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Dear Encino Community Member,

I wanted to write you regarding the old Fire Station 83 that is located on Balboa Blvd. in our Encino community. As you are aware, the fire station has sat abandoned for the past several years. During that time the property has become host to vagrants and a target for vandalism. The structure has had the wiring stripped out of the walls, most of the lighting and building fixtures have been torn out, and graffiti covers the property. Break-ins by looters and homeless people have become routine, and the structure has been used by some as a piggy bank, bedroom, and toilet. During recent years, the property has become not just an eyesore and public safety concern, but a liability hazard for the city.

Over the past year and a half, as part of standard procedure, the City has offered the Fire Station property to all governmental agencies. While a few agencies showed some initial interest, without exception all declined to purchase the property or otherwise make the necessary commitments to make the much needed repairs to render the structure habitable. This has left the City with the choice of auctioning the property, most likely to a private developer, or finding a non-profit willing to spend a substantial amount of money to rehabilitate the site in order to then provide community services.

Just as I had a concern, in the recent past, with selling City-owned parking structures to private companies, I maintain the same hesitation regarding the sale of this property to a private developer, who might build the kind of project that ends up bitterly opposed by the Encino Community. Additionally, a private company would only be willing to pay the land-value, due to the derelict nature of the property. While a one-time sum of money would be a small help to the City's coffers, a longtime community asset would be forever lost, permanently removing any options that might benefit the City and the Encino community in the future.

Prior to April of this year, despite all the contact with different agencies, only one non-profit organization had approached us with a stated willingness to provide neighborhood services for our community and spend the necessary sum, likely upwards of \$1,000,000.00, to rehabilitate the City's property. That one serious offer meant the City might have a way to maintain ownership of this property while having non-taxpayer funds spent to enhance it, for the purpose of providing services to the entire community at no expense to the City taxpayer – and with the non-profit assuming all liability.

And so in April, I introduced a placeholder motion to begin looking at leasing the property for the purpose of a community cultural center. No lease has been drafted or signed; the motion was merely meant to start the process of getting actual numbers and real terms placed on paper, for further scrutiny and subject to open discussion in the community. And while a formula was suggested in the motion – namely, a \$1 a year lease – that was used as a starting point because it is the common formula that has been used by the City on

countless occasions, including right here in the Valley, to help enable community use of sites and facilities that are derelict or otherwise intensely problematic.

Since the April motion, many people have expressed support but also many have expressed significant concerns: over a non-profit organization asking to lease the property, or over the lack of notification and community input, or because some desire to have the LAUSD school that is behind the property be able to make use of the City property to alleviate parking and drop-off issues. My office and I are busily attempting to address all such concerns.

I am working hard to address the issues of the school and school parents. My office has met with staff members from the School Board Member's office as well as with the President and several members of the Encino Neighborhood Council, the President of the Homeowners group in Encino; parents of children who attend the school, and members of the cultural center. Our goal was to discuss how the City property could be used to alleviate the school's traffic issues, while also being used for other community needs and purposes. Our discussions were open and friendly, and I believe all involved left with a better understanding of our hopes for the property and what could be done to create a better situation for all. My personal meeting with School Board Member Steve Zimmer has reflected these same hopes and desires.

In addition, members of the proposed cultural center spoke to the Encino Neighborhood Council recently to describe to the community what their hopes and planned programs were for the Encino community, and it is important to note that they describe programming that would be available to the entire community. I am pleased these discussions are happening, and ask that the neighborhood council continue these conversations about the use of the old fire station.

I have asked that this matter be held from the council committee which oversees these types of lease while we continue reaching out to you and the surrounding community, and while we continue working with the School District and their Facilities Staff to accommodate their needs.

I want to thank you for contacting me regarding this community asset, and I feel strongly that we can find a way to address the needs of the whole community. Thanks so much for your concern and interest.

Warm Regards,

PAUL KORETZ  
Councilmember, 5th District