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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

PRESENTATION BY
Ms. Alisa Katz, Chief Deputy to Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Third District, Los Angeles County
Topic: The State of the 3rd District

October 4, 2001

Chairman Philibosian introduced Alisa Katz, Chief Deputy to Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. Ms. Katz began her presentation by discussing the reapportionment of the Third District, which was precleared by the Justice Department. The redistricting affected about one percent of the county's population (fewer than 80,000 people). In the Third District there were minor changes in the Hollywood, Venice and Canoga Park areas. The Third District has a population that is 35.6% Hispanic, whereas countywide it is 44.6%; 48.4% White within the district, countywide: 31.1%; 4.1% African American within the district, countywide: 9.7%; 9.1% Asian within the district, countywide: 12.1%.

Third District Residential Charts indicated that the Hispanic population is concentrated in the San Fernando Valley, Northeast Valley, and Hollywood areas with some on the Westside, in Venice, and Santa Monica. The white population was the majority within the Third District with very low percentages of African Americans and Asians.

On the Third District Income Chart and the Median Market Home Values Chart it appears that huge swaths of the Third District are populated by relatively wealthy people. However this is misleading because the Population Density Chart indicates a small population in these areas with an average of 0 to 5000 per square mile.

Ms. Katz discussed how the Third District responds to the needs of the people. Most of the cities within the Third District provide a complete spectrum of municipal services; i.e., Police, Fire, Public Works, Building, Planning, Parks, and Libraries. A small portion of the county population resides in contract cities, incorporated within the last ten or fifteen years such as, West Hollywood and the cities in the Los Virgines/Malibu/Calabasas/Agoura areas. The unincorporated area is very small with 21,000 people located in Topanga Canyon and throughout the Santa Monica Mountains. The Third District office in Calabasas deals primarily with municipal services, and Van Nuys deals with countywide services; such as, Property Tax, Registrar/Recorder, Health, Welfare, Child Welfare and Justice system. The downtown office handles constituent services for the City of Los Angeles.

Ms. Katz remarked that poverty was elsewhere when the county health service system was established in

Hollywood, Venice and the San Fernando Valley (previously suburban, middle class, and fairly well off areas). Now, the Hollywood/Wilshire Health District has the highest number of people living under the poverty line of any health district in the county. The West Valley District and the Northeast Valley have the highest number of medically uninsured people of any health district in the county. The West Los Angeles area also has pockets of poverty and is underserved by the county health system. The Third District has been active in promoting a community based clinic system with outpatient health services, as opposed to relying on county hospitals. The county is working with private, non-profit clinics to extend its reach. Examples are:

- The Venice Family Clinic is a well-established free clinic and has taken over two county clinics in the Third District.
- The Hollywood/Wilshire Clinic is in the process of being transferred to the Los Angeles Free Clinic (an important provider).
- School based clinics have been provided at two high schools, a middle school and an elementary school in Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley with more clinics under development.
- Valley Care has been established in the San Fernando Valley, which is a coalition of county and private clinics all working to serve as a safety net for the uninsured population.
- A three-year pilot project called VIDA in cooperation with VOICE (a neighborhood organizing group) and San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Legal Services is a program to enroll people who need regular health services.

Ms. Katz emphasized transportation successes: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, as a member of the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), flew to Curitiba, Brazil to study its innovative rapid transit system which has proven to be very successful. It is based on: (1) a dedicated lane for buses, (2) relatively few stops, (3) paying before one enters the bus, (4) low buses for easy access, and (5) signal preemption. Preliminary engineering of the former Southern Pacific Railroad right of way (to be used for the Rapid Transit System along Burbank/Chandler Boulevard in the Valley from North Hollywood to Warner Center) has begun; it is hoped that this system will alleviate density transit problems. The MTA Rapid Red Bus Line has been operating on Wilshire Blvd. and Whittier Blvd. toward the eastside, as well as on Ventura Blvd and is similar to the Curitiba, Brazil bus system. A dedicated bus lane is being looked into along Wilshire Blvd. The MTA Rapid Red Bus Line is being considered for many other Los Angeles County streets. A light rail system has been voted on for Exposition Blvd. from downtown to the intersection of Venice and Robertson Boulevards. This will be developed in the next several years and will utilize an abandoned Southern Pacific right of way. Most of the Metro Rail is located in the Third District from Vermont and Wilshire to North Hollywood. Santa Monica Blvd. has recently been redeveloped in the city of West Hollywood and will be redeveloped west of the Beverly Hills' border. The Little Santa Monica and Big Santa Monica Blvds. will be turned into one, two way street with landscaping, bus lanes, pedestrian amenities and bike paths.

