

City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning

Overview of Department Reorganization

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Director

Introduction

In the summer of 2008, the Department of City Planning (DCP) began a reorganization around geographic areas in order to achieve a more focused and efficient use of resources. This initial phase of the Department's reorganization was limited to the Valley Office. Beginning in July 2010, the remainder of the geographically-based reorganization will go into effect. The new Department structure, described in more detail in the following pages and illustrated on the last page of this report, includes four main bureaus: the Community Planning Bureau, Development Services Bureau, Citywide Planning Bureau, and Administration Bureau.

Purpose

The purpose of the Department's reorganization is two-fold. First, organizing around geographic areas will allow us to provide better, faster service to entitlement and permit applicants. Second, the new organizational structure will enable each staff member to focus more closely on a particular community, gaining a depth of knowledge that will ensure the high-quality, localized project review that communities deserve and expect.

Traditionally, the Department's cases have been processed according to function, e.g. Subdivision cases have been handled by one office, City Planning Commission cases by another office, etc; with building permit sign-offs handled by yet another office. A single project has often required separate and sometimes redundant review by multiple planners throughout the Department.

An audit by the City Controller's Office in October 2005 found the Department's current organizational structure to be inefficient due to its reliance on "specialized, isolated functions that rely on multiple staff hand-offs to process each case." The audit also noted that this structure can be frustrating to customers since they do not have a single point of contact.

Over the years, there have been many reviews that have called on the Department to streamline case processing through the implementation of a "cradle-to-grave" system, whereby one planner handles all of a project's entitlements through all phases of development review. This approach also supports the Mayor's and Council President Garcetti's "12 to 2" Development Reform Plan by reducing inefficiencies and providing applicants with one point of contact within the Department.

The new organizational structure implements this "cradle-to-grave" approach to case processing, in which a single planner will handle all of the entitlement work for a project, from advising the applicant before the case is filed (if applicable) to the final sign-offs for building permits. Whereas the old organizational structure is based on function, the principal organization of the new structure is geographic. All of the Department's case processing, with the exception of Expedited cases and HPOZ cases, will now take place within the Community Planning Bureau's four Geographic Divisions, each of which will be led by a Senior City Planner. The boundaries of the Geographic Divisions will follow the boundaries of the Area Planning Commissions. Each Geographic Division will be further organized into Subgeographic Sections, each of which will be led by a City Planner. The boundaries of each Subgeographic Section will follow the boundaries of one or more Community Planning Areas. The map on page 7 shows the names and boundaries of the Geographic Divisions and Subgeographic Sections.

The Department's new structure will also enable development review staff to gain expertise on a variety of case types and planning issues, while at the same time deepening their knowledge of a particular geographic area. Currently, staff may become technically proficient in a particular type of entitlement, but may have limited opportunity to further expand their skill set, at least in the short term. And because many staff members must review cases from throughout the City, they are unable to gain the context and in-depth knowledge that comes from focusing on a smaller geographic area. The reorganized structure will allow development review staff to better understand the local community's vision and goals, and thereby make more well-informed entitlement decisions.

Applicants and community members will now have a single point of contact within the Department for all questions related to a specific project. During the transition to the new organization, there will inevitably be a learning curve as case processing staff absorbs the new functions assigned to them; however, we expect these short-term delays to be outpaced by long-term gains in case processing efficiency.

The only cases not processed by the Community Planning Bureau will be those handled by the Expedited Processing Division or by the HPOZ Section of the Office of Historic Resources.

Horizontal Consistency

With the new geographically-based organizational structure, the consistent processing and review of all cases across Community Planning divisions will be crucial. Consistency in writing new plans, policies, and implementation tools will be critical as well. Toward this end, the reorganization will include the creation of a Horizontal Consistency system in which senior managers will monitor and address consistency issues that arise for eleven major topic areas. Those areas are as follows:

- New Community Plans
- New & Existing Specific Plans
- New & Existing CDOs, PODs, NODs, and SUDs
- New & Existing CPIOs
- New & Existing Sign Districts
- APC/CPC ("Hearing Officer") cases
- Zoning Administration cases
- Subdivision cases
- Environmental Review/CEQA
- Density Bonus cases
- Clerical Support

Phasing

The reorganization will happen in three phases over the upcoming months. In Phase One, which will run from the week of May 17th through mid July, Department staff will receive their new assignments and will begin to train and prepare for their new job responsibilities. A series of informal meetings will give staff the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the reorganization. Staff currently working for a specialized citywide function, such as Subdivisions or Zoning Administration, will be dispersed to the Geographic Divisions in a manner such that each Geographic Division will have staff trained in the full range of major functions. Phase One will also include training for all Department staff on all key development

review functions, as described in more detail below, under “Training.” In addition, an office space plan will be published during Phase One, specifying the office locations for all staff.

In Phase Two, which will begin in mid-July, staff will begin to transition to their new assignments. Some entitlement cases in the early stages of review that had initially been routed to the Office of Zoning Administration, the Environmental Division, or the Division of Land, will be transferred to their respective Geographic Divisions. Cases in the middle to later stages of review may remain with the originally assigned planner, per the discretion of management. Physical moves will take place in phases, from late June through September. Initially, development review staff in the Geographic Divisions will continue to process the types of cases they are most familiar with, while they begin to take on an increasing number of “new” case types. In this manner, all members of the Geographic Divisions will incrementally learn to process all case types, with the support of cross-training by their peers and managers. Also during Phase Two, senior managers in charge of horizontal consistency will begin conducting meetings and resolving horizontal consistency issues as they arise.

Phase Three will begin in October of this year, and will consist of a second block of training sessions for all Department staff, to address more in-depth issues and training needs, and to help answer questions that have come up during Phase Two. Senior managers will conduct a thorough review of the progress of the reorganization, and address any issues or difficulties. By the end of Phase Three, in January of 2011, all development review staff should be trained and able to process all types of cases. Senior managers in charge of horizontal consistency will continue to monitor horizontal consistency issues.

Training

During Phase One and again in Phase Three, a series of training sessions will take place, open to all Department staff, to help ease the transition to a geographically-organized Department. The first block of training will begin in late May, and will run through June and July. The training will be organized around the following major topic areas:

- Environmental Review/CEQA
- Overview of the Zoning Code
- Clearing Conditions and other plan review topics
- Writing Conditions and Findings
- The Brown Act
- Subdivisions
- Zoning Administrator Cases
- Area Planning Commission and City Planning Commission Cases
- Director of Planning Cases
- Clerical Staff Training

New Organizational Structure

Community Planning Bureau

The Community Planning Bureau will be principally composed of four Geographic Divisions and 17 Subgeographic Sections, as illustrated on page 7. Some Sections will be devoted to development review, some will be focused on new plans and policy, and others will work on a combination of development review and plans/policy.

Subgeographic Sections

The types of cases reviewed and processed by a section's development review staff will include cases for which the decision maker is the City Planning Commission, Area Planning Commissions, a Zoning Administrator, the Director of Planning, or the Advisory Agency. Each Division will be assigned a Zoning Administrator, who will serve as the decision-making authority for ZA cases and will act as the Deputy Advisory Agency for subdivision cases. These sections will also handle several tasks which were previously the responsibility of the Site Plan Review / Plan Approvals Unit and the Case Management Unit, to include plan check and sign-offs for all non-Expedited cases; clearing or clarification of Q and D conditions; removal or amendment of T instructions; periodic review of Development Agreements; Zone Change Ordinance revisions; and Zone Boundary Adjustments.

The development review staff will also handle environmental review tasks that fall below the level of the EIR, to include Initial Studies, Categorical Exemptions, Negative Declarations, and Mitigated Negative Declarations.

Plans and Policy staff within each Geographic Division will work on New Community Plans, Specific Plans, and any other locally-specific overlays. Any policy programs that are not citywide in scope will be managed by these Sections.

The Community Planning Bureau will no longer process Historic Preservation Overlay cases or the preparation of new Historic Preservation Overlay Zones. These tasks will instead be handled by the Office of Historic Resources.

Environmental Review Division

The Community Planning Bureau will also contain an Environmental Review Division, which will handle all EIR review. This Division will no longer process Categorical Exemptions, Negative Declarations, and Mitigated Negative Declarations, although it will handle the final publishing of these documents. This division will also oversee Horizontal Consistency for Environmental Review/CEQA.

