

The Westside Urban Forum Presents
“Housing on the Fast Track: The Impact of Executive Directive 1”
Thursday, November 16th, 2023

Panelists

Scott Epstein

Policy & Research Director, Abundant Housing LA

Scott brings over 15 years of experience in research and public policy to Abundant Housing Los Angeles. He has previously worked as a researcher at the RAND Corporation and UCLA CRESST, as well as a public health worker at UCLA’s Arthur Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center. As the Chair of the Mid City West Neighborhood Council for 7 years, Scott fought for abundant and equitable housing in his own community. More recently Scott was proud to earn the endorsement of Abundant Housing LA and a dozen other progressive organizations in his candidacy for LA City Council.

Scott is also active in the Democratic Party, including currently as a board member of the Miracle Mile Democratic Club. He earned a Master of Public Policy degree from Georgetown University and a Bachelor of Arts in Drama from Duke University. Scott lives in Carthay Square with his wife and daughter, and enjoys hiking, biking, exploring LA’s neighborhoods and restaurants, and taking in film and theater.



Ben Lee

Broker, Marcus & Millichap

Ben Lee is an investment sales broker at Marcus & Millichap, the nation’s largest commercial real estate investment firm. He specializes in the sale of development sites and multifamily housing projects, with an emphasis on the middle market and private client segment.

Ben is emerging as one of the leading affordable housing brokers in LA and is particularly focused on bridging the gap between private capital and affordable housing. He recently completed the sale of the largest entitled ED 1 project to date, a 157-unit project in South LA and is actively engaged with developers as they seek to leverage ED 1 as an entitlement tool to reimagine underutilized lots and bring new housing stock to market.



Prior to brokerage, Ben served as the Director of Acquisitions for a New York based private equity firm, focused on acquiring rent-controlled buildings in Brooklyn. Having served both the New York and Los Angeles real estate markets, Ben draws on his previous acquisition experience in high Cost of Living cities to underwrite opportunities and serve as a resource for both privately funded investors and mission driven developers looking to solve for affordability.

Ben received his BA from Baruch College at the City University of New York, with an emphasis on finance. He has been a resident of Palms since moving to Los Angeles and can be found surveying the planning website for development trends and earmarking assemblage opportunities on ZIMAS in his free time.

Kevin J. Keller, AICP

Senior Advisor, Office of Mayor Karen Bass

As Senior Advisor, Kevin oversees the City's implementation of Executive Directive 1, the Mayor's first executive action to expedite affordable housing development approvals and streamline the development process citywide. Kevin coordinates the work of the city's twelve development service departments and has delivered on the Mayor's commitment to approve housing in under 60 days, having overseen the entitlement of more than 8000 housing units alone in the first ten months of the program.

Kevin previously served as Deputy Mayor to Mayor Eric Garcetti, overseeing the City's economic development strategy, planning and development services, tourism, convention center, airports and the Port of Los Angeles. He has a proven ability to work closely with General Managers of related city departments to promote jobs, housing, and investment in Los Angeles.

Kevin is a city planner by training and served as Executive Officer for the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, managing all internal department operations including long range planning, project planning, administration and budget.

Kevin joined the City of Los Angeles in 1999, after receiving his master's degree in urban planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and his undergraduate degree in environmental studies from UCLA. He has served as President of the California Chapter of the American Planning Association and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.





Moderator

Nancy Barba

Planning Commissioner, City of Culver City

Nancy Barba is a Senior Program Manager with Frontier Energy, Inc. Ms. Barba works with utilities and government clients to deliver energy efficiency program design and management, stakeholder and client engagement, and community outreach. Her ability to manage diverse priorities and effective communication skills contribute to her engaged, results-driven leadership. She has worked closely with financial authorities, Regional Energy Networks, and Community Choice Energy implementers leading in program design, implementation, marketing and outreach, financing, measurement and reporting.

Ms. Barba has experience working in both sustainability education and project management. She collaborated in the design of several successful pilots under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grants that are were later funded by the CPUC. Besides program design, Ms. Barba manages costs, schedules, and performance of component projects, while working to ensure the ultimate success and adoption of programs.

As a Los Angeles native, she is actively engaged and committed to a sustainable and equitable future – locally, regionally and globally.
