

Palisadian-Post

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22 PAGES

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2016 ♦ PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIFORNIA

\$1.50

Bonin Announces Support for Caruso Project

Citing overwhelming community support for the proposed community and commercial center in Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles City Councilmember **Mike Bonin** announced his support for **Caruso Affiliated's Palisades Village** project on Thursday, March 24.

Bonin released the following statement in support of the project:

"Pacific Palisades has rightly been called 'Mayberry by the Sea' because of the small-town feel that makes this one of the most desirable communities in Los Angeles. The Palisades Village project will revitalize downtown Pacific Palisades and bring back an active 'Main Street' to the Palisades community. This proposed project is the vibrant community and commercial center that the people of the Palisades need and deserve, and I am proud to support Palisades Village.

"In all my years working for the neighborhoods on the Westside, I have never seen or heard this level of overwhelming public support for a project, and I commend the development team for conducting exceptionally thorough and thoughtful community outreach. In fact, the most frequent comment I have heard about the project is 'How can we make it happen faster?'

"This is a sensitively-scaled development that does something I usually have to demand and fight developers to do—build less than they are entitled to build and address many of the

"In all my years working for the neighborhoods on the Westside, I have never seen or heard this level of overwhelming public support for a project."

~Councilmember Mike Bonin

concerns raised by neighbors. The Caruso Affiliated team has been eager to work with any neighbors who wanted to share their input, and they did more than just listen—they made real and significant changes in response to that input.

"Palisades Village is the right project for the Palisades, and I join with a unified community in voicing my strong support for the project."

Overwhelming Majority Speaks Out in Favor of Caruso Project at Public Hearing

By FRANCES SHARPE
Editor-in-Chief

The vast majority of the nearly 80 people who offered their opinions on **Rick Caruso's** proposed **Palisades Village** project at a public hearing at City Hall in downtown Los Angeles on Thursday, March 24, spoke in full support of the project.

Punctuating the resounding show of support, **Tricia Keane**, Director of Land Use and Planning for LA City Councilmember **Mike Bonin**, ended the public comment period by reading a statement announcing Bonin's support of the project.

"In all my years working for the neighborhoods on the Westside, I have never seen or heard this level of overwhelming public support for a project," Bonin said in a statement released that day. (See *Bonin's full statement on page 1.*)

Many Palisadians expressed the same sentiments.

"I have watched in sadness as Swarthmore has died and the heart of our **Village** has died. I could not be more thrilled. When is he going to start and what can we do to speed it up?" **Carol Ross**, a **Marquez Knolls** resident who has lived in Pacific Palisades since the age of 5, told

ENTITLEMENT PROCESS

PHASE 1 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ Master Land Use Application Submitted to City Planning
- ✓ Palisades DRB Preliminary Public Hearing(s)
- ✓ Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) Published
- ~~Palisades DRB Final Public Hearing(s) – canceled~~

PHASE 2 PLAN PRESENTATION AND HEARING

- ✓ Public Hearing
- City Planning Commission – *scheduled for April 28*
- Planning and Land Use Management Committee
- City Council

✓ Completed

the panel of city officials.

The panel included Deputy Advisory Agency representative J.C. Romero-Navarro, hearing officer Michelle Levy, Jimmy Kuo of the Bureau of Street Lighting, Ray Saidi of the Bureau of Engineering and the planning department's Griselda Gonzalez.

As the throng of Palisadians waited to enter the LA City Council Chamber room for the 9 a.m. hearing, **Noelle Hicks**, a **Riviera** resident, told the *Palisadian-Post* she had never been

to City Hall before but was motivated to show her support for the project.

"I'm excited to be able to walk to dinner with my husband," Hicks said.

Looking at the number of people who had made the trek from the Palisades to downtown, longtime resident **Jimmy Dunne** called it "a fantastic show of support."

When the meeting got underway, Caruso made a brief presentation, then Palisadian residents and business owners

made their way to the microphone.

One by one, they voiced their support for the project, citing a desire for a revitalized Village.

Marjorie "Boofie" Graham, a longtime Palisadian, brought up additional reasons why the project makes sense.

She pointed to the benefits of the area generating tax revenue for the city; increasing job opportunities for local teens; and reducing our carbon footprint by eliminating the need to drive to Santa Monica, Brentwood or Malibu in order to go out to dinner or to the movies.

"Thank you for your investment and for taking the risk on us," Graham said directly to Caruso, who in turn thanked her.

Reza Akef, a Riviera resident and **Pacific Palisades Community Council** (PPCC) member, told the *Post* he was concerned about tactics used by some of those who have issues with the project.

"I think it's disheartening that I was just approached by someone and told that [a small group of people] had already negotiated hours of restaurant closures," Akef said. "They are the ones talking about transparency. We haven't had a chance

(Continued on page 4)

Caruso Public Hearing *(Continued from page 1)*



Developer Rick Caruso makes a brief presentation about his Palisades Village project at a public hearing on Thursday, March 24 at City Hall.

