

# CECILIA GARCIA

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**DATE:** October 13, 2009

**TO:** Tom Ford, Chair of the Grants Committee  
729 Heinz Avenue, Suite 7  
Berkeley, CA 94710

**FROM:** Cecilia Garcia, UCLA Urban Planning M.A. Candidate 2010 & Community and Strategic Planning Intern for City of Santa Monica

**RE: APA Urban Design and Preservation Division Grants Program Proposal and Application for Studying Two Urban Re-knitting Alternatives: Freeway Capping & Crossroads Initiative**

Mr. Ford:

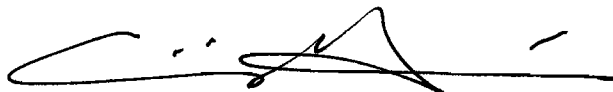
This application is for the APA Urban Design and Preservation Division Grant that I am requesting. The grant is necessary to fund a study in Santa Monica, California that will explore the feasibility of two alternatives that will help re-knit the Pico Neighborhood which has long been divided from the community to the north by the 1-10 Freeway.

The preferred alternative is to cap a portion of the I-10 Santa Monica Freeway between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets. The freeway cap will provide additional open space (up to 7.1 acres) that would complement the adjacent Memorial Park to the north. The expansion will play a significant role in transforming the area and connecting to the Memorial Park Expo light rail station (projected to complete construction by 2015) and future transit-oriented development around the park.

The second alternative, the Crossroads Initiative will focus on key streets that connect the Pico neighborhood and destinations near Memorial Park, including the Memorial Park Expo light rail station. These streets will form vital connections between residential and business districts separated by the freeway. The Crossroads alternative will explore ways of improving street quality and vitality through improved pedestrian environments, enhanced elements for wayfinding, increased activity along sidewalks, and a better bicycle network.

I understand that if I am awarded this grant I must approve, sign, and comply with terms of a contract with the Division and that I must complete stated elements of proposal or funds shall be returned to the Division. Additionally, I acknowledge that I will provide a written presentation to my State Chapter and that I will present summary of work to the general public through a presentation to the Pico Neighborhood Association and city website. I will also provide deliverable for use on the Division web site and Division archive and if I attend the annual conference of APA I will be happy to present findings at the Division's annual meeting and reception.

This study will satisfy the Applied Research requirement for the masters program at UCLA which I am currently pursuing; I appreciate your positive consideration of this grant request as it will be of tremendous help to my professional development.



Cecilia Garcia

UCLA Urban Planning M.A. Candidate 2010 & Community and Strategic Planning Intern for City of Santa Monica

## GRANT PROGRAM PROPOSAL

### PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project consists of study for two design alternatives. The preferred alternative is to cap a portion of the I-10 Santa Monica Freeway between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets. The second alternative, the Crossroads Initiative will focus on key streets that connect the Pico neighborhood and destinations near Memorial Park. The study will help demonstrate the value of urban design and preservation in the field of planning as these alternatives will play a significant role in re-knitting neighborhoods separated by the original freeway construction. The study will identify construction, access, clearance, property, and use issues for capping and crossroads to ensure these alternatives are feasible. The alternatives will foster healthy activities and sustainability, support transit-oriented mixed-use development and multi-modal network connections. The freeway cap will provide an additional 7.1 acres of land for green space, joint uses, and bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections. The Exposition Light Rail station adjacent to this area is projected to be operational in 2015, and will bring visitors from throughout Southern California. The cap or crossroads initiative will be coordinated with station area planning for joint development in the district as outlined in the Strategic Framework for the Land Use and Circulation Element (adopted July 2008), and an expansion plan for Memorial Park. These will be vital to realizing Santa Monica's vision for the area and surrounding neighborhoods

The urban divide caused by the freeways is not unique to Santa Monica as many communities have been fragmented by interstate highways and can benefit from the methods and examples for urban design and preservation this study will provide. The two study alternatives present an opportunity to positively contribute to and involve the Pico neighborhood, Santa Monica's most racially diverse and underserved neighborhood. The neighborhood is composed of 40% Hispanics, 17% Black, and a variety of other racially diverse residents. Pico Neighborhood was divided in the 1950's by the construction of the I-10 freeway. Either alternative will allow free flowing access and will mend a fractured neighborhood. Additionally, the crossroads initiative will examine current storefronts and explore and make recommendations for standards of auto repair businesses in the Pico Neighborhood which will help promote urban design as an element of public policy formulation and program implementation. Since the Pico neighborhood has the lowest household income in the city, the project is instrumental for addressing the higher level of housing, services, transportation, and employment needs. All of which are essential to an inclusive and just city. Essentially, the project aims to help the local government examine how land use rules and urban design can be crafted and written for a better built environment.

