

## Request for support of joint ad hoc River committee.

Geza X

Apr 27

to me, Patti, Martha, Edward

To the Boards of DLANC and BHNC,

Thanks very much to Russ and Martha taking time out of their day last week to come see my neighborhood :) Whether or not I win the Alameda East seat on the Downtown Board, I'd like to continue with this proposal.

- a) This is a formal request for you to agendize and discuss with your Board my recommendations for the creation of a Joint Boyle Heights-DLANC River Oversight Committee.
- b) If this needs to be presented in a certain form or format please let me know.
- c) I have outlined in person my reasons for thinking such an organization is both needed and timely but am also including that info here.

Attached is a general proposal which lists the reasons that a Joint River Oversight Committee is needed. Even if the suggestions in that proposal are not taken up, the reasons to pursue a Boyle Heights--DLANC River Project alliance are clearly stated there.

Thank you for your time and consideration :)

Friends,

Geza "Blue" Gedeon

### Riverton, Los Angeles © 2012 Geza Gedeon

1) I have been studying the River Project and its community impact for some time. Here it is, The Elephant In The Room (fig. 1) As you can clearly see, this area is a 'city within a city'. Further, if you look at the macro pic (fig. 2), you will see that it's actually a 'city within a city within a city'.

2) The streets aren't gonna change anytime soon. The chaos these traffic patterns cause *every day* is unbelievable. That's because these are de-facto SEPARATE districts, and never the twain shall meet. That's the theory behind my Riverton idea.

3) My contention is that Geography is sort of like God, in that it determines outcomes MORE than we think. What is actual *fact* as seen below is that part of Downtown LA and parts of Boyle Heights are on a diagonal to the rest of the city. (Ironically, Riverton is not, but it's 'insulated' by those districts). Thus the area's peculiar history as an Arts District and something of an oasis in the heart of LA. It also explains the long-standing urban blight. That's because it's practically invisible.

4) This has affected development and will always continue to do so. Development is either more focused in Riverton, or it is overlooked. Currently, the northernmost part of Riverton is rapidly being devoted to new housing, city resources, and film shoots. There are model communities on both sides of the north. But the southern area has been long neglected, with trash piled high and hazardous road conditions. The area has one of the busiest on ramps in town. It has needed attention for years.

5) This is all about to change. With the River Project coming to Downtown, The Riverton area is being developed and cleaned up rapidly on the LA side. More housing and an entire 'Eco Corridor' are being planned to coincide with the River project. The so-called 'Arts District' is being taken over by Hollywood, like Culver City was 20 years ago. Those production companies will need support services such as post houses, rental and storage places. Those will unquestionably pop up in the mid-size warehouses south of 7th.

6) In the 7-8 years I've been closely tracking this phenomenon, I have repeatedly told myself that when the Growth Boom crosses 7th and Santa Fe (going southward), it will be a pivotal moment. That *just* happened (approx July, 2012). Traditionally, 7th is the line between the 'good' and 'bad' parts of the city, which simply translates to their socioeconomic status. 7th is roughly the dividing line between the more affluent areas to the north and the more industrial, funky area where 'real' artists live (often illegally). Those artists aren't foreign students or trust fund babies. They are largely multimedia artists who build sets for Las Vegas shows and Burning Man, organize street fairs and festivals, and promote public art. They are techies who edit movies and build sets.

The Central Industrial District is being taken over by these artists who need large spaces to do their work. These artists are very talented, smart, and organized; they're community-minded and can be rallied to support the neighborhood if conditions are favorable to them. But they're not rich. The spaces they need are still somewhat affordable. This is a zoning issue because the City still supports the myth that this is a trucking corridor. It is obsolete for that purpose. The warehouses are all too small and cannot dock to modern semis. The trucks themselves have become too big for either Santa Fe or Mateo St. If I showed you a time-lapse movie of Olympic & Santa Fe, it would be like a Charlie Chaplin movie of semi's backing up the whole block behind them, to make their turns, completely blocking traffic at every single red light, knocking over street lights and running over bicyclists daily.

7) On the subject of Gentrification, this is also a pivotal dividing line. If development continues without a Master Plan, we will lose a huge opportunity to serve the elderly, disabled, low-income, and productive artists. As has been demonstrated in other cities, arts districts *invariably* become high-culture districts which drive the rents high. And then the artists and the entire grassroots population are driven OUT of the area by high prices and large chains replace the friendly 'mom and pop' shops and boutiques. This is a powerful force and not to be taken lightly. It has happened everywhere that artists were installed to pump up decaying neighborhoods. It's not fair to these active, productive, creative types. They are *valuable* to the arts and culture, and to the city.

8) The best solution is to acknowledge the power of the maps, and USE THAT to create "Prosperity With Balance". (That should be our Mantra). By arranging Growth Events in the right order and locations, we can 'sculpt' the Riverton area to generate money for other needs. For example, flea markets under the bridges, and Park & Ride lots connecting to trolleys headed both directions and up Alameda & Boyle. That would REVERSE some of the traffic weirdness by creating new arteries. All of this can be planned strategically. And money generated by the shops and boutiques in this desirable Riverton district could be taxed and used elsewhere to benefit more depressed areas of Boyle Heights and Los Angeles.

9) Keep in mind that this is halfway in effect already. It is *INEVITABLE* that Riverton will become a boutique area on the LA side. How Boyle Heights deals with that will determine if it is equally prosperous and successful. In most cities divided by a river, there is a 'good' and a 'bad' part of town on opposite sides. That just translates to money. If Boyle Heights acts NOW, in concert with the Downtown LA Neighborhood Council, that can be prevented and BOTH SIDES can grow in an orderly manner, with a higher and lower rent district happily succeeding and co-existing in both cities. All it takes is thinking outside the box. The river is seen as a barrier but its not, according to the map. There are 6 bridges within 3 miles. Bridges are *inclusive*, not exclusive. They are designed to *connect* people and cultures, not separate them. We should embrace this 'horizontal', rather than vertical approach. That would make (roughly) 7th the dividing line (rather than the river) and and this would preserve cultural identity and allow prosperity in all directions.

A recurring theme in the Riverton concept is the Bridges Of LA--an iconic image of inclusion across barriers. Think Paris, France, where culture, commerce, street art, diversity, tourism exist in close proximity to one another. Think media hub. An International production destination. It's Downtown LA's turn to Shine :)