

# MICHAEL JENSEN FOR VNC LAND USE AND PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIR

## CANDIDATE STATEMENT



I am Michael Jensen, and I am running for Chair of the Land Use and Planning Committee (“LUPC”). I have served as a committee member on LUPC since 2016. Over the last five years, I am grateful for the experience in engaging with applicants and stakeholders, while

learning a great deal about the technicalities of land use policy in Venice. Relying on that experience, I am prepared to lead LUPC through its next term.

### Background

I moved to this community from Philadelphia in 2007. After living in Santa Monica and Marina del Rey for several years, I moved to Venice in 2010. Since then, I’ve lived next to Ocean Front Walk. Most Fridays (at least pre-pandemic), you could find me at the old Waterfront Café, the Bistro, or Hinano’s. I surf the Breakwater and enjoy cruising on the beach path on my bike. I have grown to love this community and met many of my closest friends here.

I graduated law school in 2015 and am a practicing attorney. During law school, I was a member of law review and volunteered in several legal aid clinics, including assisting applicants with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) enrollment and small claims case assistance for low-income litigants. I currently serve as in-house counsel to a cannabis company located in DTLA. My career is not related to development or land use issues in Venice, but I am nonetheless passionate about the impact these issues have on our lives. Since 2016, I have served as a LUPC member over two separate terms.

### Why I Want to Lead LUPC

Venice has not avoided the polarizing environment of our politics, and I regrettably have witnessed contentious meetings that devolved from substantive discussion to personal attacks. We must restore the decorum and professionalism to public meetings that have been lacking in recent years. Land use issues are very important to the Venice community, and they are becoming increasingly complex as Venice evolves. My goal is for LUPC to analyze projects from an objective standpoint and build consensus in its advisory role to VNC Board’s land use decisions.

My promise to stakeholders is this: I support a public forum for discussion of issues, projects, and views from all sides.

Cases will be vetted by staff, written staff reports with supporting documents will be posted prior to meetings, public testimony will be received, and the committee will rely on the merits of a project to render its recommendation to the VNC.

### Top 3 Land Use Issues Facing Venice

#### Long-Term Planning and Development

The Venice Coastal Zone Specific Plan was created in 2003—nearly 20 years ago—and should be revised to suit the changing needs of our community. We now have an opportunity to impact the city’s new plan for Venice. This is the single most important project LUPC should take up as a committee, as it will impact density, traffic, affordable housing, and homeless housing for decades to come. I propose that in its next term, the committee devote at least one entire meeting for each sub-area of Venice, discuss planning goals specific to each, take public comment, and create comprehensive recommendations to submit as a Community Impact Statement on behalf of the VNC.

#### Homelessness

Homelessness is a crisis in Venice, as it is across the city and state, which has been exacerbated by failed government policies. The consequences of the COVID pandemic have yet to be fully realized, but when eviction moratoria are lifted, we will undoubtedly see this crisis get even worse. Venice is slated to shoulder a greater burden than our counterparts elsewhere in Council District 11, the ostensible goal of our own councilmember. But it is neither realistic nor responsible to spend \$500,000+ per unit at a completion rate of hundreds of units per year when there are more than 30,000 people who need a roof over their heads. The city needs to utilize cheaper, faster solutions to create units on existing city-owned land in three to five months, not three to five years after going through the Coastal Commission.

#### Affordable Housing

Like the rest of Los Angeles, Venice does not have enough units to meet the demand for anything but the most expensive housing. This is a direct result of downzoning large swaths of the city over the past 40 years. We have an opportunity to correct this policy as the city revamps its new community plan for Venice, a role in which LUPC should be integral. Otherwise, we will see a continuation of only high-end development that prices out all but the wealthy. We must create new housing that meets the needs of our socioeconomically diverse community.

Sincerely,

Michael Jensen