



Venice Community Housing Corporation

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Please Help protect public access to Venice Beach

When Abbot Kinney built Venice, he dubbed its beach “the People’s Beach.” It has lived up to that name, with an estimated 16,000,000 visitors annually. It has served as one of the most important recreational resources for people from under-served communities in our City and County. Visitors have also included a significant number of homeless people who camp on and about the beach or live in their vehicles. As the neighborhood has gentrified demands to privatize the beach and eliminate its unsavory elements has increased, and the City has cooperated, first by closing the Venice beach parking lots (981 spaces) at night and closing the beach itself in 1989 from midnight to 5 am. In 2010 the City began posting No Parking signs for “oversized vehicles” from 2am to 5 am which now cover 110 blocks in the Venice Coastal zone. And last year the City extended the beach-curfew to the Venice Boardwalk. All of these measures were taken without California Coastal Commission approval and some notwithstanding specific notice from the CCC that the City’s actions required a coastal development permit.

In 2009 The City did apply to the Coastal Commission for a permit to institute a resident parking only scheme from 2am-5am in the Venice Coastal Zone. Although that application to create an Overnight Parking District (OPD) in Venice has been rejected twice by the Coastal Commission, the City persists, hoping that a new commission (only 2 of the 12 Commissioners on the current Commission were commissioners at the time the application was last rejected) will rule in its favor.

Venice Community Housing is opposed to this permit parking scheme for many reasons.

An OPD is bad for homeless Venice Residents.

All of these measures, including the current application to install resident only parking, are designed to push homeless people out of Venice and into other neighborhoods. This is not a solution to homelessness; and in fact, such measures make life even more difficult for homeless people because they are forced to abandon friends and established networks of support that they depend upon to survive. Unhoused Venice residents are members of our community, deserving of our assistance and support; and the City of Los Angeles has a responsibility to safeguard the health and welfare of all its residents, especially those most vulnerable members of our City.

An OPD is bad for housed Venice residents

Venice residents will have to drive to West Los Angeles and pay an annual fee (currently \$15 per vehicle) for a permit to look for a parking space in Venice. Because the permit is only valid in the early morning hours, it is no benefit to a resident during the day or coming home from work in the evening. Even at 2:00AM, it does not guarantee a parking place. Venice has huge parking problems but this parking scheme does not address them. Rather, it costs money without guaranteed benefit. It limits the number of vehicles that any household may regularly park on the street overnight (3 vehicles), authorizes up to 2 visitor permits good for 4 months at \$10/permit and prohibits parties or other late night guests unless the permittee plans in advance and gets overnight parking permits (\$1/permit), good for one night only.

An OPD is bad for all Californians

The City of Los Angeles has long neglected its responsibility to provide the public with convenient access to Venice beach, a coastal resource that belongs equally to all Californians and is desperately needed by park starved inner city communities. (Compare, for instance, Venice with 7 acres of park area per 1000 residents with East Los Angeles with .66 acres, or Compton with .78 acres). Although the City's Community Plan for Venice encourages the development of City-owned parking facilities to meet the demand, and the Coastal Land Use Plan approved by the Coastal Commission in 2001 affirms the City's existing policy to provide **increased** parking opportunities for both visitors and residents of Venice, the City has failed to take affirmative steps to accommodate the public. Compare Santa Monica (a city of 90,000 people), for instance, which has provided 5178 beach parking spaces and several thousand more at the City Hall and Santa Monica Civic Center parking lots and in 8 parking structures all within the Santa Monica Coastal Zone, to the City of Los Angeles (3.8 million) which has provided a total of only 1691 public parking lot spaces in the Venice Coastal Zone. The City owns several large parcels of vacant and underutilized land in Venice, none of which the City has seen fit to construct a single parking structure. Hundreds of additional parking spaces could be provided by simply instituting diagonal parking on major thoroughfares. At the same time that the City has neglected to improve public access, it has actually made things much worse by continuing to approve commercial development in Venice without requiring those enterprises to provide adequate parking for their customers. An OPD in Venice will make a bad parking situation worse for the public. By limiting overnight parking to Venice residents, parking spaces that could otherwise be utilized by the public will be off limits, not only during the hours of 2am to 5am, but during earlier hours by visitors who wish to stay in Venice after 2 am and by visitors who wish to come to the beach in the morning but are denied access until residents decide to vacate the parking spaces they have claimed.

Coastal Access is a social justice issue.

Until now we have approached the fight for public access primarily as a local contest between Venice residents who want to drive out homeless people and privatize the beach, and those who want to keep Venice an inclusive community that is welcoming to everyone. But we understand and need to emphasize that the people with the biggest stake in this fight are those at whom the restrictions are aimed, and who will be shut out if the City is successful – underserved communities from all over Los Angeles.

Actions to win

The Coastal Commission will decide this matter at its upcoming June meeting in Long Beach. OPD advocates will have their attorneys and the weight of the City and Coastal Commission staff's recommendations in support of an OPD. So we must fill up the hearing room with people from all over Los Angeles who understand that Venice Beach is still the People's Beach and belongs to everyone.

The Coastal Commission meeting is set for June 12-14. However, the agenda has not yet been set, so we do not know which day the City's application for an OPD will be heard. We will be helping to organize transportation to Long Beach and expect to rent buses which will leave from and return to Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. in Venice. Please call 310-573-8411 any time after June 1 for the hearing date and time and information about free transportation to the meeting.

There will be a No OPD Rally on June 1 from 2pm-5pm at Beyond Baroque to raise \$\$ for the buses and for legal support. There will be speakers, music, food and a letter-writing table for people who wish to communicate their opposition to an OPD to Commissioners. A \$25 donation is suggested for those who can afford it but EVERYONE IS WELCOME!! Please join us at the Rally and at the hearing to support public access to Venice Beach 24/7.

Letters to the Coastal Commission should be addressed to:

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