

# MEMO

**Date:** July 9, 2014

**Re:** West Hollywood Eastside Community Plan – Eastside Tour and Working Group Meeting #4 Summary

## INTRODUCTION

This memorandum summarizes the fourth meeting of the Eastside Working Group conducted by the City of West Hollywood 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 #4, presents outcomes from the discussion, and outlines next steps.

## OVERVIEW

The City of West Hollywood hosted and facilitated Working Group Meeting #4 on July 9, 2014, at the Plummer Park Community Center from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Presenters at the meeting included Senior Planner Bianca Siegl, