

## LOS ANGELES

## Mayor may use fees for housing goals

Subsidized home plan could raise \$100 million a year from developers' projects.

By PETER JAMISON

Mayor Eric Garcetti announced Friday that he wants to impose new fees on developers that could raise more than \$100 million a year to subsidize affordable housing in Los Angeles, where residents are struggling with runaway rents and home prices.

Speaking at a conference at UCLA hosted by the Los Angeles Business Council, Garcetti said his administration will lead an effort to levy "linkage fees" on developers based on the size of new projects in the city. Such assessments are intended to offset upward pressure on housing costs from new commercial or residential development.

The mayor offered few details of the proposed fee. His staff said that basic details of the plan — such as the amounts developers would pay, how the fees would be calculated and what types of projects would be assessed — are being worked out.

The city planning department will prepare a study on those issues, Garcetti said. The City Council would have to approve any new fees.

"My commitment to you is that we are going to do this the right way," Garcetti said Friday.

Linkage fees, a relatively arcane but potentially lucrative source of affordable-housing funds, already exist in cities including San Francisco. The fees are usually charged based on the size of a development, measured by unit or by square foot. Cities can levy linkage fees only after demonstrating that a development will generate a spike in housing demand.

A 2011 study commissioned by city officials found that a citywide linkage fee, depending on its rate, could generate \$40 million to \$110 million a year. Although the city did not opt to establish linkage fees then, Garcetti said L.A.'s surge in homelessness and a severe shortage of affordable housing make this the moment to move forward.

"I knew the time was right when a couple developers came to me this summer, separately, and said, 'Please, will you charge me something?' Not something you used to hear from a developer," Garcetti said.

Not all real estate developers are likely to give the fees such a warm welcome. Tim Piasky, head of the Building Industry Assn. in L.A. and Ventura counties, said Friday that he has concerns about linkage fees.

"Generally speaking, my concern with any fees on new development would be what's going to be the impact to the project for renters or homebuyers? That cost is going to get passed on," he said.

Likewise, Mary Leslie, president of the L.A. Business Council, said she would need more information before offering an opinion on Garcetti's plans.

Although the city needs a new source of revenue to fund affordable housing, she said, "we don't necessarily know that this is the right one."

The mayor's announcement came at the business council's annual summit on housing, transportation and jobs. At last year's summit, Garcetti set a goal of adding 100,000 units of new housing in L.A. by 2021. He said the city has issued permits for about 30,000 units since he took office in 2013.

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Photographs by MICHAEL ROBINSON CHAVEZ Los Angeles Times

**A BETTER CHANCE** held a fair Sunday at Occidental College to help students navigate the prep school process. Above, Ashley Alvarez, 13, right, participates in a mock interview with alumna Leslie Poston.

## NONPROFIT GIVES STUDENTS A SHOT

### A Better Chance helps kids of color meet college prep schools reps and hone their interview skills

By TONY BARBOZA

Ashley Alvarez is being modest when she says, "I get mostly straight A's."

The eighth-grader at KIPP Scholar Academy in South Los Angeles has been the top student in her class every year since fifth grade. The only blemish on her transcript is a B+.

"It was 89.8," she says.

Next year, Ashley, 13, hopes to start high school at one of the most selective boarding schools in the nation.

On Sunday, she was one of dozens of well-dressed Southern California middle-schoolers attending a fair at Occidental College to hone their interviewing skills and meet representatives from college preparatory schools across the nation. The event is put on each fall by A Better Chance, a nonprofit that helps students of color apply to private boarding schools, day schools and top-ranked public schools across the country.

As recruiters stand behind tables covered with banners, pennants and glossy brochures, Ashley makes a beeline for the displays of Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, the Thacher School in Ojai and a few others she has been eyeing.

She quizzes the schools' representatives about student-to-teacher ratios, financial aid and how they would support her college plans. She shakes their hands and writes down information on a card.

Ashley is the type of talent these schools are looking for: bright and motivated with exceptional grades and high ambitions (Hers: Go to an Ivy League college. Study political science, then law. One day, become a judge).

Accompanying Ashley were her father, an auto mechanic, and her older sister, a student at Cal State Northridge. They support her plans but don't know how the family will pay for boarding school — which can



**ASHLEY ALVAREZ**, who attends KIPP Scholar Academy, and her older sister Jessica Trujillo speak to a boarding school recruiter.

cost more than \$45,000 a year — without a lot of financial aid.

The program does not include a scholarship.

"It's a constant worry," said Ashley's 20-year-old sister, Jessica Trujillo. "What if she gets accepted and we can't afford it?"

Students submit transcripts, essays and letters of recommendation to A Better Chance, which prescreens the candidates and helps match them with elite schools. Participants in the competitive program are generally among the top students at their middle schools. Most are black and Latino, and many are from low-income and single-parent families.

For part of the day, each student is paired with a volunteer for a mock high-school admissions interview.

Leslie Poston, a 1996 alumna of A Better Chance, sits across a table from Ashley and asks her a rapid se-

ries of questions: What are her academic strengths? How would she feel about being one of the only students of color at a boarding school? Are her parents supportive?

Her strongest subject is English, Ashley says. She wants to attend boarding school for the academic rigor "and the risk of being alone and independent." She is up to the challenge because "I'm a self-motivated person. I have drive." Her mother is nervous about her going away, "but she says I'm her little bird and it's time for me to spread my wings."

After about 30 minutes, Poston evaluates Ashley's performance on a rubric sheet, marking points for verbal expression, preparation, dress and other criteria on a 5-point scale.

She got all 5s, Poston tells her. "A perfect score."

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## Schiff sings the blues after Dodgers lose

### As a result of baseball bet, congressman croons Mets' fight song on House floor

By RYAN FONSECA

A deal is a deal, and that's why Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank) took to the House floor to fulfill his end of a baseball bargain with Rep. Steve Israel (D-New York) by singing "Meet the Mets."

The two congressmen had placed a friendly wager on which of their hometown baseball teams — Schiff's Los Angeles Dodgers and Israel's New York Mets — would advance to the National League Championship Series.

The Mets took the series, 3-2. In addition to wagering a



C-SPAN

**REP. ADAM SCHIFF** wears a Mets tie Friday because he lost a bet with Rep. Steve Israel of New York.

local treat from each district — Schiff bet gourmet popcorn from Pauline's Premier Sweets in Burbank, and Israel wagered New York bagels flown in fresh — the loser also agreed to wear a tie featuring the winning team and give a one-minute speech on the House floor "extolling the virtues of the team moving on to the next playoff round," according to a news release.

On Friday, Schiff donned a Mets tie and gave his speech on the House floor, first explaining that the Mets had beaten the Dodgers in the division series.

"I will have no interest

in extending my remarks," Schiff said. "I lost a bet with Congressman Israel, so now, Steve, this song is for you."

Schiff then began his rendition of the New York team's fight song, "Meet the Mets."

"Mr. Speaker, please tell me my time is expired," Schiff quipped several verses in.

He ended by saying he was thankful the Mets had advanced to the World Series instead of the New York Yankees.

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## 10 ARE CITED BY U.S. IN LENS SALES

Ten vendors sold decorative contacts for Halloween without prescriptions, U.S. attorney says.

By MATT STEVENS

The U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles last week charged 10 Southern California vendors with misdemeanor offenses as part of its Operation Fright Night, alleging they had sold decorative contact lenses without requiring a prescription.

Some of the products — marketed under names such as Wonder Look and Red Rose — were found to be "contaminated with dangerous pathogens that can cause eye injury, blindness and loss of the eye," according to a Department of Justice statement.

"These products pose a serious danger to unsuspecting Halloween shoppers, and those who have already purchased these products should not use them," U.S. Atty. Eileen M. Decker said in the statement. "As required by the law, contact lenses should be used only when they are prescribed by a knowledgeable medical professional."

The defendants own stores throughout the region — including Ventura, San Bernardino, Chino Hills and downtown L.A. Some of those charged own beauty supply stores, and others own shops inside mini-malls, prosecutors said.

Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney in Los Angeles, said some of the stores sold the contact lenses year-round, though many of the products are marketed specifically around Halloween. In some cases, stores had hundreds of the products on display, he said.

"People are looking to come up with the ultimate costume, to accessorize their outfit, but they are really putting themselves in danger by using these products," Mrozek said.

At this point, he said, prosecutors have targeted only retail establishments. But "we are continuing to investigate the supply chain, and I believe additional cases will be forthcoming in the coming weeks."

All charges filed as part of the operation carry a maximum penalty of one year in federal prison and fines of up to \$100,000 for an individual and up to \$200,000 for a corporation, the Department of Justice statement said.

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