



Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City

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June 17, 2015

City Council Members (via email – council@smgov.net)
City of Santa Monica
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: Recommendations for Appointments to the Planning Commission

Choosing a new Planning Commissioner in Santa Monica is a serious undertaking. The appointment must be carefully made as Commissioners have great influence in determining how the city will look and function in the future.

We believe that any Commissioner appointed should have the following qualities:

- relevant experience and knowledge of the physical and economic conditions of the city
- willingness to thoroughly and thoughtfully study complex issues regarding the physical development of our city
- long-time residence in Santa Monica
- knowledge of how our city works (purpose and scope of city planning) through prior civic involvement
- a track record of good judgment, fair dealing, practicality, level-headedness, and ability to work well with others
- the ability to balance the current pro-developer majority of the Planning Commissioners to better represent Santa Monica residents, who, based on a recent Downtown survey, rejected taller, higher density projects in our Downtown by a two-to-one ratio.

We are fortunate to have two well-qualified candidates who would be great assets to the Planning Commission. In no order of importance, we recommend the following:

Mario Fonda-Bonardi

A licensed architect who has been in practice in Santa Monica for nearly 40 years, Fonda-Bonardi has direct knowledge and hands-on experience with the unique aspects of city planning in our city. He is intimately familiar with our

zoning and building codes and has been actively engaged in attending workshops and making recommendations when the ZOU and LUCE were being updated. His commitment to sustainability enables him to consider prospective projects with an eye to impacts on our precious resources and infrastructure needs as well as the quality of life for our residents, business owners and visitors, a valuable holistic approach.

As a long-term resident of Santa Monica, Mario has been civically engaged and contributed in a number of significant ways. His 17 years working on AYSO, for example, shows a sustained commitment to the children of our city. His dedication to saving the now city-owned shotgun house as a board member of the Santa Monica Conservancy over a 15-year period, speaks volumes about his desire to improve our community and willingness to weather the ups and downs attendant to working on long-term projects. His active membership in Santa Monica Architects for a Responsible Tomorrow, as well as 30-year membership in Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights, evidences his concern and willingness to actively seek ways to improve our city.

His long-term residency and maturity also gives him the important insight and perspective that comes from seeing how our city has developed over time, witnessing successful innovations as well as detrimental decisions which will inform his contributions to the Planning Commission.

For many years he has served on various boards and has shown his ability to build consensus among people with differing opinions. His input is highly regarded by his neighborhood association and all the other affiliations he maintains. He is always thoughtful and measured, never rigidly entrenched. He considers all sides of an issue and encourages others to voice their opinions.

Nina Fresco

(In the interest of full disclosure and transparency, it should be noted that Victor Fresco, one of the signers of this letter and co-chair of SMCLC, is Nina Fresco's brother-in-law. Victor did not draft this letter but agrees with its content).

Nina has many of the same admirable qualities of Mario Fonda-Bonardi. It is no surprise that they consistently work together harmoniously on the rehabilitation of the shotgun house and that Fresco hired Fonda-Bonardi to do architectural work in her own home.

Fresco is also a long-time Santa Monica resident, serving on the Landmarks Commission for 12 years and other local boards. She now chairs the important Civic Working Group, a city task force that is devoted to determining the future

use and management of the now closed Civic Auditorium. She doggedly studied the dense Zoning Ordinance on behalf of the Santa Monica Conservancy and Ocean Park Association, making recommendations that were accepted by City Council and incorporated into the updated ordinance. She has also rigorously studied the history of Santa Monica, often using primary sources, in preparation for the Santa Monica Conservancy curriculum she created for our city's schoolchildren. Her love of our city and her dedication to its improvement is clear from the many projects she has undertaken.

Fresco also encourages and listens to the opinions of others and thoughtfully considers options before forming her own opinion. She welcomes public discourse on the issues that our city faces. In her other civic roles she has shown she can take in the passionate and disparate views voiced by the public and then find a balance between public opinion and good public policy on several important local issues. As a preservationist, she encourages adaptive reuse solutions, but is also enthusiastic about new construction that will add to character of the city's unique urban landscape. She is cognizant of the limitations of our infrastructure and our resources and strives to balance those with the need for new development and modernization. She also is keenly aware that we are part of a greater region which not only impacts our city but that our city also impacts the surrounding area.

In conclusion, SMCLC advances these two candidates for your consideration as you begin to fill vacancies in the Planning Commission. The maturity, the experience, the education, and the civic dedication shown by both Mario Fonda-Bonardi and Nina Fresco will well serve our community in the complicated role of planning commissioner.

Sincerely,

Diana Gordon, Victor Fresco, Jeff Segal & Sherrill Kushner