

Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. Applicant

Arthur Jeon

Application Date: 02/19/21

Reside in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 29 years

Work in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 29

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

As this is my first foray into service for Santa Monica, I have no prior experience with City Boards or Commissions. That said, I feel Santa Monica is at a crucial juncture in setting its course for the future and I would like to volunteer my leadership, communication skills, and time to help "reimagine public safety and wellbeing," and our vision of downtown.

Community activities:

Founding member of The Compassion Prison Project which included setting the agenda, strategy, and vision for the 501c3 organization. Specifically, we worked with incarcerated men at Kern Valley State Prison (and others), teaching trauma awareness, meditation, personal responsibility, and life skills to people who, after serving long sentences in maximum security, are getting ready to be released. (www.compassionprisonproject.org).

Co-founder of Global Animal, a foundation that acts as a Red Cross for animals in emergency need around the world. From hurricanes in the South to Wildfires in California to Tsunamis in Japan, we raise money through our online magazine and pass 100% of the funds to vetted organizations rescuing animals on the ground. (www.compassionprisonproject.org).

Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:

See other questions for qualifications and experience. My education is:

Undergraduate (Humanities): Harvard University

Grad School (MFA): USC Film School

Areas of demonstrated expertise:

- 1.) Head of Strategy for Compassion Prison Project, Om Base Productions, and Global Animal.
- 2.) Twenty years in the film industry, both as a writer and then running my production company.
- 3.) Fundraising for two 501c3 nonprofits: Compassion Prison Projects and Global Animal.

- 4.) The definition of what we did in CPP.
- 5.) Policy, mission statements, strategy for Om Base Productions, and the above nonprofits.
- 6.) None
- 7.) Created "Walk for the Underdog" events for four years running, a huge dog adoption event which included organizing venue, music, stages, vendors, and 45 dog rescues that attended. Not to mention the five hundred dogs walking their owners around the La Brea Tar Pits.
- 8.) Worked my way through college as a manager of restaurants and bars in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles.
- 9.) No experience beyond creating budgets for productions filming around the world.
- 10.) No experience.
- 11.) Before film school, I worked in advertising as a creative director for two firms in Boston.
- 12.) I have deep knowledge and love of Santa Monica, but no specific knowledge of Civic/Pier/Arts
- 13.) No experience beyond loving our library. Very concerned it has turned into a de facto homeless shelter and feel that setting up a day bed program would be a better option.

Goals:

As a creative person who has worked in advertising, film, and the nonprofit world, often in organizations I've created, my goal is to bring outside-the-box thinking to the many challenging issues we face in Santa Monica. The two areas that interest me are public safety and the downtown resurrection. They are intertwined challenges if we are to reclaim our two billion dollar tourism industry. Sadly, Santa Monica's increasing reputation as a dirty, dangerous place, where visitors will be confronted by intoxicated and/or criminal transients and depressing cases of need – on the promenade, pier, bluffs, and the rest of our commons – is growing. In addition to this, Malls around the country are shuttering under the pressure of online sales and Covid, which means the promenade needs to be completely rethought. We must become a destination that provides something more than shopping, but also a happy, safe and clean environment for people to gather and partake of experiences (restaurants, live theater, bars, and nightclubs), as well as housing above to keep the place populated. The era of the big chain stores is over, as the pre-Covid disappearance of Borders, Banana Republic, etc. has shown. So populate the promenade with boutiques that are local and cool, rather than the generic brands that can be found in any city in the country.

As you can see, I have many ideas. We are a talented, wealthy city with an incredible population to tap to help turn things around. What we need is a new vision of what we want to become and how to take advantage of the pent-up need people will have to be together once the pandemic ends.

Vision:

A clean, safe city that people want to visit from around the world, while also being a wonderful place to live. Thirteen years ago the NY Times featured us as one of the top beach destinations in the world

(under the title: Classic Beach, but Much More):

<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/22/travel/escapes/22american.html>

Where are we today? Where do we want to be tomorrow?

Personal Qualities:

I believe volunteering is a two-way street and important to a rounded and fulfilling life.

Creating two nonprofit organizations from scratch has taught me to be an active listener who leads with practical compassion (Random House has published two of my books on the subject). Helping to found Compassion Prison Project and walking into Kern Valley State Prison for the first time with a skeptical audience and downright hostile Corrections Officers was an exercise in creativity, innovation, and persuasion that could fill a book. The only way it worked was a 360° approach, taking in the trauma of the incarcerated AND the Corrections Officers. Often, they felt like two sides of the same coin, both experiencing PTSD, both desperate for change, not dissimilar to our policing situation. Gradually, after a year of regularly showing up, attitudes slowly transformed. The work took five hours of driving back and forth (and 8-hour sessions inside) but was incredibly rewarding. When Covid-19 hit and we weren't allowed into the prisons, we shifted to setting up a trauma awareness curriculum via ZOOM, based on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE scores). We adapted and were able to continue our program, as well as supporting released people on parole.

My business life as a writer/producer has taught me to look for practical solutions that work, bringing together teams of disparate people to row in the same direction for a greater good. Producing is also nonstop emergency management and creative problem-solving under intense pressure. It often requires bringing two sides together and seeing everybody's perspective. My mindfulness training has been instrumental in dropping my conditioning (and agendas) and seeing reality clearly. I feel I would be an excellent balance to people who only see things black and white.

Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?

yes

How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)

On the City's website (smgov.net or santamonica.gov)

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Occupation: Writer/Producer

Business name: Om Base Productions

Business address:

Business phone:

