# Commonly Asked Questions about the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project

The City of West Hollywood is undertaking a capital improvement project to develop premiere public facilities, parks and open space. The 25th Anniversary Capital Project, which was launched in 2009, includes three major components:

1) The implementation of **Phase I of the West Hollywood Park Master Plan** (which includes the new **West Hollywood Library** that was completed in October 2011);

2) **West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project**; and

3) Implementation of **Phase I of the Plummer Park Master Plan**.

## What is the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project?

The West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project includes the construction of a 200-space automated parking garage with an estimated 7,000 square foot community plaza and entry service area. The automated garage will help answer the city's chronic need for parking by serving the parking needs of visitors, neighboring residents, businesses in the surrounding area as well as City employees during the day. It will offer much safer access and egress for visitors, service vehicles and emergency vehicles as well as include dedicated space for motorcycle and bicycle parking. The proposed community plaza will offer a distinctive sense of arrival plus a versatile new open space for public use. It may include such design features as a sustainable demonstration garden with a native California landscape, water conservation technologies and sustainable materials and construction. The West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project design will use an organic palette, open space, landscaping and carefully-designed lighting to provide a segue between the commercial environment of Santa Monica Boulevard and the adjacent residential neighborhood.

## Why is more parking needed in the area?

West Hollywood City Hall is located in the area commonly known as "Mid-City." This is one of the areas in West Hollywood that has a parking deficiency in both the residential and commercial areas. The current parking lot behind City Hall serves a diversity of parking needs including those of visitors, residents, businesses as well as City employees and is not adequate to serve these needs. The current parking lot behind City Hall only meets about one-third of the code requirements for the building. The Kings Road parking garage, which currently accommodates overflow parking from City Hall, is often filled to capacity by 10 a.m. on work days. The addition of the automated garage will resolve both on-site and off-site parking concerns in the area; result in less congestion throughout the adjacent residential neighborhood; invigorate local businesses and create a safer and quieter environment for the local residences.

## How was the plan for the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project developed?

The City and its expert consultant, Don Monahan, considered and evaluated many design options to address parking shortages at City Hall and in the mid-city area. Those options included:

1. A single-level deck of parking over the existing parking lot – An additional single-level deck of parking over the existing parking lot proved to be inefficient due to site constraints and the requirement for a ramp to access the upper level, and did not provide sufficient additional parking to relieve the current condition.

2. A standard above-ground multi-level parking structure – The traditional multi-level parking structure option was too big for the site. The structure would come within 10 feet of the property lines. The resulting height of the structure would effectively block natural daylight from both the surrounding residences and City Hall.

3. A combination of above-ground/below-ground multi-level parking structure – The above-ground/below-ground parking garage option resolved concerns for building height but the size of the structure was still considered too big for the site. This option was also determined to be cost prohibitive.

4. An automated parking garage – The footprint for the automated garage is 40 percent smaller than a conventional, ramp-access garage and needs less space to meet the same parking requirements. The building size for the automated garage provided more open area around the structure allowing for larger set-backs from adjoining neighbors and the street; retaining more natural light into city hall; and providing room to address city hall deliveries on-site, relieving traffic congestion caused by loading/unloading in the street or in the parking lot. The automated garage allows sufficient extra open space to create a community plaza within the site for city hall visitors, community events and other public uses.

## How Does the Automated Garage Work?

Automated parking facilities use computer-controlled, motorized vertical lifts and horizontal shuttles to move vehicles from the arrival level to a remote parking space for storage without human assistance. The driver leaves the vehicle in an area known as the "entry compartment" where sensors determine the size and dimensions of the vehicle. The driver then pulls a ticket or swipes their monthly parking card to activate the storage process. The vehicle then proceeds to the final storage location. Upon retrieval, the driver presents their card or ticket at the parking activation station. The vehicle is automatically retrieved. The driver is then directed by electronic signs to the correct exit compartment to pick up their vehicle. During the retrieval process, the vehicle is rotated so that it is facing forward for ease of exiting the facility. The entire process takes approximately two minutes.

## What if someone only wants to run into City Hall for a few minutes? Or how will the Automated Garage accommodate a situation when a meeting of ten people lets out all at once?