Photo: Frances Sharpe

to voice our opinions on that.”

In fact, out of all the people who spoke, only seven of them marked “opposition” on the speaker cards.

Most of them began their statements by saying they support the overall project but have some specific concerns such as traffic and whether Swarthmore Ave. should become a one-way street as proposed or remain a two-way street.

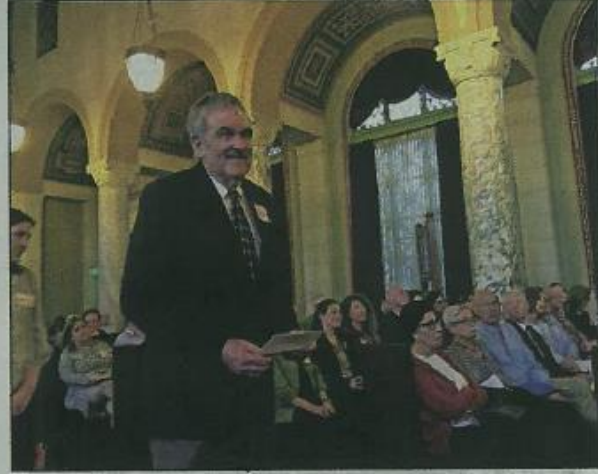
Jack Allen, an **Alphabet Streets** resident, said he was worried about—among other things—people who are “half-snookered” creating prob-

lems in his neighborhood at night.

Another Alphabet Streets resident, **Tracey Price**, who started a petition in support of a two-way Swarthmore, said she had already gathered 200 signatures.

“If I wasn’t running two businesses and a mom of three,” said Price, who voiced concern about a potential increase in traffic on the surrounding residential streets.

When given an opportunity to respond to the specific concerns raised, Caruso addressed



Arnie Wishnick prepares to take his turn at the microphone at the March 24 public hearing to voice his support for Caruso’s Palisades Village project.

Photo: Frances Sharpe

each in detail.

On the one-way vs. two-way Swarthmore issue, he said that transforming the street to one way will calm traffic, make it safer for pedestrians and allow for more parking.

“Ultimately, we want to do what’s right for the community,” Caruso said.

That has remained the developer’s mantra since February 2014 when he started having community meetings asking for input on the project.

On Tuesday, March 29, hearing officer Romero-Navarro told the *Post* he visited the Palisades

on Friday, March 25 to gain an even better understanding of the project.

“I drove around the site and around the neighborhood streets and went to the high school and the other schools in the area,” Romero-Navarro said. “I need to check all the angles and be objective before I make a decision.”

Romero-Navarro is expected to make his decision this week.

The next step in the path to entitlement for the Caruso project is a hearing before the City Planning Commission, scheduled for April 28.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Palisadian-Post invites letters to the editor. The editors retain the right to delete portions considered libelous and to shorten letters that are too long. Letters in the Post do not necessarily reflect the newspaper's opinion. Email letters with name, email address and phone number to frances@palipost.com.

Palisades Civic League Supports Caruso's Palisades Village Project

The Pacific Palisades Civic League, the homeowner association of properties within Tract 9300, supports the proposed development by Caruso Affiliated in Pacific Palisades.

The Board was asked via email whether they supported the Caruso project and the result was overwhelmingly yes.

The actual vote was eight yesses and one abstention. Donna Vaccarino was not included in the email for this vote due to her being on the Design Review Board.

The Board appreciates Mr. Caruso's willingness to have numerous presentations so all who choose to attend could hear what is being proposed, ask questions and give their input.

It is rare to have a developer who is willing to modify his design based on what the community wants.

The original elevations presented to the DRB were richly detailed classic design that was in keeping with the architectural styles of the Palisades.

The second scheme, which was modified by Caruso Affiliated in response to demands made from some members of the DRB, has none of the charm of the original design; the mid-century elements were simply applied to the original massing and should be discarded.

The community room, which would be periodically used by members of the community, should not be subject to the parking requirements for an assembly space.

This will be an asset for the community that should not be eliminated.

It is our hope that the approval process can proceed without delay.

A vocal minority, not representing the majority of the community, should not be able to drag out the approval process.

Richard Blumenberg, AIA, President, Pacific Palisades Civic League Executive Committee

(Editor's note: This letter was originally sent to Michelle Levy and Lakisha Hull of the Los Angeles City Planning Department.)



Your Two Cents' Worth

*Got something to say? Call
(310) 454-1322 ext. 13322 or email
2cents@palipost.com and get those
kudos or concerns off your chest.
Names will not be used.*

Caruso Crowd

The one thing I learned from going to the Caruso hearing at City Hall is that the small group of people who have been complaining about the project is even smaller than I thought.