

## **DLANC WINS A 2013 EMPOWERLA AWARD FOR NEIGHBORHOOD EXCELLENCE**

**Category:** Board of Directors



The results are in! The winners of the 2013 EmpowerLA Awards were finalized at the September 9th special meeting of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. The vote on Monday was the culmination of a process that began in May. A total of 45 nominations were received for projects that exemplified the mission of Neighborhood Councils to engage local stakeholders with government and make government more accountable and responsive to the needs of their communities. DLANC is very honored to be amongst the many prestigious entries who have accepted an award.

In evaluating the submissions, EmpowerLA particularly focused on those initiatives that reflect the highest ideals of inclusiveness, non-discrimination, transparency, and independence for the NC system.

Of course, selecting the winners was not easy as there is so much good work going on across the system. However, after robust deliberations, they believe they have come up with the most deserving entrants (drumroll please!):

CENTRAL: Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC)

EAST: Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council

HARBOR: Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council

NORTH VALLEY: Northridge West Neighborhood Council

SOUTH: Empowerment Congress West Area Neighborhood Development Council, Park Mesa Heights

Community Council, Empowerment Congress Central Area Neighborhood Development Council, Empowerment Congress North Area Neighborhood Development Council  
SOUTH VALLEY: Reseda Neighborhood Council  
WEST: South Robertson Neighborhood Council

The hope with these awards is to celebrate Neighborhood Councils, furthering positive perceptions of their work, providing a platform for sharing best practices and encouraging high standards as they work to engage community members and work with the City to address local needs. The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners drew from its standards and best practices report to guide in the selection process. Below are the details relating to each winner.

**Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council** took to heart something President Patricia Berman likes to say: “don’t wait for the City to do something for you, get out there and do something for yourself.” With this in mind, the take charge group has had a string of public policy successes most notably the opening of Spring Street Park between 4th and 5th Streets as well as a two parklets along the same corridor! And what is also great is that they are working with ALL the populations of downtown – for example, organizing a high level Town Hall on the TB outbreak of a few months ago and an ongoing Skid Row resident-led Clean-Up Campaign to address needs on Skid Row. They are helping vulnerable homeless populations in the most powerful of ways– through direct engagement, involvement, and empowerment.

**Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council** has worked hard over the past year to elevate its presence and connect with stakeholders in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. They are an inspiration to all Neighborhood Councils struggling to engage their communities. Under the new board leadership, including the very effective President Monica Alcaraz, the community has come out in droves to candidate forums (one offered in two languages), business mixers and meetings where they focus squarely on addressing local needs. Since their stepped up focus on outreach began, hundreds of people have participated in their activities which they attribute to relevance, savvy social media efforts, and sweat equity invested in getting people to come out.

**Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council** has effectively galvanized their community to address the needs of youth. Most impressive was their work to create, “Pathways to Employment,” an event in partnership with San Pedro Rotary and Harbor Communities Benefit Foundation to provide this important population with employment skills through training workshops, practice interviews, and presentations by many of the 36 businesses present. And, in addition to addressing the career needs of youth, they are providing recreational options as well through the soon to be opened skate park at Peck Park, a project which they initiated and worked with the Council Office and Department of Recreation and Parks to realize.

**Northridge West Neighborhood Council** will celebrate three years of Operation Clean Sweep with eight to fifteen volunteers showing up every week on Thursday for four hours to clean sidewalks, parkways, gutters and storm. How many NCs can boost this kind of consistency in the work to make their community a more beautiful and walkable place? Subscribing to the broken window theory, they have had a big impact on the local crime rate by ensuring their neighborhood is well cared for.

**Empowerment Congress West, Park Mesa Heights, Empowerment Congress Central, and Empowerment Congress North** knew something was amiss when they heard that the Space Shuttle Endeavor parade through their communities was going to cost them a whole lot of trees. So in an unprecedented effort, they worked together as the Space Shuttle Task Force to mitigate the negative impact of the historic event on the neighborhoods. Spearheading negotiations, they reduced the number of trees to be cut down by hundreds and reached an agreement that included four trees replaced for each of the 253 trees cut down; development of both a park and a tree master plan for South Los Angeles; \$400,000 for tree trimming; 1,000 feet of linear sidewalk repair; ten scholarships per year for five years for NC-area youth to attend the Science Center Camp program; and five professional development programs for teachers at South LA schools within the next three years.

**Reseda Neighborhood Council's** Economic Development Committee in 2011 began discussing the

downward trend in the economy and what sort of community level initiatives could be helpful to small businesses in Reseda. After researching successful small business development efforts across the country, they launched a local program on their own (Spend \$25 on the 25th in Reseda) which caught the attention of the citywide ShopLA program and American Express, both of which then partnered with ShopRESEDA. In conjunction with these efforts, the ShopRESEDA Discount Card was launched at a national news conference and now includes as 200 local business partners (<http://www.shopresedacity.com/>). This concept of “shopping local” has successfully encouraged a lasting sense of community pride and spirit as well as encouraging more participants in Reseda’s local economy to engage in the NC process and the greater City.

**South Robertson Neighborhood Council** encompasses several neighborhoods known over the years by other names: Pico-Robertson, Palms (in some areas), and Beverlywood (in others). Building a coherent and recognizable identity out of all the different neighborhoods has been a challenge, but an important one: neighborhoods decay when no one cares. So they have focused on building local community pride by increasing the sense of identity by “branding” the neighborhood as SORO. To this end, they display Street Banners which make the SORO name visible on a continuing basis and host the well attended annual SORO festival. Most notably, they are sponsoring an innovative partnership with KCET Departures to create a series of video profiles, articles, and photo journals that will in conjunction with the other initiatives, tell the story of and strengthen pride in SORO

**Event: Date/Time:** Tuesday, September 17, 2013 - 3:30pm

on Tue, 09/17/2013 - 3:34pm Anastasia Johnson

The public is requested to fill out a Speaker Card to address the Board on any item of the agenda prior to the Board taking action on an item. Comments from the public on agenda items will be heard only when the respective item is being considered. Comments from the public on matters not appearing on the agenda that is within the Committee's subject matter jurisdiction will be heard during the public comment period. Public comment is limited to 2 minutes per speaker, unless waived by the presiding officer of the Committee. As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disability Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability and upon request, will provide reasonable accomodation to ensure equal access to its programs, services, and activities. Sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, or other auxilliary aids and/or services may be provided upon request. To ensure availability of services, please make sure your request at least 3 business days (72 hours) prior to the meeting you wish to attend by contacting the Committee chair.

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