

Letter from the President - Mitchell Frank

November 28, 2006

Dear Echo Park Business:

During the past year, we have come together to reconstitute this much needed Echo Park Chamber of Commerce. Although this Chamber was established nearly 80 years ago, it has been dormant for approximately two years. Currently, the Chamber (and neighborhood for that matter) is at a point where we need your assistance to increase overall business in the area while continuing our efforts to improve the quality of life in our community.

As representatives of business in Echo Park, we have held numerous meetings to discuss what the Chamber's priorities should be and how to best reach our goals. Throughout these discussions, we have become aware that the following topics are hot-button concerns that our constituency would like the Chamber to address: Homeless Encampment; Graffiti; Trash Littered in Streets; Security; Parking; Pressure Washing and Street Cleaning.

We have made great strides since re-forming the Echo Park Chamber, and we will continue to work on these sometimes sensitive and difficult issues, as well as on some very positive, charitable ones. Following are some examples of the progress we've made, and the plans we currently have in place:

Bike Racks - We have offered to our members a city sponsored bike rack program. Many businesses have opted to take advantage of the offer by placing orders and are currently awaiting their bike racks.

Block Captain Program - The Chamber has spearheaded a block captain program for the business district. Much like the neighborhood watch programs, each block captain acts as an integral component to keeping their block actively involved in crime prevention and beautification efforts. In addition, they facilitate the important process of information exchange between businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.

Business Development - Small business development and business loan workshops have been presented by the Chamber, including speakers and affiliates from the Valley Economic Development Center, The Asian Pacific Islander Small Business Program, Citibank and the Small Business

Administration.

Clean Up - We have combined forces with numerous businesses to deep clean and pressure wash various "hot spots", including the pedestrian stairway near Glendale and under the Sunset Bridge. The Chamber has been instrumental in convincing Walgreen's to add the south side of Sunset to their cleaning schedule and getting the Dream Center to do bi-weekly cleanings under Sunset Bridge. A community-wide "Spring Clean-up" in cooperation with the Dream Center is in the planning stages, scheduled for March 10, 2007.

Fundraising - Our events have been successful in raising funds for various charities, including the Echo Park Night at Dodger Stadium to benefit the Echo Park Holiday parade and Movie Madness Night to benefit the Mayberry School Full Circle Program. A Toy Drive to benefit the Echo Park Child Development Center is being organized in connection with our Holiday Mixer. Numerous other events will be planned for the future, including the "Taste of the East", a food festival showcasing local restaurants with a number of Eastside establishments scheduled to participate.

Graffiti - We have been working closely with LA City Council President Eric Garcetti's CD13 office on trying to eradicate graffiti in many areas of our neighborhood. Our hard work is finally paying off! The graffiti on Glendale Blvd. under the Sunset Bridge has been removed! The tunnel has been sandblasted in preparation for an updated mural by artist Ruben Soto. We will continue working our way down Glendale and Sunset Boulevards, removing graffiti from the murals. Members are encouraged to call in any graffiti to CD13 and the Central City Action Committee for removal, and we have disseminated block captain information for LA City's TAG graffiti removal program.

Holiday Parade - The Chamber is hosting this year's VIP event for the Echo Park Holiday Parade. Organized in cooperation with El Centro Del Pueblo and the new Holiday Parade Committee, the event will take place at 11 AM on the morning of the Holiday Parade, December 9, 2006 at Clothing of The American Mind - 1284 Sunset Blvd.

Homeless - The Chamber is working closely with LA City Council President Eric Garcetti's CD13 office in getting city services out to remove encampments, offer services to the homeless, and provide pressure washing in these areas. We are currently documenting the homeless situation and have been holding monthly round table discussions with neighborhood business leaders,

Recreation and Parks, and other organizations associated with the homeless. Our goal is to reduce the homeless encampments while offering the services necessary to these neglected individuals who are still part of our community.

HPOZ - We recently met with the Department of LA City Planning. There are currently plans on the table to include the commercial buildings in the Angelino Heights/Echo Park area as part of the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ). We are working to ensure that the Echo Park Chamber is represented on all commercial building panels so that our opinions will be heard. Our representation on these panels will also help to provide our businesses with some assurance that bureaucracies inherent in the system will not stymie the process. In addition to the HPOZ, we are also interested in ensuring our opinions are taken into consideration by the ICO, which inhibits any new building permits on Sunset from Echo Park Blvd to Alvarado and south to the 101 Freeway.

Mixers - The Chamber organizes several mixers each year. Past guest speakers have included, LA City Council President Eric Garcetti, Councilman Ed Reyes (District 1), Matthew Dubois (Greater Echo Park Elysian Neighborhood Council), Dave Woods (Property Manager from The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel/Angelus Temple), Arthi Varma (Los Angeles City Planning), Albert Torres (Department of Recreation and Parks), Robert George (Dream Center), Robert Aguayo and Sandra Figueroa-Villa (El Centro del Pueblo).

Security - We have met with Senior Lead Officer Ford and Officer Ramirez from the LAPD Rampart Division regarding various security issues - parking lots, graffiti, vandalism, etc. We have since requested the Rampart and Northeast divisions of the LAPD beef up the security of Echo Park during the upcoming holiday season. LAPD-monitored security cameras are scheduled to be installed at the intersection of Sunset Blvd. and Echo Park Ave. We are also requesting that cameras be installed at the park. Additionally, new, brighter lighting will be installed in the tunnel under the Sunset Bridge by March 2007.

As president of The Chamber, I am committed to rejuvenating our community and restoring pride in Echo Park - our home. The Echo Park Chamber of Commerce possesses the smarts, finances and determination to make a difference. The Chamber Board spends countless hours behind the scenes

improving our neighborhood in varied and vast ways. There is, however, much more to be done.

Our actions as the Chamber of Commerce, whether directly or indirectly, affect your businesses, and therefore, we need your input to successfully reach our goals. Please come to a meeting or mixer and inform us of what you need or would envision for our neighborhood. We respectfully ask those of you who are not current members to please join the Chamber and volunteer for events or committees.

By working together, we can create a secure environment in which our patrons, customers, and residents can enjoy all that our vibrant and diverse neighborhood has to offer, as well as an environment in which our businesses can thrive to their greatest potential.

The Executive Board meets each Wednesday at Taix Restaurant at 1:30 pm.

The General Meeting is the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7pm, also at Taix Restaurant. R.S.V.P. (213) 630-3032

Mitchell Frank, President_Echo Park Chamber of Commerce: