

# **A Fresh Start**

## **The Villaraigosa Administration** Preliminary / Executive Summary

**May 31, 2005**

# I. A FRESH START: RESTORING HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles is the greatest city in the world. It is the creative capital of the United States. Poised at the gateway to the Pacific Rim, it is home to a breathtakingly diverse population representing every conceivable cultural background and economic circumstance. And for people around the globe, Los Angeles is synonymous with opportunity.

I believe this city represents America's greatest hopes and our biggest challenges.

I am honored and humbled by the confidence the people of Los Angeles have placed in me—and in all who will become part of my administration. We will not let them down. I will work hard every day to create an administration that is innovative, results-oriented, ethical and inclusive of the best and the brightest -- the most diverse and talented array of people committed to our city. Opening City Hall to all Angelenos will be a key to my administration's success.

The goal of my administration is to build bridges between our city's disparate communities and to make the promise of opportunity real for all of our people. I want to unite Los Angeles in a common cause to fix our schools, make our communities safer, bring high quality jobs to LA, end gridlock, and restore trust and confidence in City Hall.

One of the top priorities of my administration will be turning our schools around. I want to build consensus around a fundamental set of rights and responsibilities for children, parents, teachers and administrators. I will work to improve school safety, to make sure that money gets spent in the classroom and not on bureaucracy, and to move the emphasis to providing small, autonomous neighborhood schools.

My administration will work to ensure that children can play without the fear of gangs and gun violence regardless of where they live in Los Angeles. I will work to develop stronger partnerships between police officers and the communities they serve. I will expand community policing. And I will forge a consensus on fully staffing and funding the LAPD.

My administration will be devoted to bringing more high-quality jobs to LA and to seizing the opportunities presented by our city's unique vantage point in the global economy. I will work to expand the growth of emerging industries and to foster the creation of small businesses in Los Angeles.

Our goal is to see a Los Angeles where we all spend more time with our families and less time stuck in traffic. I'll work to implement the small common sense ideas that have been bottlenecked for too long, and I'll fight for the big investments in public transportation that are the hallmark of any great city.

I will work to restore trust in City Hall. I will institute a tough new code of ethics. I'll remove lobbyists from city boards and commissions. And I'll fight for tougher campaign finance laws.

Finally, I will work to engage more people in the life of our city. We are all Angelenos. We all have a contribution to make. And my administration will be dedicated to making sure that we all rise together.

## **Setting the Highest Ethical and Public Service Standards**

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I will have absolutely no tolerance for conduct that does not reflect the high ethical standards of my administration. We are the public's servants. We must set a higher benchmark by our actions to restore the public's faith and trust in the government closest to home. I expect my own staff, our city commissioners and all city employees to adopt a work ethic that is forceful, energetic, customer-oriented and focused on results.

I expect every member of my staff, city commissions and all appointees to act with the utmost efficiency, coupled with respect and consideration for the people of Los Angeles. City Hall will become a place that is known both for getting things done and building for the future. We will measure our success in safer, more livable neighborhoods, in the efficient delivery of city services, and in greater mobility and economic opportunity. City Hall will become an inclusive place where people from South Los Angeles to Sylmar and from the Westside to Boyle Heights feel welcome and trust that their voices will be heard.

## **Facing the Challenges Ahead**

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My administration will think forward, finding solutions to problems that have plagued Los Angeles. We will add more police officers, become an active participant in bettering our schools, create a climate for economic growth, and find innovative transportation solutions to reduce traffic.

As a region, we must adapt to rapidly evolving globalization and its impact on our local economy and transportation networks, as well as the challenges and opportunities globalization presents to our public education system. We must face the new challenge of securing our city and its critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks. We must restore peoples' faith in their government. Ultimately, we must master these challenges to make Los Angeles the leading city of the twenty-first century – what Venice and New York were in centuries past.

Facing these challenges will not be easy, but we can meet and overcome them through determined and energetic focus. We can respond swiftly to the changing world and the developing needs of city residents if we adhere to the principles and values I have expressed and which the voters have embraced.

I have asked you to join this effort because I have confidence in your skills and devotion to the public good and because I believe that you share the priorities and principles expressed here. “A Fresh Start” outlines the key priorities and values that will guide my administration throughout the next four years; other memos in this series will explore these and other issues in greater detail. Together we will work long and hard to give the people of Los Angeles a fresh start...and results.

## II. MY TOP FIVE PRIORITIES FOR LOS ANGELES

Every day my administration will face new challenges competing for attention. We plan to address each of those challenges -- but five issues will be the primary focus during the next four years. I expect my staff and all appointees to concentrate on each of these with all of the determination, talent and creativity we can individually and collectively muster.

### 1. Ethics

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City service is an honor, and with it goes responsibility. I will establish and strictly enforce a very high ethical threshold for my staff and appointees, and I expect an energetic work ethic to get things done. We will focus on results and also be attentive to how we accomplish our goals.

I will pursue a number of initiatives to ensure that a higher citywide ethical standard is applied. These proposals include:

- **Establish the Office of Counsel to the Mayor**  
The Counsel to the Mayor will serve as the Mayor’s top legal advisor and chief ethics officer. This watchdog office within my administration will report directly to me.
- **Strengthen city ethics and campaign finance laws**  
There must be absolutely no question that government serves the people, not old-boy networks and city contractors. I will actively advocate for new ethics and campaign finance laws to increase accountability and enhance public confidence.
- **Remove lobbyists from all City boards and commissions**  
I will remove all lobbyists from City boards and commissions and my administration will not appoint lobbyist to these powerful posts. No one in my administration will be in a position to use his/her commission appointment as a means to further the interests of his/her clients.
- **Require all mayoral staff, department general managers, and commissioners to sign an ethics pledge**  
Everyone serving in my administration needs to acknowledge his/her responsibilities to the residents of Los Angeles. We are all here to serve the public interest, and anyone who fails to adhere to that principle will not be

welcome.

As public servants, we must restore the public's faith in local government through our attentiveness to results and our commitment to ethical standards. If we fail to increase confidence in our local government, all our other achievements will be lost. This goal will be the heart of my administration.

## **2. Public Safety**

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For our city to prosper, every neighborhood must be safe and secure. This security comes from protection against violent crime and gang violence, and it includes terrorism prevention and emergency preparedness activities, adequate fire and ambulance services and respect always for civil rights. I will demand that each of these public safety priorities be improved and enhanced by my administration.

Developing a continuously improving public safety strategy will be a steady and evolving task, involving the Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Fire Department, security experts and the community. Specific proposals and plans will ultimately be crafted, but all of them must be guided by a set of objectives that I will strive to meet.

- **Expand the size of the Los Angeles Police Department**

My administration will be dedicated to finding the resources necessary to add 1,000 new police officers. I inherit a police force that is far smaller, on a per capita basis, than other major urban centers in the United States, including New York, Chicago and Philadelphia. I recently worked with Councilmembers Greig Smith and Jack Weiss to identify funding for 359 police officers from within existing resources. This is a good start, but more is needed. I will do whatever is necessary to provide Chief Bratton and the LAPD with the resources needed to protect the neighborhoods and communities of Los Angeles.

- **Defend Los Angeles against terrorist attacks**

We must reevaluate our preparedness and strengthen our defenses against new global threats. That will require integrating all the resources the city has, from the way we anticipate and minimize threats to our outreach efforts with neighborhoods and residents -- and working more closely with federal and state officials.

- **Enhance fire and ambulance services**

Our Fire Department is second to none, and the LAFD must continue providing excellent emergency medical and firefighting services. We will partner with public safety leadership and frontline service providers to find ways to better use new technologies in this life-preserving work.

- **Prevention and intervention**

As a community, we have to do a much better job of creating and connecting

systematic efforts to prevent violence and gang membership –and intervening when problems arise and violence threatens. I will work with parents, schools, law enforcement, community organizations and city departments and other governmental agencies to provide choices for young people that expand their horizons, offer meaningful job preparation and provide safe learning and recreation options.

- **Improve protections for civil rights**

My administration will work to ensure that the LAPD’s Consent Decree is fully and successfully implemented. With transparency, accountability and oversight, I will demand that safeguards are in place to prevent the repetition of the abuses of the past.

### **3. Education**

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I believe that the future health and vitality of Los Angeles is directly tied to the future health and vitality of our public schools. I believe the bedrock for learning is a safe school environment supported by parents, educators, and the community. I know that teachers are the key, and I believe that every child can learn and achieve at high levels. I intend to be a forceful advocate for education improvement and reform.

I want to use the Mayor’s Office as a powerful tool to lead the way toward improving our schools, raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps. Some of these initiatives will include:

- **Expand the Mayor’s role and responsibilities in education**

I will partner with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), parents, teachers and community stakeholders to expand the Mayor’s role and responsibility in education. Many people have expressed a desire for a single chief executive and I am committed to providing that leadership.

- **Make schools the centers of our communities**

I will use my office to foster opportunities for increased parent involvement. Parents must become more active participants in the learning life of their children.

