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NEWS RELEASE

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August 25 Citywide Congress of Neighborhoods Planning Group Reaches a Meeting of the Minds

Los Angeles: In their third full-fledged meeting on this year's Citywide Congress of Neighborhoods, Congress Planning Committee members and about 25 Neighborhood Council System stakeholders delved into the content, structure and funding of the October 11, 2008, Congress that will be held in City Hall.

Deliberating for a full two and a half hours at the Maryknoll Japanese Catholic Center in the heart of Little Tokyo, the participants at the meeting achieved an almost perfect rendition of what Department of Neighborhood Empowerment General Manager BongHwan Kim called an "Open Space" process. Thus, though Congress Planning Committee members helped guide the conversation and set time limits for generalized agenda items, the entire Congress discussion was open on an equal basis to all participants who were present.

And discuss they did, considering both the challenges of holding the Congress this year, such as reduced funding, and the potential benefits of holding the Congress alongside the Mayor's Community Budget event, inviting City Department and Community-Based Organizations to showcase their programs, and focusing on Neighborhood Council Best Practices and powerful Alliances that run the gamut from the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils to a new and different kind of alliance, such as PlanCheckNC.

Though in a general sense, the shape of the Congress has been agreed upon—Mayor's Community Budget Day and concomitant Congress "tracks" running side by side, three focused on alliances, Neighborhood Council Best Practices, and an Open Forum—sub-committees organized around the topics Workshop Tracks, Outreach and Fundraising will hammer out the nuts and bolts of what will take place when, who the presenters will be, how various aspects of the Congress program will be funded, how outreach will be conducted.

As these deliberations take place, Neighborhood Council input on the planning process is still timely, and it will be beneficial for all who are working to make the Congress a success. Therefore, council members and stakeholders who want to weigh in on the decision-making process are invited to access the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment website at www.lacityneighborhoods.com, select the Citywide Congress and Neighborhoods and Mayor's Budget Day tab and provide input through the process outlined at that website location. Input on the plans for the Congress will be collected through September 3, the date of the next Congress Planning Committee meeting. Notes and minutes of the August 25th Congress Planning Meeting are attached.

For more information, call the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at (213) 485-1360.

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