Ms. Katz stated that the Santa Monica Mountains and the Venice/Santa Monica/Malibu/Ventura beaches play a large topographical role in the Third District. They are undeveloped, have a low population density, are physically beautiful, and attract tourism and recreation. The North Area Plan was adopted to reduce potential densities in the Santa Monica Mountains by 30% as well as to maintain their integrity. The Third District has been active in purchasing lands (approximately 4000 acres) over the last six or seven years for preservation from development through Proposition A, Park Bond (1996), and Proposition 12 funding from the State. The refurbishment of beaches for beauty and safety; the restoration of the Malibu Pier (a landmark that has been in disrepair); the ensurance of the existence of trails such as the Backbone Trail (starting from Topanga State Park continuing west); and creation of the Coastal Slope Trail for more accessibility to people are additional Third District projects.

Ms. Katz commented that the "flip side" of the topography issues is natural disaster preparedness (forest fires, soil erosion, landslides). Emergency preparations including: (1) Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (TCEP), which is a central point, community communications structure that operates separately from the Sheriff and Fire Departments; (2) the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Control Equine Response Team (LAC DAC ERT), comprised of thirty volunteers trained and certified and who can deal with the emergency evacuation of livestock from the mountains/hills; (3) the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA) working with hazard mitigation issues such as road planning during a waste spill disaster on Highway 101; and (4) watershed planning issues in the Malibu and Topanga Creek areas to control sediment, septic tanks and generally maintain swimming safety and cleanliness in the Santa Monica Bay and the Malibu Lagoon areas.

Local Government Services Commissioner Andes stated that he understood that Bob Hope owns the mountain area from the coast and it has been very difficult dealing with him. Ms. Katz answered that the Federal, State and County Governments are involved in preserving this land, and a new tool, which is a state law that encourages donation of land with tax benefits is in place. LGS Commissioner Andes continued that a construction company from Hawaii was considering development of the area for residential purposes. Ms. Katz responded that the North Area Plan was formed for density control; steep mountainous terrain precludes development; Fire Department vehicles' find it difficult for entrance into these areas and their requirement for a water storage facility; insurance is very expensive; and generally the rules for the control of development in remote area are strict.

Commissioner Cho asked about the newly formed countywide taskforce/committee to address citizens' defense against terrorism. Ms. Katz stated that there are many agencies making plans and the Board of Supervisors is in closed session regarding the status of the county's preparedness. Chairman Philibosian responded that there is a state terrorism council that has been set up by the Governor, Chaired by Sheriff Baca. Ms. Katz remarked that the county is familiar with numerous disasters and is organized from the Sheriff and the Fire Departments' standpoints, however from the biochemical standpoint there is much to consider.

Mr. Simmons asked if the school-based clinics were provided for the schools students or for the community as well? Ms. Katz responded that the goal was to make the clinics a community resource since they are well situated in every neighborhood, are trusted institutions and elementary schools are usually within walking distance. The question is: "Who is going to pay for it?" The Third District attempted to get funding for a school based clinic system through a waiver, but was unsuccessful. "Who is eligible, what are the hours and what is the capacity of the clinic?" At the Maclay Middle School Clinic families are invited to use the facility when the parent agrees to have the child seen. The County wants to bring medicine to the children. The children are not going to the facilities for various reasons: no money, no time, no insurance, immigration status, students remain at home when they are ill, or they go to "botanicas".

Chairman Philibosian thanked Ms. Katz for her presentation and said that she can be contacted by e-mail: abkatz@bos.co.la.ca.us.

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