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Candidate Jose Gardea Answers Questions at Mount Washington Association Meeting

Gardea states opposition to 710 Freeway Extension and pledges to work to reopen Southwest Museum.

By [David Fonseca](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 18, 2012

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What attendees hoped would be a debate between the two leading candidates for the Los Angeles City Council district that represents Highland Park and Mount Washington turned out to be a question and answer session candidate José Gardea.

The longtime Chief of Staff for current CD1 Councilmember Ed Reyes went before the Mount Washington Association at the Jack and Denny Smith Community Center solo on Monday evening, with challenger Assemblymember Gil Cedillo stating that he had a prior commitment and could not attend.

According to Mount Washington Association member and event organizer Carol Jacques, Cedillo said it was still too early to participate in a debate.

Instead, the crowd of about 25 who attended the meeting learned about Gardea's childhood in the MacArthur Park area, his career in public service alongside Reyes, and what he referred to as his three campaign pillars: constituent services, budget accountability and land use.

Audience members were also able to quiz Gardea on his stances on issues ranging from the [710 Freeway extension](#), [to public safety](#), to the [Southwest Museum](#) to attracting businesses to Northeast LA.

On Working With Neighborhood Councils:

We don't see ourselves as over them. We don't see them as having to report to us. We just don't see that kind of partnership. We really do consider them partners in our neighborhoods.

It's been a hit and miss experiment; the reasons are multiple. One of them is resources. I don't think as a city we've put the resources needed into neighborhood council development. I think they've done a good job developing into neighborhood institutions, but I don't think the nurturing has been there.

On Preserving the LA River:

We wanted to create a big stage, to give the sense that The LA River is not just about the Northeast, it's about the waterline, the lifeline of the city. We wanted to create a big stage, and as a result the river master plan came from that effort. It's a long-term effort that will require resources and patience. I'm committed to making sure that moving forward the city will continue to be a strong partner in developing the river.

On Attracting Businesses to Northeast LA:

[LA] is a city of mom and pop businesses. Just because we talk about Farmers' Field Downtown and the 17,000 or 18,000 jobs it will create, don't believe that is the cure all. It isn't. When it comes to building businesses and really enhancing our economic environment, its not just about the football stadiums. It has to be a multiple approach.

If we start with mom and pops, then we need to create an environment where we have a one-stop. So if you come tomorrow and say you want to start a business, I'm gonna give you one location and you're on your way.

On How He Compares to Ed Reyes:

The fact that I've been his Chief of Staff since day one is interesting because Chiefs of Staff don't last that long. I think I've lasted because of the relationship, the partnership that we've forged together to really work to bring resources into the neighborhoods.

Ed is an urban planner by training, very much a policy wonk. I'm a community organizer, by training. My perspective would bit more community driven, working with communities to make projects a reality. We do that now, but I think our focus would be much more on community organizing, without forgetting that at the end of the day it's all about constituent services, it's about budget planning and it's about good land use.

On the [Southwest Museum](#):

I think in this city we haven't done our job well enough. As much as we consider the Southwest Museum a treasure for the Northeast, it really should be a treasure for the entire city. Our challenge here is to make sure the entire city recognizes that we should not treat our first museum as a closed museum. So we need to work toward reopening the museum -- making sure the collection is part of the reopened museum.

On the [Veterans Square Memorial](#):

It's a really interesting project because it reflects a lot of the issues we deal with in the city. What are the issues? Beautification. Preservation. Homelessness. Crime. Lack of open space. We have an opportunity here to sit in a room as a community and gameplan for everyone of those items. That's the opportunity before us. We're gonna spend some time developing something that is appropriate to the veterans, because we have to keep in mind that it's a sacred space. But we also want to make sure we'r ecreative enough to deal with some fo the blight associate with that area and really bring some open space back. At the same time, we need to continue to work with our homeless agencies to continue to address the issue of homelessness.

On his opponent, Gil Cedillo:

Something interesting is happening across the city for these March elections. We're electing a new mayor and we're electing six new council members. Across the city you're seeing this re-shifting of politicians from Sacramento to local municipalities, and Los Angeles is not immune to that.

My perspective does begin at the neighborhood level, and I've been criticized for that. We are a city, we are one city without a doubt, but we are a city of neighborhoods. And I think we can build our neighborhoods, make them safer, make them cleaner, and as a result we'll have a better city. But when I talk about public safety, or budget accountability or land use, those are city wide issues. Because when we protect Highland Park though land use, those are tools Northridge can use.

On Public Safety:

In my experience, it begins with knowing your neighbors, and it begins with participating in groups like the Mount Washington Association. I will show you example after example where you begin with three or four neighbors who are afraid of their neighborhood, but if you bring them together with more neighbors, that level of safety goes up.

You're going to find, in me, an elected official who is going to focus on putting part of this resources into neighborhood groups to continue to grow the network of outreach. I think we need to have a serious discussion in Northeast about our police division. A lot of you know that our division is one of the largest in the city. That police car that comes to your door in Mount Washington come from Glassell Park or Los Feliz. There are times when we don't have enough police cars. It's tough to accept that we don't have that kind of coverage. I think as a community we need to have a discussion about our police division and perhaps making it smaller.

On the 710:

I'm absolutely against it. When you look at a project like the tunnel project and the alternatives that are proposed, you're looking at bad planning. You're not working with community, you're not working with neighborhoods. It's just contrary to what we believe in in terms of good planning. It's easy for for me to say I'm opposed to it. You can talk about job creation, you can talk about moving cargo, but it doesn't replace good planning. So, I'm against it, and I'll do whatever I can in my power to fight any other "good ideas" they may have.

On [Medical Marijuana](#):

As currently distributed, I'm against it.

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nonoise

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7:06 am on Wednesday, September 19, 2012

Don't vote for anyone that worked for "do nothing Reyes".

Look at what he says about neighborhood councils, " We don't see them as having to report to us. We just don't see that kind of partnership. We really do consider them partners in our neighborhoods. What? We do not see that kind of partnership but then he says they are partners?"

Councilmember Ed Reyes, "do nothing Reyes" has not been involved in neighborhood councils. Now all of a sudden in his last months in office he is quickly trying to do something to leave a legacy. Sorry, that is 12 years too late.

Don't vote for anyone that works for "do nothing Reyes". Employees that work for him also have done nothing. And, don't vote for anyone that wears permanent eye liner either (Cedillo).



The MOG

7:10 am on Wednesday, September 19, 2012

@nonoise, I'm with you! I like your last comment on "One Bill" Gil, too. LOL!

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David Fonseca

9:34 am on Wednesday, September 19, 2012

Susan, I think what Gardea meant to say is that he does not envision a partnership in which neighborhood councils are below the council office and are required to "report" to them, and instead one in which they are more like equals. Perhaps I could have made that clearer.

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nonoise

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7:52 am on Wednesday, September 19, 2012

If you haven't seen Cedillo in person it is a MUST!! Clown face is putting it nicely. He was the one that wanted it that way. Go figure.

And, here is an article about "do nothing Reyes".

http://www.laobserved.com/biz/2012/09/still_no_urgency_fro.php

nonoise

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7:55 am on Wednesday, September 19, 2012

You should have seen Reyes staff person at last night's Greater Cypress Park neighborhood council meeting. He is begging for help so that Reyes can do SOMETHING in his last months in office. Of course, I had to ask where was he the last 12 years. Of course, I got no answer from his staff