The Business Perspective is an award-winning weekly opinion column by Rusty Hammer, President & CEO, LA Area Chamber of Commerce.

This Week

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Coming up at the Chamber

- View all upcoming events on the web calendar.

TUESDAY | Aug. 9
Reeferral Network
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo
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TUESDAY | Aug. 23
Reeferral Network
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo
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WED | Sept. 7
Health Care Committee Meeting
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TUESDAY | Sept. 13
Reeferral Network
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo
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THU | Sept. 15
Environmental Quality Committee Meeting
more info

THU | Sept. 15
Education & Workforce Committee Meeting
more info

FRI | Sept. 16
Accenture Pancakes & Politics
more info

FRI | Sept. 16
Education & Workforce Committee Meeting
more info

FRI | Sept. 16
FRI | Sept. 20
Transportation & Goods Movement Committee Meeting
more info

THU | Sept. 22
Economic Development & Land Use Committee Meeting
more info

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, with more than 1,400 members, is the voice of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information, visit www.lachamber.org.

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In the most recent mayoral election in the city of Los Angeles, voters selected Antonio Villaraigosa in large part because of the personal energy and enthusiasm he displayed and his passion for tackling the many challenges facing the city. In a race where there were few policy differences, it was clear that people were voting for people. In other words, people count.

Mayor Villaraigosa has recognized that selecting good people for top jobs will define his administration and the success he will have as Mayor. From people such as Chief of Staff Robbin Kramer and Deputy Mayor Blad Ovrom to David Fleming and Richard Katz, whom he appointed to serve on the Metro Board, and others, he has shown a keen sense of recruiting qualified and thoughtful people for important jobs.

One open job that needs just such a person is the Director of Planning for the city of Los Angeles, a position in which the planning community has a great deal of interest. The person in this job -- like the highly successful Andrew Adelman, who single-handedly turned around the Department of Building and Safety under Mayors Riordan and Hallen -- will have a great deal to do with determining whether L.A. will continue to have a growing economy. Will we have a planning process that encourages and facilitates quality development, or will we stifle it? That is what the appointment of this person will determine.

We believe that Mayor Villaraigosa needs to recruit someone with the following characteristics:

- **Vision**: promoting a clear and simple vision for the future of the city that is consistent with that of the Mayor and City Council.
- **Understanding**: appreciating the relationships between land use, transportation, neighborhoods and economic growth.
- **Leadership**: organizing staff, other city departments and other local city and county governments to address common issues on a region-wide basis.
- **Consensus-building**: demonstrating a familiarity and ability to work with diverse constituents including business, labor, environmentalists and neighborhood groups.
- **Courage**: showing a willingness to stand up for and articulate good planning policy.
- **Ethics**: displaying the highest of ethics in all of his/her public dealings.

Speaking of the Building & Safety Department, should it be merged with the Department of Planning to reduce red tape? Or would that result in a larger, more bureaucratic department? I don’t have the answer, but this is something that should at least be considered. We need more people at City Hall who are results-oriented and are prepared to make decisions that might seem unpopular now, but will pay dividends for the city later.

In the meantime, we believe someone at the Planning Department who brings these values to office will be a successful planning director, and we hope that is exactly what the mayor is looking for.

But more importantly, we need leadership at City Hall that won’t politicize the job and jeopardize smart planning.

And that’s the Business Perspective.

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