



# CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

C-7

333 WEST OCEAN BOULEVARD • LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA 90802

June 15, 2004

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
City of Long Beach  
California

**SUBJECT:** Agreement With Los Angeles County Bar Association Dispute Resolution Services, Inc. to Provide Free and Low Cost Mediation Services at the Neighborhood Resource Center (Citywide)

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## DISCUSSION

The Department of Community Development, Neighborhood Services Bureau, is responsible for the management of the Neighborhood Resource Center (Center), located at 425 Atlantic Avenue. The Center staff has significant interaction with residents and often assists them in mediating neighborhood disputes without police intervention or litigation.

The County of Los Angeles collects filing fees to support mediation services in lieu of legal action. Currently, 16 agencies receive County funds for mediation services, including the Los Angeles County Bar Association Dispute Resolution Services, Inc. (DRS). On September 10, 2002, the City Council approved an agreement with DRS to provide free services for Long Beach residents at the Center. The agreement was for one year, with a one-year renewal option, which will expire on June 30, 2004.

For the past five years, DRS has provided services at low- or no cost to those who live, work, or attend school in Long Beach. Mediation services help resolve neighbor-to-neighbor disputes on such issues as loud parties, barking dogs, and other disruptive behaviors. A significant amount of mediation assistance involves landlord-tenant disputes. The County's budget for mediation services was reduced by 11 percent for Fiscal Year 2004 (FY 04), and as a result, the County has reduced the funding it provides to DRS by 11 percent. To continue to operate the program in Long Beach, it is necessary for DRS to increase the charge to its clients with the ability to pay from \$25 to \$50 per case. Fees will be waived for Long Beach residents who meet federal low-income guidelines. The fees will help cover the staff cost to operate the program and are consistent with what DRS charges for this service in other cities.

The attached Program Plan outlines the free and low-cost mediation services provided by DRS. DRS staff will be responsible for scheduling mediation services at the Center and providing trained mediators. The City will assist DRS staff in the marketing and outreach necessary to inform Long Beach residents of this service, provide free office

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space at the Center, and make bilingual translators available during mediation, as required.

Mediation services are not intended to eliminate existing City programs, such as Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement, Safe Streets Now!, Community Code Enforcement, and Community Policing. The program is intended to complement existing City resources to resolve ongoing neighborhood issues and to accept referrals of individuals interested in mediation to solve their neighborhood disputes.

The term of the agreement will be from July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005, with an option to renew for an additional one-year period based on satisfactory performance and availability of County funding.

This letter was reviewed by Assistant City Attorney Michael J. Mais on June 1, 2004 and Budget Manager Michael A. Killebrew on June 3, 2004.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action is requested on June 15, 2004 to ensure continued mediation services at the Center.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of mediation services will be borne by the Los Angeles County Department of Community and Senior Services and individual clients. There will be no impact on the General Fund.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with the Los Angeles County Bar Association Dispute Resolution Services, Inc., for the use of the Neighborhood Resource Center to provide free and low-cost mediation services for one year with an option to renew for an additional one-year period based on satisfactory performance and availability of County funding.

Respectfully submitted,



for MELANIE S. FALLON  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MSF::mm

Attachment

APPROVED:



GERALD R. MILLER  
CITY MANAGER