

West Hollywood Design District Working Group

Summary of June 5, 2014 Meeting

As of 6/10/2014

Participants:

Design Consultant: Pat Smith

City of West Hollywood: Georgia Sheridan, Melissa Antol, Tiffany Robinson

Members of West Hollywood Design District Working Group:

Darren Gold, Chair, Design District BID

Donna Saur, Public Facilities Commissioner

Robert Burke, Public Safety Commissioner

Mary Ann Collins, resident & West Hollywood elementary board member

Lindsey Horvath (on behalf of David Eichman), Transportation Commissioner

Karen Harautuneian, Owner, Hub of the House

Karen Kuo, Owner, Robert Kuo

Richard Giesbret, West Hollywood West Representative

Ted Stafford, Realtor

Jamie Adler, Owner, Phyllis Morris

Meeting Purpose:

- Provide an update of the project schedule and scope since the last meeting.
- Provide an update on new planning projects in the Design District that may help shape the district as a pedestrian-oriented area.
- Notify the working group that there will be a series of Community Workshops this summer to gather input on the design of the public gathering spaces identified in the Master Plan.
- Review the base maps of the proposed public gatherings spaces.
- Discuss the potential for Robertson “North” (between Santa Monica and Melrose) to be a flexible “festival” street that could be closed for special events and/or evenings.
- Discuss the potential for a pedestrian paseo network throughout the Design District and review precedent images of paseos in other cities to help create a set of guidelines for the size and characteristics of future paseos in the area.

Update on Streetscape Master Plan Planning Process and Funding

Planning Process:

- The Streetscape Master Plan was approved in 2013.
- Staff is beginning the second phase of the Streetscape Master Plan, which is focused on the design of the public spaces identified in the Master Plan, as well as the design of Robertson North, and a pedestrian paseo network.
- The City will be hosting three community workshops over the summer, as well as meetings with business and property owners to get input on the design of these public spaces.
- Since the Master Plan was adopted, the City has completed a survey of the streets and public spaces to provide more detailed and accurate base maps to aid design.
- Pat Smith, the design consultant for the Streetscape Master Plan, continues to work on the project with support from traffic consultants (Fehr & Peers) and engineers (KPF) to study traffic flow, utilities, and storm water drainage during the design process.
- The City plans to complete the design and outreach for the public spaces by Fall 2014.

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Funding and Implementation:

- The Streetscape Master Plan will be funded and built in phases. Melrose Ave was identified as the first segment to be built.
- The City is looking at grant opportunities to supplement City funds to complete the project.
- To complete Melrose Ave -
 - The City allocated \$2.9 million as part of the Capital Improvement Program, as part of the 2014-26 City budget (scheduled to go to Council on June 23rd).
 - The City applied for a grant of \$4.9 million to the Southern California Association Governments (SCAG) through its Active Transportation program. The grant application will serve as a template when other opportunities for funding arise.
 - i. Members had questions about implementation costs. City staff explained that the City did a cost estimate prior to seeking funding.
 - ii. Members asked raised about the timing for notification of the grant. City staff explained that we should know by early Fall.

Pipeline Projects in the Design District

- **WeHo Park:** The City is in the process of designing new landscaping and public facilities as part of the West Hollywood Park Master Plan. The City hired LPA and Rios Clemente Hale for design. This project will bring new energy to the district and offers great opportunities for connections between Robertson and the park.
- **Melrose Triangle:** A large mixed-use development is proposed for the triangle-shaped block north of Melrose, between Almost and Doheny. This project will include pedestrian paseos and streetscaping along Melrose and Almont, to be coordinated with the Streetscape Master Plan.
- **Mixed-Use Hotel on Robertson:** A new hotel with retail, restaurant, and conference space is proposed along Robertson with a pedestrian paseo that connects to La Peer. This project will include streetscaping along Robertson and La Peer, to be coordinated with the Streetscape Master Plan. There are opportunities to visually connect this project with the park through consistent paving, lighting and/or landscaping materials.
- **Utility Undergrounding:** SoCal Edison is planning to underground utilities along Robertson this fall (2014). It is important to finalize the design of Robertson prior to the undergrounding to assure that the utilities are placed so as not to be moved twice when the Streetscape Master Plan is built out on Robertson.

