Quality and Productivity Commission

27th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program

"Saluting County Excellence"

2013 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: ZONING ENFORCEMENT IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: JULY 2008
(Must have been implemented at least one year - on or before June 30, 2012)

PROJECT STATUS: √ Ongoing _____ One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? _____ Yes √ No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner

Good government should communicate in plain language. Poor communication increases service costs and confuses constituents. Eighty percent of adults in the U.S. read at or below the 7th grade level and less than 15 percent of adults read at the 12th grade level or higher. Furthermore, many of our constituents are not confident communicating in English: one out of five residents does not speak English well. The Department of Regional Planning (DRP) Zoning Enforcement enforces the Planning & Zoning Code in the unincorporated areas. Zoning Enforcement seeks voluntary compliance from residents. Compliance with the zoning ordinance helps property owners and residents keep their neighborhoods clean and attractive. Time-consuming and costly legal and clean-up actions are the last resort. Therefore, effective communication of what the law requires becomes extremely important. In 2008, DRP redesigned its Zoning Enforcement service brochure in plain language and translated it into Spanish. It is visually pleasant and the content relevant to the public. The brochure was translated into Korean in 2010, Chinese in 2012, and Tagalog in 2013. The five languages are spoken by 90% of the Los Angeles County population.

(1) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ESTIMATED/ACTUAL BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
$ N/A	$ N/A	$ N/A	$ N/A	√

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Department of Regional Planning 320 West Temple Street, 13th Floor Los Angeles, CA 90012	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** 213-974-6411
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Patricia Hachiya Pat Hachiya — 6/18/13	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** 213-974-6453 **EMAIL** phachiya@planning.lacounty.gov
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Hsiao-Ching Chen — **DATE** 6-18-2013	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** 213-974-6559 **EMAIL** hchen@planning.lacounty.gov
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Richard J. Bruckner — **DATE** 6-18-2013	**TELEPHONE NUMBER** 213-974-6411

We Support Plain Language

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FACT SHEET – LIMITED TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **Challenge, Solution, and Benefits** of the project, written in plain language. Include a discussion of the technology and linkage to the County Strategic Plan. The description should identify Performance Measures.

CHALLENGE

DRP has only 35 zoning enforcement inspectors to provide services to the over one million residents throughout the 2,650 square miles of unincorporated area. During FY 2011-12, DRP processed more than 7,600 zoning violation cases in unincorporated Los Angeles County. About 45% of these zoning enforcement cases involved non-English speaking violators.

Based on statistics, about one out of every five County residents are not confident in their ability to communicate in English. Even when complainants and violators do not speak English, DRP must be able to explain the code enforcement process that involves multiple governmental agencies in order to successfully resolve problems.

However, of DRP's 35 zoning enforcement inspectors, only 10 are bilingual in Spanish and one is bilingual in Korean. DRP must rely on employees from other sections to translate for Chinese when needed. This provides a true challenge for DRP to communicate with residents with concerns and property owners who truly do not understand County codes.

Explaining the zoning code to the public is not an easy task given the size and complexity of the code. Also, not all provisions in the zoning code are relevant to most people.

SOLUTION

DRP's simple solution to this problem was to redesign and update an informational brochure in plain language to explain common zoning violations, reporting procedures, and enforcement processes. Common violations include converting single-family residences into multiple units, converting a garage into living quarters, maintaining junk and salvage items on properties, storing inoperable vehicles on residential properties, parking cars on the front lawn area, operating unpermitted home-based business, and having excessive yard sales.

DRP also strengthened its ability to communicate with constituents by translating the brochure into multiple languages and distributing these brochures at County events, community meetings, online, during inspections, and to anyone who wants more information. Considering limited resources, translation priority was given to the top five languages spoken in Los Angeles County: English (47%), Spanish (35%), Chinese (3.5%), Tagalog (2.5%), and Korean (2.0%).

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Furthermore, DRP also included information on how to report common violations to other County agencies such as the Departments of Animal Care and Control, Public Works, Sheriff, and Public Health, because maintaining neighborhood quality depends on collaboration with many other County agencies.

BENEFITS

Recently, a senior citizen and longtime resident became fed up with increasing code violations in her East Rancho Dominguez neighborhood. The area had a high transitory renter population and many new residents were unfamiliar with County zoning codes. Instead of filing numerous complaints, she thought it would be more effective to educate new residents on the importance of property maintenance. She communicated her idea to DRP's zoning enforcement inspector assigned to the community. The inspector delivered to her 200 zoning enforcement brochures in English and Spanish so she could distribute to community members and explain the importance of code compliance. Many people voluntarily corrected their violations after reading the brochure. This demonstrates the importance of empowering community members with a simple tool to improve their neighborhoods. It led to significant savings in staff time because enforcement staff did not have to conduct numerous inspections, repeatedly explain violations, and mail notices to the properties. This resident-driven collaborative effort with DRP eliminated blight and improved quality-of-life in the community.

County Strategic Plan Goal 1: Operational Effectiveness – "Maximize the effectiveness of processes, structure, and operations to support timely delivery of customer-oriented and efficient public services."

- The brochures simplify the concept of how zoning codes maintain and preserve residential neighborhoods and improve quality of life for residents.
- The brochures provide information for constituents, empowering them to take action in addressing problems in their communities. They also refer to other County resources that can assist them in these endeavors.
- The use of the brochures reduces make it easier for staff to answer basic questions.
- The use of the brochures helps to leverage the amount of bilingual resources that exist in DRP so that use of bilingual speaking staff can be prioritized to address more complex communications.

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County Strategic Plan Goal 3: Integrated Service Delivery

The zoning enforcement brochures provide important contacts for other County enforcement agencies, including the Departments of Public Works (Building and Safety, Property Rehabilitation, Graffiti Hotline), Assessor's Office, Treasurer and Tax Collector-Business License, Public Health, and the County 2-1-1 Hotline. County residents can gain information to address multiple problems in their communities and keep their neighborhoods safe and clean.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS):

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFIT): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation.

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL **ANNUAL** ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
$	$	$	$	☒

ANNUAL= 12 MONTHS ONLY

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