The maximum vehicle retrieval time for an individual car is approximately two minutes. The automated garage has multiple lifts and shuttles that can move many vehicles at once. The automated garage operates using smart technology that can park a vehicle according to how long the patron expects to keep the car in the garage. A vehicle that is only going to be parked for a few minutes will be parked near the exit compartment; while a vehicle that is expected to be parked all day will be located away from the exit compartment. The vehicle furthest away can be retrieved within approximately two minutes—vehicles closer can be retrieved sooner. The time to deliver the last vehicle of a group of ten who retrieve their vehicle at approximately the same time will be approximately five minutes. The automated garage system is designed to process 125 vehicles exiting the garage per hour or slightly more than two vehicles per minutes.

## Is the Technology Utilized in Automated Garages new?

The technology used for automated garages is borrowed from the automated warehousing industry and has also been used in automobile assembly lines for more than 40 years. Automated parking facilities have been around in Europe and Asia for more than twenty years. Today, there are more than 500 automated parking facilities in Europe and more than 1.6 million automated parking spaces in Asia. In the United States, the construction and operation of automated parking facilities is an emerging industry, particularly, in densely-built urban areas where the space footprint for parking facilities is limited. There are currently approximately fifteen (15) automated parking facilities in the United States (including a newly-constructed garage in Santa Monica) with parking capacities ranging from 40 spaces to more than 400 spaces.

## How Reliable are Automated Garages?

Automated garages are 99.9 percent reliable. Redundancy is built into the system for every device. If the transport device only needs one motor, two are provided. Generators are provided for backup power. Uninterruptible power supplies are provided for the computer system and computers are backed up multiple times a day. There are multiple transport devices in the system to store and retrieve vehicles allowing for one or more to be out of service at any one time. The proposed automated garage includes three lifts in the storage vault while the operation only requires two lifts. There are four entry/exit compartments while traffic counts and traffic engineering calculations indicate that less than three are required. The computers monitor the number of revolutions for the motors and signal when routine maintenance is required. The contract for the City's automated garage includes a comprehensive service plan and maintenance agreement.

## Is it Safe to Build Automated Garages in Earthquake-prone California?

Many automated parking facilities have been constructed in high seismic areas such as Japan. A geotechnical investigation was prepared by GEOCON Inland Empire Inc. – Geotechnical Consultants (GEOCON) on the project site in 2008 and updated in 2011. The investigation concluded that no active faults were present beneath the project site or within 50 feet of the project site and the automated garage would not be exposed to hazards associated with surface fault rupture. As with any site in California, the project would be required to be constructed to comply with the California Building Code (CBC). In adherence to the CBC, the design and construction of the automated garage would be engineered to withstand the seismic ground shaking that may result in the event of a major earthquake.

## How will a person with a disability, the elderly or someone in need of special assistance be served?

There will be a security attendant at the automated garage at all times. No individual will ever be alone at the facility. The security attendant will be able to guide people through the process of dropping-off and retrieving their vehicle. The automated garage will be fully accessible to persons with disabilities and/or special needs and will be clearly marked.

## Why was an Automated Garage selected for this site?

There are many benefits to building an automated parking garage versus a conventional parking garage. Automated parking facilities/garages rely upon a smaller space footprint (length, width and height) than conventional self-park garages with the same capacity sometimes 30 percent to 50 percent less space requirement. The automated garage will increase the parking capacity from 68 parking spaces to 200

parking spaces. This is nearly three (3) times the amount of parking currently available. In addition to increased parking capacity, other benefits include energy savings due to minimal ventilation needs; reduced car emissions, fuel consumption and low power consumption; more efficient automated vehicle retrieval system; and enhanced public safety and vehicle security. As planned, the automated garage will use less than 40 percent of the space needed for a conventional parking garage at the project site. The space savings will net more than 7,000 square feet of increased space to be used as a versatile civil plaza for community events and building service needs.

## How was Unitronics selected to build the automated parking garage?

Don Monahan, a recognized authority on automated parking garages, was hired by the City to prepare the technical specifications and performance design requirements for the solicitation of automated parking system suppliers. In Fall 2010, a request for qualifications was issued and the City received eleven responses. The eleven request for qualifications submitted were reviewed by Don Monahan and the City's design team. Six firms were deemed qualified and invited to prepare a bid for the automated parking system machinery. In February 2011, the City invited the six qualified companies to submit bids for the design, fabrication, installation and maintenance of an automated parking garage. This process allowed the design team to customize the building to fit the unique requirements of the selected automated parking system supplier. Unitronics submitted the lowest responsible bid for the project. In June 2011, the City entered into an agreement with Unitronics for the design and construction of the automated garage.

