a refusal to be cowed. While, thanks to old-timers such as Wally, our street is idyllic, the same cannot be said of our main streets.

These are huge boulevards with the most resonant names that America has to offer: Washington, Adams, Jefferson. And they are indeed like something out of "It's a Wonderful Life,"

except that they come from the nightmarish Pottersville rather than Bedford Falls.

These boulevards are deliriously ugly, and I sometimes wonder if our holiday displays aren't somehow mounted to defy the sleaze? Maybe we do it to signal that our residential streets are safe and that we are friendly. We certainly do it because we like it.

Last Christmas, I briefly imagined that our street was the best decorated of all. Then, as I whizzed over to my brother's place, I grudgingly had to admit that his street, La Salle Avenue, might have bested ours. But then biking down to the California Science Center and across Gramercy Place to church, and basically beetling about, I was hit by a humbling fact. Every street offered some new amazing show. It was as if the whole area woke up pixilated.

Could we, with our super wattage, be sending a message? Could longtime residents like Wally be banishing the vestiges of the riots that erupted amid them? Declaring themselves alive and well and in top holiday spirit?

If I, myself, have a Christmas wish, it is that progressive food provisioners—not huge, not tiny, but just the right size for the splendid old halls on our main streets—would come see our light fantastic. They would find an able work force and a rich market for candied nuts.

*This article first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.*

*So we don't have snow  
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We have Christmas lights, and every  
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## Bernstein's Perspective Continued from page 2

balanced and thoughtful neighborhood involvement in City decisions.

By allowing every community to craft their own vision of what a neighborhood council should be, DONE will end up creating a system that does not go far enough in giving the neighborhood councils a meaningful way to plug into City government. The system being proposed will create a new network of independent organizations — DONE even recommends that neighborhood councils become new, stand-alone non-profit organizations — rather than quasi-governmental entities that actually become part of the City's decisionmaking process (either formally or informally).

In areas that have established homeowners or residents associations (which exist in the majority of Los Angeles communities), the neighborhood councils will tend to look much like these existing entities and involve many of the same activists, albeit with "non-residential stakeholders" tacked on. They will simply become another set of meetings for these activists to attend. I am not arguing that these meetings are without benefit: it is extremely important to foster real cooperation between residential and non-residential stakeholders, and to create a mechanism for them to work on common community problems. But the resulting system falls well short of the Charter language's promise "to promote more public participation in government" (emphasis added). Citizens participating in neighborhood councils — as beneficial the councils sometimes could be — will not be participating in government at all, but rather in another outside community organization.

Incredibly, the Draft Plan gives communities no guidance at all on the substance of neighborhood councils' work.

The Draft Plan leaves to the discretion of each community the types of issues that neighborhood councils will address, merely outlining a process for creation and acceptance of the neighborhood councils. Left unanswered are the most important questions that will make or break the neighborhood councils. For example, what are some of the issues that the councils might address? On planning and land use issues, what neighborhood council procedures — whether on project presentation, neighbor notification, or other issues — would best allow communities to give good, substantive input? How will neighborhood councils address public safety issues, and what will their relationship be with Community Police Advisory Boards and other local advisory bodies? How will neighborhood councils have an opportunity to help make recommendations on budget and resource allocation issues, whether citywide or within a particular community? These are just a few of many substantive questions that will determine whether neighborhood councils will provide meaningful, balanced, advisory guidance, or just become another set of outside community meetings. Yet, none are addressed in the Draft Plan.

By allowing every neighborhood to create its own structure for neighborhood councils, the resulting system will be impenetrable to outsiders and to the business community.

We often hear the business community claim that every new law or process will make Los Angeles an impossible place in which to do business. While at times such complaints sound like Chicken Little, such a complaint would actually be warranted here: this system will truly be difficult to navigate. A developer or businessperson wanting to contact neighborhood councils around the city to get input will have to deal with over 100 different sets of procedures, leadership structures, meeting formats, etc. While it is impossible to create a "one size fits all" system, DONE has made no effort to standardize even the most basic elements of the neighborhood council plan to ensure that the system as a whole has some commonalities and is transparent to outsiders.

The Commission should consider creating a system of 45 to 60 Neighborhood Councils or "Community Councils" that will receive more significant City staff support than proposed under the Draft Plan.

