

NCs Getting Smarter, More Influential on Planning

What is a PPP?

By Maggi Fajnor



Almost a year ago Certified Neighborhood Councils began receiving electronic Early Notification Reports from the Planning Department. The Early Notification Report that provides Certified Neighborhood Councils information on entitlement applications for projects being proposed in their neighborhoods is perhaps the most well known part of the Planning Pilot Program.

But this is only one small part of the eleven point program developed through a unique partnership between the Los Angeles Department of City Planning and Certified Neighborhood Councils. On Saturday, June 14, members of PlanCheckNC Oversight Committee and interested stakeholders from throughout the City met in Clifton's Cafeteria in downtown Los Angeles to learn about the Planning Pilot Program today and what the future could be. Eva Yuan-McDaniel, Deputy Director, Department of City Planning, and BongHwan Kim, General Manager, DONE were special guests.

For this first phase, most of the efforts concentrated on helping NCs gain access to the project information that in the past has been the purview of the developers and the Planning Department. Now PlanCheckNC is moving forward to provide opportunities for all stakeholders to educate themselves in the tools and basic planning and zoning vocabulary. The PlanCheckNC Education program will begin courses in July to add breadth and depth to the tools provided by the Planning Pilot Training Class.

When BongHwan Kim introduced the new DONE web page, it was apparent that the hopes expressed in Point 4 of the pilot program had already been surpassed. And, fields have been added to indicate a Planning Contact to receive project file hard copy. Most NCs do not realize that the DONE NC database is utilized by Planning and other City departments to send notices to the NCs. This database provides a key link between the Neighborhood Council and many sources of information within the City. Try out the web page for yourself. It is a work in progress. Watch for more on the new web page and upgrades to the database. For example, soon NCs will be able to review, up-to-date and correct their information on the database.

The Planning Department is committed to working with NCs to provide access to information about projects, assistance with education and knowledge of the tools available. With the support of DONE, NCs will be able to receive information in a timely manner. Now NCs need to become full partners as well. As soon as you receive the Early Notification Report, contact the applicant for projects that are of interest to your stakeholders. Begin the dialogue early while there are opportunities to influence the process. I invite you to contact PlanCheckNC to let us know what is working and what could be improved. This pilot program is an opportunity for neighborhood councils to help design a program that meets their needs. But, to become full partners, NCs must also assume more of the responsibility.

An overview of the eleven point pilot program between the Los Angeles Department of City Planning and Certified Neighborhood Councils follows:

1. The Planning Department will identify a Neighborhood Council Liaison as the main contact for the Certified NCs. Iris Fagar-Awakuni is the identified Neighborhood Council Liaison
2. All Certified NCs may designate a person as the contact with the Planning Department for the Pilot Program. An alternate contact may also be designated for PlanCheckNC representation.
3. The DONE contact list for Certified NCs will be used for Planning Department distribution notifications to the Certified NCs including the bi-weekly Early Notification Reports. The DONE contact list for Certified NCs will be modified to include the name and contact information for the Certified NC Planning Contact.
4. Each Certified NC will notify the DONE Database Administrator, NC Project Coordinator and PlanCheckNC of

changes to their DONE contact list in a timely manner.

5. Each applicant will provide a copy of the application filing package as soon as the case is filed. The envelope will be mailed by the Planning Department. The Certified NC may initiate discussions with the project applicant any time after the project is identified.
6. Certified NC comment on a specific project should be submitted in accordance with the procedure for submittal as outlined in the Notice of Public Hearing and submitted to the contact identified in the notice
7. Using the DONE contact list, the Planning Department will give Certified NCs advance notification of the work program for proposed City initiated cases.
8. Planning will establish a schedule for Community Plan updates for all Community Plans and publish the schedule on the Planning Department website.
9. The Planning Department and PlanCheckNC will work cooperatively to provide stakeholders with instruction at a departmental level and from the neighborhood standpoint, such as learning how to negotiate conditions and other project changes with the applicant.
10. The Planning Department will assist Certified NCs with discussions about issues important to the community and with planning related educational programs.
11. PlanCheckNC will provide the Planning Department with feedback at a minimum of once a year. (Maggi Fajnor is chair of PlanCheckNC.)

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