

MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI
City of Los Angeles

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 1, 2015

CONTACTS

Yusef Robb, Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti
[323-384-1789](tel:323-384-1789) (cell) | [213-978-0741](tel:213-978-0741)
yusef.robblacity.org

Rob Wilcox, Office of City Attorney Mike Feuer
[213-215-2707](tel:213-215-2707) (cell) | [\(213\)978-8377_rob.wilcox@lacity.org](mailto:(213)978-8377_rob.wilcox@lacity.org)

Ed Johnson, Office of Council President Herb Wesson
[213-473-7010](tel:213-473-7010) | [310-283-3750](tel:310-283-3750) (cell)
edw.johnson@lacity.org

Ian Thompson, Office of Councilmember Paul Krekorian
[310-490-8595](tel:310-490-8595) (cell) | [213-473-7002](tel:213-473-7002)
ian.thompson@lacity.org

WILLITS V. CITY OF LA SIDEWALK SETTLEMENT ANNOUNCED

LOS ANGELES -- An agreement to resolve the Willits v. City of Los Angeles case was reached today that will result in a more than \$1 billion investment in city sidewalk repairs and other pedestrian improvements.

The class action sought to ensure better access for persons with mobility disabilities to the city's sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks, pedestrian crossings and other walkways.

Plaintiffs included Mark Willits, Judy Griffin, Brent Pilgreen, and Communities Actively Living Independent and Free ("CALIF"). They were represented by a team of lawyers led by Guy Wallace of Schneider Wallace Cottrell Konecky Wotkyns, LLP, Linda M. Dardarian of Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian and Ho, Jinny Kim of the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center, and Anna Rivera of Disability Rights Legal Center.

The City of Los Angeles was represented by City Attorney Mike Feuer and Chief Deputy City Attorney Jim Clark, Assistant City Attorney Laurie Rittenberg, and the City's outside Counsel Kevin Gilbert of Lozano Smith, and Christopher Wong and David Raizman of Ogletree, Deakins.

In addition, the Mayor's Office, City Council President Herb Wesson, City Council Members Paul Krekorian and Joe Buscaino, and City Administrative Officer Miguel Santana all played key roles in the shaping of the agreement.

Plaintiffs' lead counsel Guy Wallace said, "This \$1.4 billion settlement is the largest disability access class action settlement in U.S. history. It will make the City's sidewalk system accessible to persons with mobility disabilities. It will install curb ramps throughout the City, fix sidewalks

that are broken and torn up by tree roots, install accessible sidewalks where they do not exist, and remove many other barriers. By making the City's sidewalks and crosswalks accessible, this settlement will make it much easier for persons with mobility disabilities to get to and use government facilities, to find or get to jobs and workplaces, to go shopping, to go to the doctor, to participate in community life, and to be with their friends and families.

"Under the settlement, people with disabilities will also be able to make requests for access fixes in their own neighborhoods, such as for curb ramp installation, or tree root repairs. Over the course of the settlement, the City's sidewalks will be transformed. And the lives of persons with mobility disabilities will be made a lot better. We are very thankful to Mayor Eric Garcetti, City Attorney Mike Feuer, Chief Deputy City Attorney Jim Clark, City Administrative Officer Miguel Santana and all of the City officials who have made this outstanding and historic result possible."

Lilibeth Navarro, Executive Director of CALIF, said, "This settlement vindicates the central purposes of the ADA: access, independence and equality. In Los Angeles, for too long, wheelchair users and people with other types of mobility disabilities have been forced to struggle with curbs that don't have curb ramps, sidewalks that are broken and torn up, and crosswalks that are filled with potholes and cracks. We are pleased that the City has finally made a real commitment to making its public sidewalk system accessible. Now people with mobility disabilities will be able to go where they need to go, and also where they want to go. That is what the ADA is all about."

Linda Dardarian, said "This historic agreement shows what can be accomplished when the City and its residents work together to solve chronic, systemic, seemingly intractable problems. The City's sidewalks have been deteriorating for decades, but due to the dedication and commitment of the City and the community of people with mobility disabilities, this trend is being reversed, to the benefit of everyone who lives in or visits Los Angeles."

"This agreement shows how we are changing the way we do business at City Hall and are getting back to basics," said Mayor Eric Garcetti. "Instead of fighting against fixing our sidewalks, we came to the table to reach an agreement to invest more than a billion dollars in our sidewalk infrastructure – which will improve access and safety, and boost property values and neighborhood pride."

"Today we make an ironclad long-term commitment to repair L.A.'s broken sidewalks," said City Attorney Mike Feuer. "It's so much better to prevent residents from being injured in the first place than to react after the fact. This settlement directs taxpayer dollars to where they belong: solving one of our City's most longstanding problems."

"This historic settlement is good news. After five years of litigation, we can now look to the future and what will be achieved to enhance the quality of life for everyone in the City of Los Angeles," said Council President Herb Wesson.

"This settlement is an enormous step forward for the City of Los Angeles and its residents," said Councilmember Paul Krekorian, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee. "For decades,

buckled sidewalks have plagued neighborhoods from the San Fernando Valley to the South Bay. All of that is going to change starting today with the city's historic commitment to fix our sidewalks and make them accessible to everyone. I have been intimately involved in this case from day one and will continue to work with the Mayor, the City Attorney and my colleagues on the City Council to achieve our goal of implementing a comprehensive sidewalk repair program that improves every community in this great city."

"As chairman of the Public Works committee, I have been committed to finding solutions to fixing our streets and sidewalks since my first day on the Los Angeles City Council," said Councilmember Joe Buscaino. "The settlement of this lawsuit is a win for not only the mobility impaired, but for all Angelenos as it finally requires the city to fix its broken sidewalks. There are no losers here. I look forward to hearing from the public as we develop the details in the Public Works Committee on how residents can submit repair requests, which locations to prioritize and how quickly we can start the work."

The agreement calls for a \$1.4 billion investment in the city's sidewalks and other walkways over the next 30 fiscal years, starting at the beginning of FY 15-16. Annual investments will range from \$31 million during the next five years to more than \$63 million in years 26 to 30. The amounts increase over time to ensure value is not lost due to inflation.

The settlement proposal will now go to the supervising court for approval and ultimate implementation.