

## **Little Italy Residents Association**

Meeting Minutes: September 20, 2007

LIRA Members in Attendance: 18

### Guests:

Matthew Awbrey, Office of Kevin Faulconer  
Jimmy Bruner, Educational Task Force  
Jason Farran, Office of Supervisor Ron Roberts  
Chris Gomez, Little Italy Association (LIA)  
Tara Lake, Center City Development Corporation (CCDC)  
Maelin Levine, Educational Task Force  
Jennifer Rodil, Washington Mutual Bank

### **1. Traffic Signal Update (presented after item #2)**

Matthew Awbrey, Councilmember Faulconer  
The traffic light at Cedar and Front Streets is funded per the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) FY 2008 Budget. CCDC and the City of San Diego are working together on this project; CCDC is working on sidewalk bulb-outs and the City of San Diego is working on the Traffic Signal. The design is currently being finalized. Design completion is anticipated at the end of October, 2007. The entire project is hoped to be complete in 2008. In addition, a blinking light is to be located at this intersection. Caltrans is in the very early stages of planning for this.

LIRA members asked about the purpose and cost of bulbouts. Matthew Awbrey and Chris Gomez indicated that these were sidewalk bulb-outs to reduce traffic speeds and provide aesthetic value. Matthew Awbrey indicated that the total cost for the project will be approximately \$400,000 total (including \$180,000 specifically for the light).

LIRA members indicated that some residents are putting together a list of intersections that they are concerned about to send to Councilmember Faulconer. Members expressed that education is needed to let people know that Little Italy is a pedestrian area and that pedestrians have the right of way and driving speeds should remain low.

Chris Gomez indicated that LIA is working on getting stop signs installed all along Kettner Boulevard. There will be a stop sign at Kettner and Cedar within two weeks.

LIRA members also expressed some concern about parking limitations and spillover of customers associated with use of the Mexican Consulate. Matthew Awbrey indicated that Councilmember Faulconer's office will look into issue. Councilmember Falconer's office will also assist in arranging to have a sergeant from the central division attend the next LIRA meeting. Chris Gomez indicated that the Mexican Consulate was looking for a new location to better serve customers several years ago and may still be seeking a location nearer to the border. The Consulate has made efforts to be a good neighbor including incorporating more standing space inside of the building for those using the services of the Consulate.

### **2. Dog Run Update**

Chris Gomez, Little Italy Association (LIA)

LIA is working with CCDC and Councilmember Faulconer's office to develop a dog park in the Little Italy area. Mr. Gomez indicated that the previous plan was for a dog run utilizing ten diagonal spaces off of Front Street. The possibility of a larger park is now under discussion in lieu of the dog run. A location has not yet been determined. The goal is to finish in approximately one year. Public input will be solicited and the expected timeline to complete the plan may be extended to complete in order to ensure a thorough public process. LIA is offering to take interested persons on a tour of potential sites for the dog park. For more information, contact LIA at: [Littleitalysd.com](http://Littleitalysd.com)

### **3. Recycling**

Chris Gomez, Little Italy Association (LIA)

LIA is engaged in a grant-writing process to obtain funding for permanent recycling bins for the Little Italy area for day to day recycling as well as for special events. It is hoped that funding will be secured by mid-2008.

The City is proposing mandatory recycling ordinance. This would apply to all residential, commercial, and office buildings. The process will involve substantial outreach. Councilmember Faulconer's office is currently seeking opportunities for public/ private partnerships. Councilmember Faulconer would like to work with LIRA & LIA.

Mr. Awbrey suggested commenting on this issue at the Natural Resources & Culture Committee meeting on September 26th at 2pm.

### **4. Quiet Zone**

LIRA members expressed concerns that the train horns are louder and are blown more frequently and for a longer period than prior to the acceptance of the Quiet Zone concept. Matthew Awbrey indicated that he would bring someone from Councilmember Faulconer's office to the next meeting to discuss. He noted that, when implemented, the local Quiet Zone will be largest in the country.

### **5. Educational Task Force**

A local Educational Task Force consisting of volunteers, CCDC Officials, and representatives from the San Diego Community College District. Though it is still early in the development process, the Task Force has set the goal of improving the educational opportunities downtown. The Task Force is currently gathering information & identifying needs and opportunities. They have formed four committees: 1) facilities, 2) educational program committee, 3) community outreach committee, and 4) financial resource committee. The most media-focused aspect of the effort is geared toward Washington elementary. Meetings are held downtown bi-monthly at the CCDC office (next Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> at 8am). The Facilities Committee will have community workshop in mid to late November. The Educational Task Force will be sending out an e-mail to the e-mail list of the LIRA.

Maelin Levin discussed the closure of Harborside and the Washington Elementary Stepped in prior to closure of Harborside. She and several other volunteers have worked with the local Superintendent to transfer the Harborside classes to a local site. They have kept almost all teachers and families from Harborside. They have also established a feeder pre-school program to feed into the kindergarten program. The school is seeking pre-schoolers for enrollment in the next two weeks to ensure that there is a sufficient number of students for the next school year. There will be an Open House on campus on Thursday, September 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Washington Mutual-** Jennifer Rodil, WAMU, Little Italy Branch presented on WAMU personal and business services.

## **5. Focus Plan**

Tera Lake 619- 533-7173

The Focus Plan is being developed in two Phases.

Phase 1: Downtown Design Guidelines contract just went to the CCDC Board. These included new street typologies, architectural elements of buildings, planned district ordinance updates. The Downtown Design Guidelines will focus on all of downtown and will be general in nature.