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## Bernstein's Perspective Continued from page 7

By creating a system that will result in over 100 new, free-floating community organizations, the Draft Plan ensures that DONE will be logistically unable to provide real staff support to the neighborhood councils. As a result, the Draft Plan avoids any promise of real staff support: the Plan states that DONE will merely provide advice and training, and may help pay for some basic operational expenses, but otherwise will not be involved in the day-to-day workings of the neighborhood councils. A largely unstaffed system would represent a major departure from the best neighborhood council systems around the nation (Portland, Seattle, St. Paul, etc.) and even from our own city's best models, such as Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas' Empowerment Congress.

When I worked for Councilmember Laura Chick, we created in 1993 a system of very successful Neighborhood Planning Advisory Councils (NPACs) in the Third District: effective, balanced, diverse advisory bodies that carefully reviewed every potentially controversial development project in the district. These NPACs could not have functioned successfully on their own, without our office's staff

support. Staff provided training sessions to NPAC members, lined up and confirmed the developer representatives, acquired mailing lists of potentially affected neighborhoods and completed notification mailings, explained the often-complex background and context of each issue, interpreted planning and zoning regulations, and did much more. While the NPACs took a great deal of staff effort and time, they were invaluable to developers, neighborhoods, and the Council office alike because they consistently forged up-front consensus on difficult development issues.

For the NPACs, we divided the Third District into three NPAC "districts," combining communities with commonalities of interest: Woodland Hills and West Hills, Canoga Park and Winnetka, Reseda and West Van Nuys. While these combinations resulted in slightly larger "neighborhoods" or "communities", the NPACs still offered real, grass-roots representation at a local level. Having only three groups enabled our office to provide real staff support to all. Combining smaller communities into larger groupings also helped all stakeholders look beyond their immediate "neighborhood" to strengthen the links between their communities, and better relate residential

neighborhoods to all of their nearby retail and commercial districts.

The Draft Plan should, similarly, strive for three or four councils per district. This more reasonable number would allow DONE to meet neighborhoods' justified expectations for City support. Nowhere in the United States has a neighborhood council system with more than 100 separate entities been created. Even New York, a city with more than twice Los Angeles' population, has about half the number of "Community Boards" that Los Angeles is contemplating. So much is hanging on this grand and worthwhile experiment of neighborhood councils, including the very existence of the City of Los Angeles as we know it. It would be so much more effective to have fewer, well-functioning, well-funded, well-staffed councils than a patchwork quilt of over 100 cash-strapped, disorganized, undirected organizations.

The Draft Plan mishandles the sticky issue of setting neighborhood boundaries by allowing overlapping boundaries, which could leave individual neighborhoods in multiple neighborhood councils.

Since most Los Angeles community names have no legal status, many difficult inter-community boundary disputes and name change proposals have arisen over the years. It is, therefore, perfectly understandable that DONE might want to "punt" on this issue, leaving it to the neighborhoods themselves to settle these disputes. However, this strategy ignores the reality that many of these disputes have simmered for years and decades and may, in fact, prove intractable. Under the Draft Plan, a single neighborhood could well find itself part of two, three, or even four separate neighborhood councils, making it impossible to gauge true community sentiments on any local issue.

What happens, for example, if the Cahuenga Pass wants to be part of the Hollywood Neighborhood Council, while the Studio City Neighborhood Council includes it as part of theirs? The draft states that, "overlapping bound-

Continued on page 9

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## Bernstein's Perspective Continued from page 7

aries must be approved by all affected Neighborhood Councils," but what happens if approval is not forthcoming? Couldn't a boundary dispute effectively hold multiple neighborhood councils hostage, preventing neighborhood council formation for all?

Rather than allowing overlapping boundaries, DONE should work to resolve these disputes, through a two-part process of mediation and binding arbitration. DONE or perhaps the City Attorney's Dispute Resolution Office, would first mediate the dispute and try to facilitate an agreement. If none is forthcoming, the parties would go to binding arbitration before either the Commission or the City Attorney's office, with the community that better meets the Plan's boundary criteria "prevailing." Once resolved, all communities would be able to proceed within a single neighborhood council.

The "Criteria for Responsible and Inclusive Representation" should be made tighter and better defined. These criteria should contain greater specificity on what constitutes diversity among stakeholders in a neighborhood council. Must a neighborhood council include not only business representation, but also commercial property owners, residential tenants, social service organizations, religious institutions, schools — or not? This issue of "diversity" is clouded by the terminology the Draft Plan utilizes to discuss neighborhood council participants: it incorporates the language of non-profit organizations, speaking of "membership," as if these entities will be outside organizations that may even have a dues-paying membership. Membership-based organizations must, of course, accept all those who apply for membership, but may not necessarily reach out to ensure balanced participation by all stakeholder categories.