Unitronics has more than 20 years of experience with automated warehouses and automated parking. The company creates its own software and manufactures its own components for the entire automated parking system and is a supplier for other companies using similar technology. Therefore, they do not rely on third party vendors for their equipment and are extremely knowledgeable when it comes to maintaining the equipment.

Since 1989, Unitronics has been a leading global company with a presence in the Los Angeles area and has three business divisions including Automation Products, Automated Logistics Systems and Automated Parking Solutions. Unitronics provides design, production, integration, installation, support and maintenance services for automatic parking systems. GREEN solutions and LEED certification are major factors in Unitronics' Automated Parking Solutions designs.

## Was there an Environmental Review conducted for this Project?

Yes. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the City to evaluate the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed project. The environmental analysis is completed through an Initial Study. An Initial Study was conducted to determine any potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. Completion of an Initial Study can result in three possible outcomes (1) there are no significant impacts so no mitigation is needed and a Negative Declaration is adopted, (2) there are impacts but they can be mitigated to a less than significant level, so a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is adopted, or (3) there are potentially significant impacts and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required. For the proposed project, an MND was determined to be the appropriate environmental document to prepare. An MND identifies the steps that must be taken (mitigation measures) as part of the project to reduce any environmental impacts created by the project.

## What was the outcome of the Environmental Review for this Project?

The impacts identified in a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) can be categorized as (a) no impact, (b) less than significant impact, or (c) potentially significant impacts unless mitigation is incorporated as part of the project. The MND determined that no impacts would occur to Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population/ Housing, Public Services, or Recreation as a result of the proposed project. The MND found less than significant impacts with respect to Aesthetics, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/ Water Quality, Noise, Transportation/Traffic, Utilities/ Service Systems. The MND determined that impacts to Air Quality and Geology/Soils were potentially significant, but mitigable to a less than significant level. Therefore, the project team will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Air Quality and Geology/Soils mitigation measures prior to project implementation.

The MND is currently circulating for review and comment. In order to finalize the environmental review process, all comments will be addressed in accordance with CEQA requirements and guidelines.

## When does construction start on the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project?

The project is scheduled to break ground in Spring 2013 with an anticipated completion in Summer 2014.

## How Does the Cost for an Automated Garage Compare to a Standard Garage?

The cost for an automated parking garage is less than a standard parking structure because standard parking structures require more space to achieve the same amount of parking. The new automated garage for City Hall requires 54,500 square feet to create a 200-space garage but a standard parking structure at City Hall would require 76,000 square feet to achieve the same capacity. The construction cost estimate for the automated garage is $10,600,000 but a standard parking garage would cost an estimated $11,650,000 - more than a million dollar price difference.

## How much will the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project Cost?

The projected budget for the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project is $16 million which includes the cost of design and engineering; construction of the automated garage; photovoltaic/solar panels and the community plaza. The specific costs are as follows:

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| Automated Garage | $10,600,000 |
| Photovoltaic Panels | $825,000 |
| Site Work and Community Plaza | $ 1,500,000 |
| Design & Engineering Costs | $ 3,075,000 |
| **TOTAL** | **$ 16,000,000** |

The 25th Anniversary Capital Project is primarily funded through reserves set aside from the City's General Fund and Parking Fund; the issuance of bonds; other governmental funding including Los Angeles County Park Funds; private donor contributions and other public and private grants. The debt service on the bonds will be paid from the City's Parking Improvement Fund, current revenue set aside and new revenue growth.

## What is the process for public input on the design of the West Hollywood City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project?

On May 2, 2011, the City Council approved the establishment of a Design Steering Committee comprised of one City Councilmember and representatives from the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission, the Planning Commission, the Public Facilities Commission, the Transportation Commission, the Disabilities Advisory Board and the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce to guide the design process on this project. The meetings of the City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Design Steering Committee are open to the public and follow all public meeting notice requirements. The first committee meeting took place on June 30, 2011 at City Hall. **The next scheduled meeting will take place at West Hollywood City Hall in the First Floor Conference Room on Thursday, March 29, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.**

## Who do I contact for more information?

For more information about the City Hall Automated Garage and Community Plaza Project, contact Daniel Adams, Sr., Associate Project Director, HEERY International, at (310) 657-4780 or email him at dadams@heery.com