### METHODS

**Data & User Input.** The Method of investigation will require assembling existing data: Zoning, Land Use, Bicycle Network, Aerial and other maps. Because the study will document a community outreach process—reaching youth, seniors, families, business owners, property owners, and cycling, pedestrian and transit advocates—it will help provide a liaison with the city and nongovernmental organizations involved in the urban design process. In particular I will work closely with neighborhood residents as well as the Pico Neighborhood Association (PNA) and provide bilingual services for residents as I conduct community outreach, possibly through a user survey (upon City approval). This will also be done by conducting a walking tour and/or a charette with the Pico neighborhood and by conducting stakeholder interviews with key groups in the area including: the school district (SMMUSD), Pico Neighborhood Association, the Pico Business Improvement Association, Santa Monica College, Pico library, area hospitals and other stakeholders. If approved by city I hope to develop a youth outreach program by creating a Children and Youth Activity Packet that asks questions about circulation and park preferences, and invites students to design their dream cap or crossroad. It will also introduce students to the discipline and professional field. If approved by the city I will develop Twitter and/or a Facebook account for project which will potentially help reach younger residents. This technique can be a useful procedure that can be directly applied to the practice of urban design.

**Inventory & Analysis.** For this study I will utilize urban design principles and practices to improve the comprehensive planning process. My Urban Design Analysis will include site reconnaissance and consideration of existing urban design framework. I will develop analysis diagrams and models showing existing conditions, key opportunities and constraints (bicycle and pedestrian connections, built form, land uses, gathering places and site relationships). I will determine options for freeway cap structure types, considering safety, ventilation, access, and lighting systems and evaluate Green Building Structures and construction techniques.

**Cost Considerations & Funding.** Financial considerations such as joint-use funding, State and Federal sources, and phasing techniques will also be analyzed. I will review case studies for financing strategies and implementation and will assess feasibility of joint use development to contribute to construction costs. This will include potential candidates, sites, and development strategies. The development of cost estimates and funding recommendations will be done by creating an inventory of current State and Federal funding sources applicable to the project, and typical funding amounts.

**Alternative Concepts & Feasibility Plan.** I will develop these concepts based on community priorities, and technical analyses. The preparation of the final feasibility plan will be based on memos prepared throughout the project that incorporate and document the process. The feasibility plan will include the graphics and illustrations of the preferred plan and provide an executive summary, and appendix of key information.

#### RESOURCES NEEDED & BUDGET

Resources needed include GIS data and design software: AutoCAD, Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator and Dreamweaver. These needs will be met by using the UCLA School of Public Affairs Computer Lab and/or the City of Santa Monica resources. I will also have to coordinate with the city to find space to hold charette and will need printers to print surveys and activity packet.

My current budget is quite limited; the city of Santa Monica will pay me approximately \$1,800. I plan on devoting approximately 550 hours to project therefore grant funds will help cover this time since it is time that I could be working and making money to cover my living expenses.

#### PROFESSIONAL GOALS & WORK

This project directly serves as a resource for my professional growth and enrichment as an urban designers and future planner. My current professional goal is to obtain a masters degree in planning. I am in my second and final year of study. This project will fulfill the applied research project requirement that I must meet in order to graduate. Additionally, the project allows for practical application of what I have learned through coursework and past experience as a landscape architect and urban designer. This particular project delves and aims to solve problems that are pressing to my area of interest as it will explore how through design we can build in smarter, more sustainable ways which are respectful of varying cultural needs. The study will widen my skills, especially those needed to work with neighbors, community and the public sector in the entitlement and development of a complex project.

This project is relevant to my anticipated professional work because I plan on becoming part of a multi-disciplinary firm that offers services in landscape architecture, urban design, planning and public involvement. The study will help me explore the interaction between the physical and socio-economic components of urban life since the study alternatives will acknowledge underrepresented city dwellers in the Pico neighborhood and will be sensitive to their different needs. I hope to make my greatest contribution to a design team through my personal experience and studies of minority communities, informal city and economy and my bilingual proficiency all of which I will further develop through my work in this project.

#### FORM OF FINAL PRODUCT & TIMELINE

The final product of my study will be in a report that will document method of investigation, summary of public input, diagrams, conceptual design graphics, case studies, literature review, preliminary cost estimates and funding options. In addition I will produce a Children and Youth Activity Packet. I began this project on September 28, 2009 and expect to be finished June 1, 2010.