

Kyle J. Smith

From: Michael Buitron <michaelbuitron@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2021 4:37 PM
To: Redistricting
Subject: Independent Redistricting Commission (Council District 2) Meeting on Wednesday, June 23, 2021

-EXTERNAL-

Greetings, Independent Redistricting Commission Members,

I would like to submit eComments in advance of your Second District meeting. Thank you for taking my experience into consideration.

My name is Michael Buitron and I have been a resident of the 2nd city council district for the past twenty-eight years. For more than twenty of those years I've worked in Long Beach for CSULB and on the campus of St Mary Medical Center, biking to work for a majority of the time. I'm a homeowner, taxpayer, and voter. I've spoken with the mayor and my councilperson on the issues that are important to me. I've attended a city council meeting and stayed past midnight so I speak at a council meeting. I've worked out of the Health Department, not as an employee, but as a researcher. I've even spent a couple of nights in your jail. I even have a library card—and I use it.

I live on Minerva Park, the first historic street in Long Beach, which is located in the relatively new-named neighborhood called AOC7. From the street corner near my home, I can walk in three directions and cross into three other council districts, all in my neighborhood. I would have to walk or drive through another district to reach the main part of the 2nd council district.

Currently my neighborhood designation of AOC7 was created when the city made an effort to give every part of the city a neighborhood name. The things that would bring the community together: houses of worship, parks, schools, etc., don't exist in AOC7, so it's nothing I ascribe to or identify with. AOC7 feels like an identity the city foisted on the neighborhood, not one it came to organically.

When asked, I usually tell people I live in Little Cambodia, where there is shopping, parks, and a library. The borders of my community includes the neighborhood that runs on either side of the Anaheim retail corridor. The more gentrified Rose Park, to the east, is not part of my neighborhood; historically, my community is a community of immigrants and working class people which are increasingly priced out of the city.

The dearth of city services that are available in Khmer and Spanish speak to the historic underrepresentation of my community on the City Council. So does the lack of affordable housing for those that live on a lower working class income. Certainly in the past five years, nothing affordable has been built that falls between the low-income subsidized housing and the high end stuff. I feel that a district along the Anaheim corridor—an expanded version of Cambodia Town—would give voice to the immigrant, low-income, and service workers who are essential to the diversity and labor needs of the city.

For the most part, my street feels gerrymandered into the second district. I love visiting the restaurants and bars of the 2nd district and have friends who live below 4th Street, but most of the District 2 residents are

centered around the establishments of the East Village and Alamitos Beach, which we affectionately called the gay ghetto.

I also don't identify with the industrial harbor or the PoLB, which also occupies the Second District. If anything, the port should be beholden to the residents along the 710/103 corridor. They are the ones who have to breathe the port pollution. They are the residents that suffer the highest rates of cancer and pulmonary disorders from the diesel trucks and ships, the adjacent refineries and the toxic pollution coming from the light industries in the area.

Did you know that coal trains coming into the harbor don't have to be covered, and that each uncovered train car puts five hundred pounds of coal dust into the air? LB City Council wouldn't have unanimously voted to renew the Koch brothers twenty-year lease for their toxic coal facility if westside residents had a voice, at least in my view.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments on the second district, my neighborhood, and my divided and silenced local community.

Michael Buitrón