

MEMO

To: Bianca Siegl, City of West Hollywood

From: Andrea Nelson, PMC

CC: Jeff Henderson, PMC
Loreli Cappel, PMC

Date: June 3, 2014

Re: West Hollywood Eastside Community Plan – Working Group Meeting #2 Summary

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum summarizes the second meeting of the Eastside Working Group conducted by the City of West Hollywood and PMC for the purpose of developing an Eastside Community Plan that will identify the community's goals and priorities for the future of the neighborhood. This summary describes the purpose and composition of Working Group Meeting #2, presents outcomes from the meeting discussion, and outlines the next steps in the process.

OVERVIEW

The City of West Hollywood and PMC hosted and facilitated Working Group Meeting #2 on May 14, 2014, at the Plummer Park Community Center from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Presenters at the meeting included Senior Planner Bianca Siegl from the City of West Hollywood, and Jeff Henderson and Andrea Nelson from PMC. The meeting was attended by 11 Eastside Working Group members, including residents, business owners, and community-based organization representatives. At the meeting, presenters provided a brief overview of the results of Working Group Meeting #1, the City of West Hollywood General Plan, and Eastside neighborhood demographics. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of preliminary topics for the Eastside Community Plan. In addition, the public was invited to share comments at the beginning and end of the meeting.

MEETING #2 RESULTS

MEETING AGENDA

The meeting followed the following agenda:

- Call to order, pledge of allegiance, and roll call
- Public comment
- Welcome and introductions
- Working Group Meeting #1 summary
- General Plan overview
- Eastside and citywide demographics
- Preliminary topics for the Eastside Community Plan discussion
- Eastside Tour logistics and schedule
- Comments and adjournment

EASTSIDE AND CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS

After a presentation of Eastside and citywide demographics, Working Group members shared comments regarding the data. Working group members are interested in reviewing additional data including:

- Age
 - Detailed age breakdown for children under 18
- Language spoken at home
 - Compare 2000 and 2010 US Census to 2012 American Community Survey data for percentage of households who speak Eastern European languages.
- Housing
 - Affordability of homes (to rent and to own) over time
- Gender
 - Male and female gender breakdown

COMMUNITY PLAN DISCUSSION TOPICS

Working Group members worked in three small groups to discuss the following potential topics for the Eastside Community Plan, which were identified by the Eastside Task Force and the Working Group during their first meeting:

- Community identity, economic development, and public events (Group #1)
- Mobility, public safety, and urban design and community character (Group #2)
- Civic engagement, public spaces, community services, and housing (Group #3)

Each group discussed short-term and long-term priorities, considered which topics should be addressed in the Eastside Community Plan, and provided preliminary feedback on the following questions regarding each potential topic:

- Should this be a key focus of the Community Plan?
- What needs to be addressed immediately?
- What are the long-term priorities?

After discussing in small groups, each group reported out to the larger group. The following is a summary of the key findings from the small group discussions. Detailed notes from the small group discussion and report out is provided at the end of this summary. The entire Working Group will discuss and refine these topics and suggested prioritization at the next meeting.

HIGHEST PRIORITY TOPICS

Economic Development

The topic of economic development may include programs to support existing businesses, identification of key business types to meet the needs of existing and future residents and/or existing large businesses on the Eastside, strategies to encourage neighborhood-serving shops or local jobs, branding and promotion, business associations, or other tools to support a strong local economy.

Working Group members noted that economic development relates to community identity and mobility. There will be a need for new and existing businesses to meet the needs of residents living in new, larger residential developments. Working Group members recognized that the neighborhood's existing identity is eclectic, but likely to change with shifting demographics and new development. The Community Plan presents an opportunity to develop branding aligned with the community's identity.

Mobility

In the Community Plan, mobility may address how we move around the Eastside, and how we balance the needs of cars, transit, bikes, and pedestrians in a limited space. It might include strategies to make better pedestrian connections to increase walkability, improve safety, reduce congestion, or manage limited parking resources, among others.

Working Group members discussed the importance of identifying problematic intersections and road segments and proposing visionary solutions. Working Group members support transit extensions, including the subway, and improving bus service in the Eastside. Providing angled parking along streets near Plummer Park was suggested as a potential parking solution. Providing bicycle lanes on side streets, rather than along major thoroughfares such as Fountain Avenue, was supported. Members also suggested increasing street clean-up efforts, particularly in alleys in the Eastside.