Schools are currently treated as single use entities and are not fulfilling their potential as community assets. By co-locating public facilities and community services, such as park space, libraries and healthcare providers, schools can elevate their usefulness and serve as centers of community hubs.

- **School safety**

I will work with the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Unified School District, LAUSD Police and parents to ensure that students have safe passage to and from school. We cannot tolerate children being fearful of traveling or going to school.

- **Advocate for smaller schools with increased local control**

I will be an outspoken advocate for smaller schools and greater control of local schools by parents and teachers. I will work to ensure high levels of parent participation in local schools. Rather than concentrating power at the top, I believe that the existing leadership needs to place their trust in the people closest to the children and who best understand their needs.

## 4. Traffic

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There are few issues that directly impact the daily lives of all Angelenos more than traffic congestion and gridlock. I am committed to implementing short-term solutions and long-term planning efforts to provide relief. With an innovative approach to transportation, urban planning and commuting, we can make Los Angeles a more productive, environmentally friendly and inviting place.

There is no single or simple answer to the complex traffic problems facing Los Angeles. I intend to lead a multi-faceted effort that seeks comprehensive solutions to these challenges.

- **Implement short-term solutions**

I will immediately begin work to implement a set of policies and projects to provide immediate traffic relief. With the initial steps of prohibiting rush-hour construction and adding more left-turn signals, commuters will begin to enjoy some immediate relief.

- **Develop a long-term strategic plan for reducing traffic congestion**

Los Angeles needs a comprehensive long-term plan for increasing mobility and relieving traffic congestion, a plan developed in conjunction and alignment with the city's planning, economic development and housing vision and policy-making. In addition to infrastructure improvements, long-term planning must engage employers and the business community to promote flexible work hours, telecommuting and other innovative measures to reduce the number of cars on streets and freeways.

- **Expand and enhance public transportation**

Issues related to public transportation require leadership and regional collaboration, both of which I am ready to offer. The public transportation system in Los Angeles must be expanded and upgraded. Many of these improvements, such as expansion of the light rail system and enhancements to the bus system, will necessitate active involvement on the MTA Board. I likewise intend to be a strong voice in Sacramento and Washington to advocate for more funds to increase mobility and support our myriad and large-scale transit needs for both people and goods. I will ensure that the City of Los Angeles is a full partner in long-range regional transportation planning to address these issues.

## 5. Jobs and the Economy

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In addition to strengthening our public schools, I intend to devote significant time and administration resources to attracting new companies to Los Angeles and partnering with established business leaders and many networks of talented, local and emerging entrepreneurs to help their businesses grow. Through collaborative efforts with the private sector, labor and other levels of government, we will generate new opportunities for economic success and stability for families throughout the city.

Providing assistance to the local business community will be a multi-pronged effort.

- **Revitalize the Mayor’s Business Team**

I will energize and empower the Mayor’s Business Team to ensure it is a powerful force for economic improvement, both in its traditional role working with individual businesses and in a broader role developing coherent strategies and solutions to structural problems that hinder Los Angeles businesses. The Mayor’s Business Team will meet regularly with business and labor leaders to foster real dialogue about economic development in our city; work to connect small businesses with available sources of capital and mentoring; and lead efforts to streamline the city’s relationship with businesses.

- **Create an environment to attract and foster businesses**

Many business leaders have said they find Los Angeles not to be a “business-friendly” city. I want to change that perception. Los Angeles needs to welcome new businesses and encourage our existing business community to grow. To do this, we must identify excessive bureaucratic “red-tape” and revisit unnecessary regulations in hopes of streamlining local laws to encourage business development.

- **Continue efforts to reform the business tax system**

The city has taken initial steps to provide limited business tax relief in Los Angeles, but much more remains to be done. I will continue to work with the City Council and our diverse business community leadership to further reform the city’s system to be fair and competitive with other cities in the region and nation.

## IV. LET’S GET TO WORK

Set forth here are my key priorities. In our dynamic city, we must remember that the landscape in which we operate is constantly changing, new challenges will surely emerge to demand our attention. Together, by drawing on the strengths of our city – our diversity, vibrancy, and creativity – we will confront and overcome these challenges. It

will take everyone – public officials and those who call Los Angeles their home – to propel our city forward. Focusing on the proactive goals outlined here to improve the lives of the people of Los Angeles is a good start. If we remain committed to these priorities and work aggressively to address them, I will be satisfied that we have done what we came here to do.

Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work. Thank you for your partnership, energy and wisdom.

Antonio Villaraigosa  
Mayor-Elect