Development Services Bureau

The Development Services Bureau will consist of one office and three divisions, as outlined below.

Office of Zoning Administration

The Office of Zoning Administration will be comprised of the Zoning Administrators, who will continue to report to the Chief Zoning Administrator while they are serving as decision-making authorities for the Community Planning Bureau's Geographic Divisions and for the Expedited Processing Division.

Expedited Processing Division

The Expedited Processing Division will continue to provide expedited case processing on a cost-recovery basis. This division will process Zoning Administration and Advisory Agency cases and associated environmental review. This division will no longer process Director's Determination cases, Area Planning Commission cases or City Planning Commission cases, as well as Environmental cases for which a parent case is not also undergoing Expedited Processing.

Zoning Maintenance Division

The Zoning Maintenance Division will be comprised of two sections: Code Amendments and Revocations. The Code Amendments Section will handle continue to handle all amendments

to the Zoning Code that are citywide in scope or that pertain to multiple Geographic Divisions. The Revocations Section will continue to function as it does currently.

Development Support Division

The Development Support Division will consist of the Downtown and Valley Public Counters, as well as the Pre-Development Counseling Section (formerly known as Case Management). The Downtown Public Counter, located at 201 N. Figueroa, will assume the additional function of the Subdivision Counter, previously located in Room 750 of City Hall. The Pre-Development Counseling Section will no longer provide support for the Office of Zoning Administration, but will continue to provide pre-development counseling services, including meetings and coordination with various City departments; as well as Housing Implementation Program (HIP) services, such as pre-application consultations for small lot subdivisions, density bonus cases, Mello cases, and Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAC) applications. The Pre-Development Counseling Section will no longer track the progress of larger projects (such as L.A. Live alcohol cases, CRA - South L.A. Retailers Program, Dodger Stadium, and Kodak Theater), which will now be handled by the Community Planning Bureau's Geographic Divisions.

Citywide Planning Bureau

The Citywide Planning Bureau will be comprised of three Offices, as outlined below.

Office of Historic Resources

The Office of Historic Resources will continue to function as it does currently, to include the administration of Survey LA, and review of matters pertaining to the Mills Act and Historic-Cultural Monuments. In addition, the Office of Historic Resources will now process Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) cases, which were previously processed by the Community Planning Bureau. The Office of Historic Resources will also manage the creation of new HPOZs and Preservation Plans.