Rather than conceive of neighborhood councils as free-floating neighborhood associations, the Commission should consider making them into a quasi-governmental forum where all neighborhood constituencies come together and work on common problems. Under such a structure, the neighborhood councils would not consist of dues-paying members but would be open to everyone who wants to participate, with a leadership structure based on a combination of self-selection, appointments, and elections.

The Early Notification System (ENS), while required in the Charter, seems unwieldy and impractical as proposed. While it is a nice idea to give all neighborhood councils the ability to provide input on citywide policy issues, achieving meaningful input is more difficult in practice. Imagine, for a moment, that the City Council is considering a complex infrastructure issue such as an adjustment to the sewer service charge. To give thoughtful, meaningful input will require the neighborhood councils to have relevant context and understanding of the issues — and, often, access to a real human being who can answer questions and facilitate discussion. A single e-mail is likely not sufficient to foster real discussion and deliberation citywide. But having a city Public

Works staff member (in my example) to be present to answer questions and provide clarification is a physical impossibility in a system of over 100 neighborhood councils.

The Draft Plan also creates no guidelines for city departments as to which issues must be submitted for review to the ENS. Will departments be required to submit all major policy changes to all neighborhood councils, or will only certain issues go to the neighborhood councils? Who will decide to activate the ENS — DONE, the City Council, the Mayor, departments, or the neighborhood councils themselves? Also left unanswered by the Plan is how the neighborhood councils' views will be conveyed to decisionmakers. For example, simple vote counts may not sufficiently reflect the nuances of a neighborhood council discussion.

The Draft Plan does not live up to the Charter's promise to improve the delivery of City services to neighborhoods. In cities with successful neighborhood councils, such as Seattle and Portland, the councils are much more than outside advocacy organizations: they have become a central vehicle for reorganizing the delivery of City services and improving the quality of decisionmaking at the neighborhood level. These cities have fully integrated neighborhood councils into the very fabric of their City structures.

Some cities do have neighborhood council systems that are a confederation of membership-based neighborhood associations. But these associations are given much more staff support and real advisory control over resource allocation decisions. Such cities always have made substantial structural changes to City government to support these independent organizations. In some cities, each neighborhood council has a neighborhood planner assigned to it, and the entire planning function has been decentralized along neighborhood council lines. In other cities, community organizers and staff members serve the neighborhood councils. In still others, staff to the neighborhood councils ensure the councils' coordination with service delivery issues because they also double as constituent service deputies, similar to Los Angeles? City Council deputies. None of these structural changes seems to be forthcoming in Los Angeles.

The charter language on neighborhood councils includes among its goals and objectives: "To facilitate the delivery of City services to neighborhoods by helping to identify community needs and involving relevant City staff for integrated problem-solving with the Neighborhood Councils." Yet, the Draft Plan ignores both the role of neighborhood councils in service delivery and the role of City staff in "integrated problem-solving." Indeed, the Plan's huge number of councils and their inevitable lack of commonality will make such integrated problem-solving unlikely.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Commission for providing an opportunity for significant public feedback on the Draft Plan. I hope you will work to craft a system that will provide meaningful, well-structured neighborhood participation in City government. I look forward to the opportunity to work in partnership with the Commission and staff to refine these suggestions and bring them to fruition.

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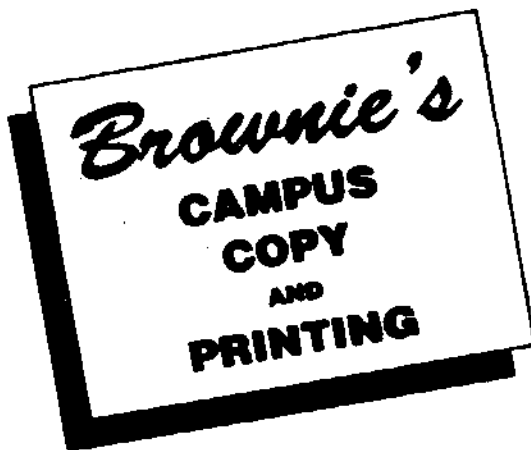
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Holiday Tour
3 Holiday Tour	4	5	6	7	8	9 WAHA Holiday Party
10 Cockins' Open House	11	12 Newsletter Committee	13 Membership Community Outreach Committee	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 Zoning & Planning/ Preservation Committee	21	22	23
24/31	25	26	27	28	29	30

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