

February 26, 2026

**Raymond Meza, Commission Chair**  
**Melinda Murray, Commission Second Vice Chair**  
**Christina Sanchez, Commission Vice Chair**  
**and distinguished members of the City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission**

City of Los Angeles  
200 N Spring St, Room 277  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Subject:** Restructuring the City of Los Angeles for Functionality, Equity, and Prosperity

*Dear Charter Reform Commissioners, City Councilmembers, and Mayor Bass,*

As Director of Government and Public Affairs for the American Institute of Architects Los Angeles (AIA|LA), I serve as the liaison between our 4,500+ design professionals and the civic agencies shaping our built environment. I am writing to thank you for your leadership on the Charter Reform Commission and to formally offer the technical expertise, insight, and full commitment of the LA architecture community. We are here to serve as a dedicated resource as you undertake the historic mission of reviewing the City Charter and drafting structural recommendations that will define the future of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles stands at a critical juncture. With the 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games rapidly approaching, global attention is turning toward our city. Yet, beneath the international spotlight, we face a \$1 billion budget deficit, a severe housing shortage, and deteriorating infrastructure. For too long, we have relied on a fragmented bureaucracy that defaults to reactive crisis management instead of proactive planning. This archaic structure makes the simple acts of building housing and maintaining our public spaces maddening and exhausting.

We cannot afford to face 21st-century crises with a 20th-century organizational chart. The ongoing Charter Reform process presents a rare, generational opportunity to fundamentally rewrite the city's operating manual. To transition Los Angeles from a culture of gatekeeping to a proactive, prosperous, and equitable "City of Yes," we strongly encourage you to adopt the following structural reforms:

### **1. Codify and Elevate a Chief Design Officer (CDO) and Development Czar**

Los Angeles faces enormous, interconnected design challenges that cannot be solved in departmental silos. The Charter must permanently establish a Chief Design Officer—a licensed California architect—empowered with the direct executive authority to synthesize a holistic

vision across Public Works, City Planning, LADWP, LAHD, and other agencies. Furthermore, to compel coordination among the dozen departments that impact development, the city must establish a "Development Services Czar" (or Deputy Mayor for Development Services). This role is essential to elevate the performance of all city services and replace bureaucratic gatekeepers with active solution-providers.

## **2. Mandate a 5-Year Capital Infrastructure Program (CIP)**

Incredibly, Los Angeles is the only major U.S. city without a multi-year Capital Infrastructure Program. Operating without a blueprint forces the city to react to crises rather than strategically upgrading infrastructure. The Charter must be amended to legally mandate a 5-year comprehensive CIP to prioritize, coordinate, and track investments. Following recent post-*Sheetz* court rulings, a detailed, publicly vetted CIP is no longer just a best practice; it is a strict legal necessity. Without it, we cannot demonstrate the legal nexus connecting development impact fees to specific facility needs, leaving the City's revenue streams highly vulnerable to facial legal challenges.

## **3. Reorganize and Consolidate Fragmented Bureaucracy**

Spreading development and public realm functions across disconnected agencies guarantees service gaps, delayed projects, and increased costs. The Charter must reorganize this broken decision-making tree by:

- **Dissolving the politically appointed Board of Public Works:** Replace this century-old board with a centralized, professional Director of Public Works.
- **Unifying the Right-of-Way:** Consolidate the Department of Transportation (LADOT) into Public Works. This ensures unified project delivery so that when a street is repaved, its transit infrastructure, bike lanes, and tree canopies are upgraded simultaneously.
- **Establishing a Department of Business Services:** Create a consolidated "concierge" for design/construction permits and small business support, officially shifting city personnel from regulatory gatekeepers to active solution-providers.

## **4. Optimize City Real Estate to Pay a Dividend**

A functional metropolis recognizes that revenue should be raised by increasing the value of its services, not by perpetually increasing taxes. Los Angeles is one of the largest property owners in the region. The Charter should empower a Department of Real Estate to optimize the revenue

potential of our publicly owned assets. By transforming neglected properties—such as empty civic center retail spaces—into vibrant community keystones, we can eliminate government-induced blight, stabilize our budget, and ideally generate a financial dividend for residents.

## 5. Equitably Fund Our Parks and Civic Infrastructure

Los Angeles has plummeted to 90th in the national ParkScore ranking. This decline is directly tied to the fact that the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) operates on a charter funding allocation that has been frozen since 1937. Today, 40% of the RAP budget is diverted to cover indirect costs never included in that Great Depression-era formula, starving our civic infrastructure. The Commission must advance the proposal to **double the RAP charter allocation from 0.033% to 0.065% of assessed property value**. This is a mandatory step to restore decades of cuts and ensure clean, accessible parks for our most underserved communities.

By embracing these proven structural changes, you can ensure that our city's operating system finally matches its ambitions. AIA Los Angeles urges you to include these proposals in your final recommendations so we can build a Los Angeles whose revenue streams and service delivery systems truly work for everyone.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at [will@aialosangeles.org](mailto:will@aialosangeles.org)

Thank you for your time, leadership, and dedication to our city.

Truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Wright', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Will Wright, Hon. AIALA  
Director, Government & Public Affairs