Office of Citywide Policy

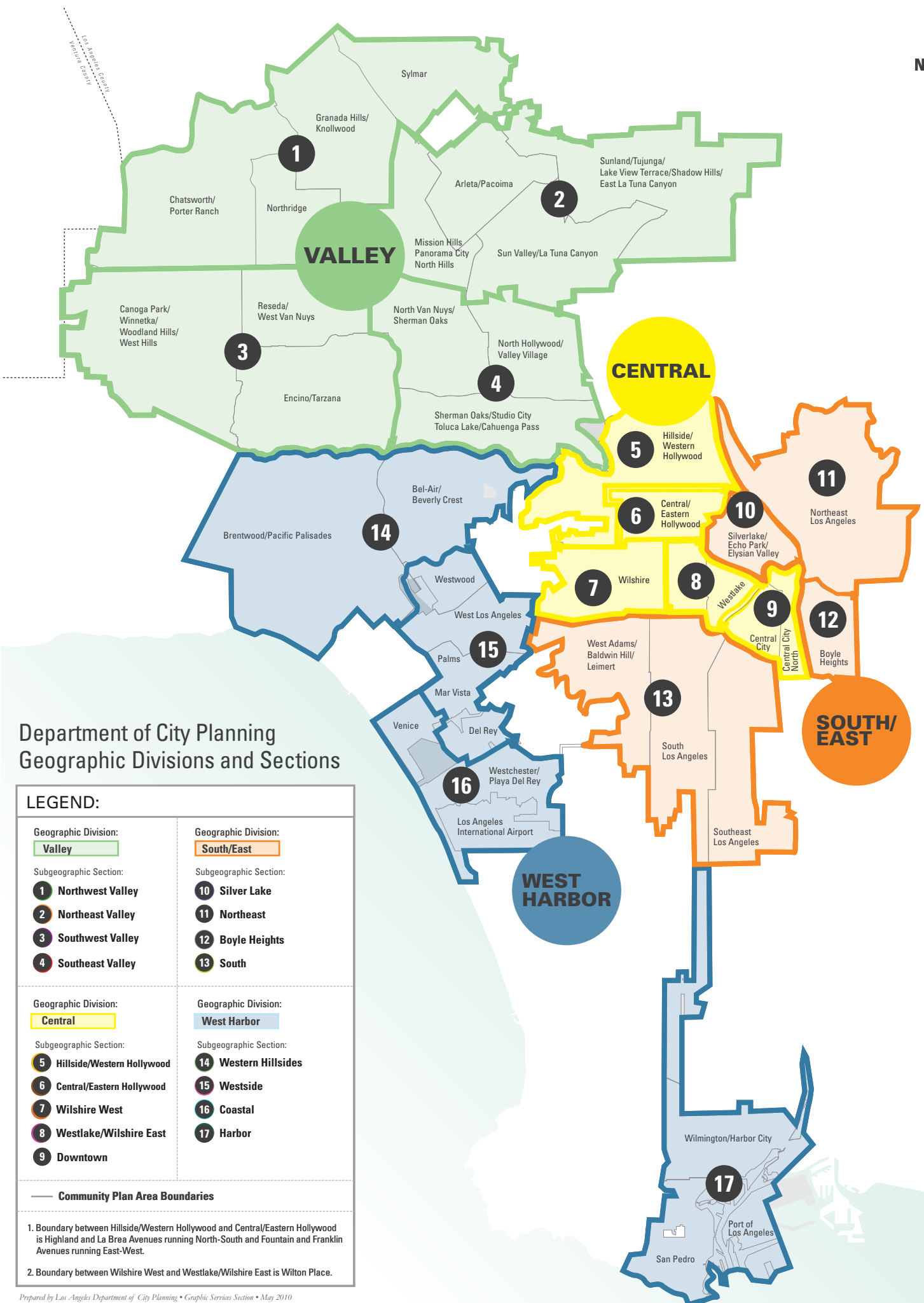
The Office of Citywide Policy will continue to be responsible for updating General Plan Elements (except for the Land Use Element, which is composed of the Community Plans) and to implement the City's existing General Plan Elements. In addition, the Office of Citywide Policy will manage special plans and policies that are citywide in scope, such as the Industrial Land Use policy. The Office of Citywide Policy will no longer conduct policy work that is community-specific.

Urban Design Studio

The Urban Design Studio will continue in its existing capacity, leading citywide urban design policy efforts, providing technical assistance for Community Plan and General Plan updates, and reviewing the design of select, high-profile development projects by Commission or staff request. In addition, the office will continue to serve on the Street Standards Committee and coordinate the Professional Volunteer Pilot Program, a group of volunteer design professionals that assist planning staff with design review on a regular basis.

Administration Bureau

The Administration Bureau will continue to function as it does currently. This Bureau includes the Administrative Services Division, Personnel Division, Systems and GIS Division, and Commission & Council Support Division.



Department of City Planning Geographic Divisions and Sections

LEGEND:

Geographic Division:

Valley

Subgeographic Section:

- 1 Northwest Valley
- 2 Northeast Valley
- 3 Southwest Valley
- 4 Southeast Valley

Geographic Division:

South/East

Subgeographic Section:

- 10 Silver Lake
- 11 Northeast
- 12 Boyle Heights
- 13 South

Geographic Division:

Central

Subgeographic Section:

- 5 Hillside/Western Hollywood
- 6 Central/Eastern Hollywood
- 7 Wilshire West
- 8 Westlake/Wilshire East
- 9 Downtown

Geographic Division:

West Harbor

Subgeographic Section:

- 14 Western Hillside
- 15 Westside
- 16 Coastal
- 17 Harbor

— Community Plan Area Boundaries

1. Boundary between Hillside/Western Hollywood and Central/Eastern Hollywood is Highland and La Brea Avenues running North-South and Fountain and Franklin Avenues running East-West.

2. Boundary between Wilshire West and Westlake/Wilshire East is Wilton Place.

Department Organization Chart

Bureaus, Divisions, and Sections

Department of
City Planning