Urban Design and Community Character

This topic addresses the buildings and spaces that make up our community, identifying what makes a place more comfortable, safe, and attractive to be in. It might include programs to encourage active storefronts or sidewalk dining, improve signage, address the relationship between commercial and residential streets, or develop community priorities for new development.

Working Group members commented that while the neighborhood is constantly in flux and has historically welcomed change and new residents, there is a need to protect the existing character of residential neighborhoods. The eclectic character in the Eastside neighborhood residential areas contributes to the area's look, feel, and spirit. The architectural style and character of existing single-family homes contribute greatly to the neighborhood's culture and are cherished by residents. Working Group members recognized that recently built larger, "big box" homes do not fit the character of the Eastside. To protect community character, members suggested addressing issues in the neighborhood that contribute to blight.

Public Safety

The topic of public safety in the Community Plan would address how we can all feel more safe on the Eastside, and might include improvements like more street lighting, visibility of safety officers, or community education.

Working Group members recognized that public safety is related to and integral to many of the other potential Community Plan topics. Anticipated population increases and demographic changes will impact public safety resulting in potential for higher need for services such as officers on bicycles, care for the elderly, and undercover officers. Some members feel that the City already provides quality public safety services and will continue to provide services to meet Eastside needs in the future. Therefore, there was not consensus that this should be a priority topic area for the Community Study.

Housing

The City's General Plan and Housing Element guide the amount and type of housing and address strategies for improving affordability. Given the new housing being built on the Eastside, the Community Plan might address the needs of people who will be moving in, as well as existing residents in older buildings.

Working Group members noted that approximately 1,000 housing units have been recently built or are in the pipeline within or adjacent to the Eastside neighborhood and will be built in the near future. It is anticipated that these units will attract new young and hip residents to the Eastside neighborhood. Working Group members identified short-term priorities including flexible zoning to accommodate housing needs at all economic levels, assessing impacts of new residents on the housing stock, and providing opportunity for existing residents to stay in the Eastside. Considering the neighborhood's changing demographics, there is a long-term need to provide housing that is affordable for all socioeconomic levels. Additionally, Working Group members identified a need to provide market rate housing and housing that can be purchased by residents interested in homeownership.

Public Spaces

This topic addresses how we use public spaces on the Eastside, and might include improvements to sidewalks, streets, and alleys; opportunities for public gathering places or open spaces; street trees and plants; or other amenities to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Working group members expressed the need to provide spaces for residents to gather since it is increasingly important as the population and density of the Eastside increases. There is a need to provide green space, parks, open spaces, and other such areas in

the neighborhood. Additionally, streetscapes could be enhanced to introduce more green along thoroughfares with street trees, landscaping, and benches.

Plummer Park is a valuable resource in the community. Immediate opportunity exists to address open space needs by building consensus in the community and resolving recent issues to enhance Plummer Park's existing assets and meet additional open space, recreation, and community service needs.

OTHER POTENTIAL TOPICS

Working Group members generally determined that other potential topics were not a priority for the group and did not need to be featured in the Eastside Community Plan. Members agreed that the City is successfully meeting the needs of residents for civic engagement, community services, and public events.

NEXT STEPS

This Working Group meeting was the second of three scheduled meetings. The third will take place on June 11, 2014, at Plummer Park from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The third meeting will include an overview of the findings from Working Group Meeting #2 and present additional, requested demographic information. Additionally, Working Group members will further refine and prioritize the Community Plan topics. City staff will host a tour of the Eastside neighborhood for Working Group members on May 31, 2014, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Participants will meet at Plummer Park. Based on input from the Working Group, PMC and City staff will continue to develop the list of priority topics for the Eastside Community Plan.

EASTSIDE WORKING GROUP MEETING #2 TRANSCRIPTION NOTES

DISCUSSION

The following are notes from comments made by Working Group members.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Tremendous increase in population of children under 5
 - Can we get more detail on children? Perhaps a breakdown of different age groups
- Change in percentage of Russian languages spoken at home over time?
 - Anecdotal experience indicates that there is a decrease
 - Let's compare with 2000 and 2010 US Census data
 - Can we see a breakdown of all Russian languages over time?
- Statistics can be misleading
 - The Eastside-specific data shows a decrease in families in the Eastside versus citywide. If you do the math the Eastside is the largest contribution to the City's overall decrease in families.
- What is the demographic breakdown of males and females in the community over time?
- How will new housing units impact demographics in the near future?

PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY PLAN TOPICS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (GROUP #1)

- Number one priority for the group.
- Review what community wants the Eastside to look like and let that dictate what we look like.
- Faced with large developments that will be in place in 2016.
- Moratorium on pawn shops, marijuana dispensaries, and liquor stores. Contribute to blight.
- Overlaps with mobility.
- Signage to delineate and define the Eastside – take up blank spaces on buildings.

PUBLIC EVENTS (GROUP #1)

- Not a top priority for the group.
- West Hollywood currently hosts wonderful events.
- Suggest having equal number of events on east and west sides of the city.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY (GROUP #1)

- Identity exists as an eclectic community.
- Ethnic groups trending upwards and downwards and why?
- Branding/identity – 30% of the Eastside community identity is shifting with demographic changes.
- Community character and identity directly relate to economic development.
- Eastside community is changing – eclectic and hip, forward.

MOBILITY (GROUP #2)

- Top priority for group.
- Bike lanes on side streets
- Fountain and Formosa: example of backed-up traffic.
- Identify problematic intersections and approach potential solutions with visionary thinking/planning.
- Consider: where is not working in the Eastside regarding mobility and access and address.

Mobility Comments from Group #1

- Long-term issues:
 - Support the Pink Line subway extension.
 - Improve and clean up alleys and support bus extensions.
 - Fountain Avenue
 - Where the lane changes – conduct a traffic study and consider improvements.
 - Sharrows are not appropriate on Fountain Avenue.
 - La Brea traffic light.
- Immediate issues:
 - Direct traffic to Detroit.
 - Provide angle parking along Detroit and Vista – streets adjacent to Plummer Park

URBAN DESIGN AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER (GROUP #2)

- Top priority for the group.
- Protect character of housing on the Eastside.
 - Thematic neighborhoods: look, feel, spirit of our community.
- Clean up blight (such as non-operable pay phones).
- Retain what we love about the Eastside.
- Links to mobility.
- Consider overlay zones that protect historic fabric, character; protect the “continuity” of the unique neighborhoods.
- Part of our urban design and personality has been surrendered to boxes, high rises, etc.
 - Place a 45-day moratorium on big box, private homes since they do not fit the character of the neighborhood.
- Incentivize homeowners to protect the character of the community. Consider economic incentives.
- Look toward the future.
- Implement regulations to limit billboards.

PUBLIC SAFETY (GROUP #2)

- Top priority for the some members of the group.
- Public safety has tentacles into a number of other major topics.
- Increase in population will impact public safety need.
 - There will be a higher need for sheriffs on bicycles, and undercover officers.
 - Higher demographic of elderly requires heightened public safety consciousness/provision.
 - The City will not drop off services and will continue to provide public safety services.
- West Hollywood has a record of highest budget for public safety.

HOUSING (GROUP #3)

- Top priority for the group.
- This should be a key focus of the Community Plan, especially given demographic information.
- Short-term priorities:
 - Flexibility in zoning code?
 - What are the impacts of the new residents? Including economic impacts as far as supply vs. demand and housing stock.
 - Pressure existing single-family residences housing stock to keep families in WeHo.
- Long-term priorities:
 - More housing at all economic levels that is: affordable, market-rate, and homeownership priorities.

Housing Comments from Group #1

- More affordable housing.

- Target affordable housing density credit for low- and moderate-income brackets.

PUBLIC SPACES (GROUP #3)

- Second highest priority of group #3.
- Related to housing – people who live here, play here.
- This should be a focus of the Community Plan.
- Long-term priorities:
 - Increasing open spaces, parks and green space and other public spaces and increasing public access.
 - Lots of opportunity for creativity: “pop-up” open spaces, repurposing existing areas as public space (temporary, reoccurring)
 - Resolution of the issues and building consensus regarding Plummer Park.
- Short-term priorities:
 - Less concrete, more green.
 - Significant public landmarks. Planting more street trees.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (GROUP #3)

- Not a priority for this group.
- Should not be included in the Community Plan.
- Does not seem to be an issue that this group needs to focus on.

COMMUNITY SERVICES (GROUP #3)

- Not a priority for this group.
- Should not be included in the Community Plan.
- Not that this isn't important, but it's something that we already do very well.
- Doesn't need specific attention in the Eastside Plan.
- Already a strength of the City's.