Community Outreach Schedule

1. Kick-off Meeting for Design of Public Space with Working Group (June 5)
2. Community Workshop #1 (June 22) – discuss design options, visit sites
3. Community Workshop #2 (July 26) – present and discuss revised design options based on input
4. Community Workshop #3 (August 23) – present final design plan
5. Final Working Group Mtg (TBD)
6. Meetings with property owners and business owners (ongoing)

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Presentation on Design Considerations for Public Gathering Spaces

Pat Smith presented several design options to the Working Group members to identify concerns and document their preferences. See Powerpoint presentation and handout for options shown and questions posed to group.

1. Bonner/Beverly Public Space

Majority feedback:

- Preference for Option 2b: (new) large park w/ mini traffic circle on Bonner (surface parking shifted to on-street) with curb extensions rather than raised diverters if the former is feasible.
- General agreement with comment that design should be reviewed by fire and public safety and final design deferred to engineering staff.

Other comments:

- Can the curb be extended on Bonner to make the mini-traffic circle more of a true circle. It was noted that the design would be reevaluated to determine that request.
- A 5,000 SF gathering space is large and a portion should be devoted to parking, e.g., angled parking on Bonner. [By way of comparison the Veterans' Memorial on Santa Monica Boulevard is 7,800 SF.]
- Use signage and landscaping to signal to motorists that it is a residential neighborhood and they should either slow down or not enter.

2. Melrose/Norwich Public Space

Majority feedback:

- No suggested changes to the base map.

Other comments:

- Make sure the crosswalk from Norwich to the north side of Melrose is installed.
- Could sidewalk be located close to the buildings and the park extend to the street?
- The park should feel more like an urban plaza than a park.
- Gathering space is too large; provide diagonal parking.

3. Robertson North

a) **Park Connection:** Members agreed that a strong connection to the park is a good idea.

b) **Paseos**

Majority feedback:

- Support for paseos in the district.
- Support for recommended characteristics, that is, 25-30 feet wide on average with a wider entrance to invite people in, lined with dining retail and other active uses, and mostly open to the sky.
- Preference for entry area materials to be same as street materials, transitioning to materials consistent with development.

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Other comments:

- Support for paseos that are more open at the sidewalk to invite pedestrians in.
- Support for paseos that are not “too wide”, but are more intimate.
- Request to check the dimensions of La Arcada in Santa Barbara shown in photos, which has a comfortable width and scale.
- One comment that paseos should be at least 25 feet wide.
- Paseos should be wide enough for clear visibility and well illuminated. People should be able to see through it and not feel like they are enclosed in an alley.
- In written notes, two members preferred lighting consistent with development.
- Paseos should include materials that give visual cue that space is “public” (not private property) and pedestrians are allowed and invited to inhabit the space. It was noted that having retail and restaurant space will help with this.

c) **Street closure:** Members agreed that a street closure/festival street is a good idea.

- **Closure Length:** The street closure should go from El Tovar to Santa Monica. This allows for parking access at El Tovar. Members commented that parking access needs to be looked at for all businesses on street with closure.
- **Special treatment zone:** Members would like special treatment (i.e. paving, lighting, etc) to extend for the length of the closure (Santa Monica Boulevard to El Tovar). A member noted that when people arrive at Robertson, there should be lights strung up to let them know they are entering a festival space, like the example photos. Also need well designed illuminated signs to indicate public parking ahead and street closure.
- **Time:** Members liked the idea of a nightly street closure starting at either 7pm or 8pm, but concluded it was ultimately up to the business owners to decide the time of closure since it could trigger an issue with parking. In written notes, two members preferred closure every evening, one preferred weekends and events, one preferred events only, and two said “to be determined.”
- **Method of closure:** Members favored automatic (pneumatic or hydraulic) bollards if feasible.
- **Curbs or Curbless:** Members prefer a design with curbs. They agreed that curbs would be safer, work as well as curbless for a festival street, and the expense of curbless is too great and that the money saved could be put towards the cost of the bollards and other design features.
- **Sidewalk & roadway paving:** Members favor different but complementary paving materials for the sidewalk and street. They would like the special paving to be the same materials as the “accent” materials used in the Design District.
- **Sidewalk width:** Working group would like to widen sidewalks to 15' by removing parking on west side of street as proposed in the Streetscape Master Plan.