Phase 2: Phase 2 will include the specific neighborhood plans. These plans will be specific to the neighborhoods and will have plenty of opportunity for members of LIRA and residents of Little Italy to have input into the Little Italy Design Guidelines.

Public Involvement is anticipated to take place in the spring or summer of 2008.

Workshops will be noted on the CCDC website (<http://www.ccdc.com/>).

## **6. County Administration Building**

Jason Farran, Chairman Ron Roberts Office

Jason Farran distributed preliminary designs for the County Administration Center (CAC) proposed parking structure at Cedar and Kettner and distributed copies of the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors Agenda item from July 31, 2007.

The goal of the project is to facilitate the development of CAC park proposed to stretch on either side of the primary CAC building from Ash Street to Grape Street. The proposed parking structure project is expected to include approximately 250 parking spots underground, though the numbers are preliminary and may change. 700 County and 300 residential parking spaces are currently components of the building. The 700 County spots are expected to be public on the weekends or after 5pm.

LIRA members inquired as to when the project will be complete. Mr. Farran indicated that the goal is for the project to be completed in 2010. The related CAC park is planned to be completed by 2012.

LIRA members asked when the public will have an official opportunity to provide input. Mr. Farran stated that information regarding the next steps in the process will come back to the County Board of Supervisors for approval. The date is not currently set, but he anticipates that it won't be prior to January, 2008. Community input will be a part of the process. He indicated that the project will go through CCDC and will be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other standard processes for such projects.

LIRA members expressed concern about the visual impacts of above-grade parking and visual impacts (i.e., lights from cars shining in windows, etc.). Jason Farran indicated that the parking structure will not be visible from the street due to the commercial development.

Residents stated that they embraced large buildings as a component of the urban environment. However, residents need more than residential buildings, they also need businesses, educational opportunities, offices, etc. to support a community with a high quality of life.

Resident Gail Roberts presented a petition opposing the project at Kettner and Cedar. The petition states that the proposed building is too large, vehicular and foot traffic

problematic, visual impacts blocking Little Italy. Would like to see 5-6 story parking structure as originally planned. Contact Gail if interested in signing petition: [gailroberts@yahoo.com](mailto:gailroberts@yahoo.com) (323) 828-7461

Chris Gomez stated that LIA has received comments in support and opposition of project. County Supervisor Ron Roberts is working with the community regarding the community's concerns about the proposed building height. The LIA Board has not taken a position at this time.

Chris Gomez stated that LIA is working with CCDC regarding parking meter revenues and is considering a shuttle bus for residents to be able to go out of the community and to bring others in to support businesses, etc.

### **Safety**

Residents discussed concerns about personal safety due to some of the homeless persons in the neighborhood who have demonstrated intimidating behavior. Chris Gomez noted that the City of San Diego does not view Little Italy as "blighted". City of San Diego police patrols are focused on other areas. He recommended contacting LIA and non-emergency police patrols for anyone having consistent issues. A LIRA member suggested calling 858-490-3830 for the homeless outreach team, "Hot Team", which is an element of the San Diego police department.

Ken Cluskey suggested that someone from the City be invited to come discuss this issue at the next meeting in January. Police Officer, John Graham, was recommended as the representative for Little Italy issues: 619-685-8206

### **LIA Update**

A LIRA member provided input to Mr. Gomez about the Park at Fir & State that needs to be cleaned. Mr. Gomez indicated that LIA has looked into this park and found that it is owned by City. LIA has installed doggie bag holders and made efforts to improve this park to the degree appropriate. He suggested working with Councilmember Faulconer's office through Matthew Awbrey.

LIRA members also inquired about the status of the residential parking permits concept that was proposed. Mr. Gomez noted that it does not exist now. LIA was involved in an analysis about two years ago. A pilot project that was launched in Cortez Hill has not yet been determined to be successful. The possibility of such a program is still being evaluated for Little Italy, though it appears that other options may be more successful locally. Ken Cluskey added that CCDC preparing to begin downtown residential parking study and that Tara Lake is the contact for this project.

LIRA members also asked if a Whole Foods was going to be located in the proposed County building at Kettner and Cedar. Chris Gomez indicated that LIA is looking into attracting a business like Whole Foods to the area.

Chris Gomez presented several announcements on behalf of LIA: Diagonal parking will be installed on the west side of Kettner between Kalmia and Grape within approximately the next month. LIA is working on increasing diagonal parking on the east side of Kettner to slow traffic and increase parking. LIA's aim is to see stop signs posted all along Kettner Boulevard. The next step is to circulate a petition.

A number of festivals and events will take place this fall through the winter, including Festa will take place on October 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> (see website for street closures), the Running of the Bulls & kickoff for Opera Nights is October 20<sup>th</sup>, multiple Italian motorsport car shows, Trick or Treat on India Street, and the Holiday tree-lighting in December.

See the Events Page on the LIA website for more details on events and living resources: [Littleitalysd.com](http://Littleitalysd.com)

### **Announcements**

President, Ken Cluskey, is moving from the area and this is his last LIRA meeting. LIRA members, guests and residents thanked Ken for his past year of outstanding service and for helping the community to successfully tackle major community issues.

The next LIRA meeting will be in January, 2008 (date to be determined). LIRA officers will be elected at that meeting. Individuals interested in being LIRA officers are encouraged to attend.

Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup> Police Advisory Committee 5:30pm

The LIRA Executive Committee suggests creating a more formal relationship with Downtown Residents Group to share some resources and increase communication about downtown issues. The Executive Committee suggested a subcommittee to look into this more. Individuals interested in participating in this subcommittee should contact Ken, Dahvia, or Kathleen.

Respectfully submitted by: Dahvia Lynch