Sherri and Jeanne belong to the Mar Vista Community Council where they serve as the Co-Chairs of the MVCC Green Committee.

They met four years ago when Jeanne was tabling about sustainability at the Mar Vista Farmers Market and Sherri stopped to talk about local issues. When they heard that the Mar Vista Community Council was organizing a Green Committee they jumped at the chance to get involved and to work with founder Laura Bodenstein.

“Our goal was to inspire the community to embrace sustainability,” reports Sherri, “and we quickly learned that the community shares our passion and that the Council involvement amplifies our voices and allows us to have influence with City Hall.”

Sherri and Jeanne are best known for the annual Mar Vista Green Garden Showcase and the weekly Green Tent at the Mar Vista Farmers Market. “Both give us the opportunity to bring important environmental issues to the community,” says Sherri “and we are able to do outreach and education and demonstrate to our Board and thus to City Hall that there is strong community support. This has allowed us to take an active role to push for legislation on a wide range of issues – the LID ordinance, banning plastic bags and Styrofoam, legalizing urban beekeeping, creating a plan for solar feed in tariffs and more. The beauty of this is that people are busy and getting them out to a meeting or screening can be challenging. The tour and the tent bring these issues to them. We’re particularly proud of using an MVCC grant to hold a Sustainable Works Green Living Workshop pilot program. This was so impactful to our community that Bill Rosendhal awarded them an LADWP grant to hold an LA pilot of 5 more workshop series as well as a Business Green program pilot. Our goal is to follow the lead of Santa Monica and these programs widely available throughout Los Angeles. As we gain support on issues and for organizations, we also introduce them to other NC’s. The ultimate goal is that when the issue reaches the City Council, each Council Member has seen support within their district.”

Sherri and Jeanne are proud of their partnership and of their relationship with the Community Council. “It’s truly one of our best tools in the environmental community. It starts with just a few people and it grows organically. Free blogs and social media allow you to quickly connect with the community. We are eager to meet like minded members of other NC’s and share best practices. We’ll happily share what has worked for us to help other NC’s build Green Committees and would love to learn from their experiences as well!”
Cindy Cleghorn belongs to the Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council where she serves as the Secretary and Deputy Chair of the Land Use Committee.

Cindy has been involved with her Neighborhood Council since before it was certified, helping to organize the Council from 2001 to 2003. She was elected to the first Sunland-Tujunga Board in 2003 and has served as the President and as the Secretary.

In addition to working with her local community, Cindy served as a Commissioner on the Neighborhood Council Review Commission and is currently one of the driving forces in the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils and in PlanCheck LA.

When asked what motivated her to get involved with her Neighborhood Council, Cindy reports that she had just moved her business to Tujunga and she needed community support in order to get approval for the change of use. Once she experienced the tremendous power of the community’s influence, she decided to learn more and to work with other groups and organizations to improve Sunland-Tujunga over time.

Cindy is proud of the impact her Council has had in bringing the community together, creating coalitions of neighborhood groups that effectively organize resist bad development such as the Home Depot in Sunland-Tujunga while supporting good economic growth with businesses that the community wants and needs such as Starbucks and Fresh & Easy.

Through it all, Cindy is especially proud that well-organized community outreach saved the Weatherolde Castle from demolition and that the community was able to keep the 4th of July Fireworks Celebration with proceeds going back to the local High School Students.

Most of all, Cindy reports “Sunland-Tujunga drafted the first Interim Control Ordinance limiting the size of homes built on small lots and now has the first RFA (Residential Floor Area) ordinance, community outreach to save Weatherolde Castle from demolition.”

Cindy is a tireless advocate for Neighborhood Councils and is currently chairing the 2012 Congress of Neighborhoods Committee which is a citywide event that brings all Councils together at City Hall.

“NCs are a great growing experience” Cindy declares, “where you meet extraordinary people and united, make a difference in your community.”
Eric DeSobe is the President of the Board of Directors for the Del Rey Neighborhood Council, a position that he has held since 2010. Prior to that he served as the Secretary for the Council and he intends to run for the position of President in the upcoming Board elections in October. Why? Because it works!

When asked what prompted him to get involved with the Council, Eric looked back and reflected “I’m a former 4th grade teacher in Compton. I always encouraged my students to be involved in their community and changing it for the better. I took my own advice and joined the Del Rey NC initially to support education initiatives.”

When asked about any memorable success stories from his Council, Eric responded “There are many! But the one that resonates most with me is the an event our Board created called the Del Rey Cup. Our Council uses this outreach sponsorship to host a youth soccer tournament in Mar Vista Gardens, the west side’s only housing development. In the past two years residents at the Gardens worked hard to secure improvements to their recreational facilities including installing lights on their soccer and baseball field. So, our Council put on the tournament and held the opening game under the lights. Nearly 100 residents cheered on the teams, met their Council representatives, and received free school supplies. The now annual event expanded last year to include a handball tournament and even more teams. Events like the Del Rey Cup show what’s possible when community members work together and create meaningful programming.”

Eric says his Council “strives to ‘put neighbor back into neighborhood.’ To us that means making Del Rey about personal connections and from those connections we listen to people’s needs, ideas, and concerns and then create real, positive change. Sometimes that means installing just one street or stop sign. Sometimes it’s means beautifying large public spaces for everyone to enjoy. What drives us is that lasting, personal connection so please join your neighborhood council today and put neighbor back into your neighborhood.”

The Del Rey Neighborhood Council is preparing for their upcoming elections by telling their story in person, online, in print, and in this YouTube video that Eric created.
Valerie Watson is an At-Large Director on the Board of the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) where she serves as the Chair of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Committee, as a Committee Member of the Planning & Land Use Committee, and as a Convener for the Complete Streets Working Group.

Three years ago, Patti Berman, the current DLANC President, invited Valerie to join a Parks Committee meeting and once Valerie experienced how wonderful it is to get projects moving, she decided to run for election to the Board and to take on more of a leadership role.

Valerie plastered Downtown with flyers and was overjoyed at the support she received from friends, coworkers, and perfect strangers.

DLANC has much to be proud of, including the installation of the Spring Street Green Buffered Bike Lane. Valerie calls it “A true collaboration! The group of residents, stakeholders, and talented design professionals we convened to work on improving Downtown streets for people who walk, bike, take transit, work and do business, the Complete Streets Working Group, was able to really make a difference in getting this innovative bike lane on the ground.”

Valerie attributes the success of the Spring Street Green Buffered Bike Lane to a great partnership with “LADOT, Councilmembers Perry and Huizar, the Mayor’s office, the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, and many others to create a public information campaign and outreach strategy to make sure the design and installation process went as smoothly as possible.”

This success story is no small feat, after all it’s a first for Downtown streets, a project that establishes a design standard for other streets.

Valerie reports “It’s really remarkable how different Spring Street feels now – traffic is flowing in a more calm, orderly way, and it’s a noticeable sidewalk buffer for the west side of Spring. This effort has paved the way for more bike lanes to come – with the further expansion of the Downtown Bike Network this summer. This first step toward more balanced streets also enables us to install even more innovative design elements like parklets, impossible before due to peak-hour parking restrictions which are now lifted with the bike lanes coming in. In this sense, DLANC has been able to effectively shape and promote City policy that will help raise the bar for neighborhood design in DTLA and all over Los Angeles.”

When asked to reflect on her Neighborhood Council experience, Valerie responded “What I love most about offering my time to my neighborhood is the opportunity it gives me to work with such a diverse array of amazing, passionate, talented, and wildly interesting people – folks I would never otherwise talk to or come across in my day-to-day life. That has been the most enriching aspect of my involvement with DLANC. I strongly encourage anyone to get involved in any way they can, big or small. You will be richly rewarded.”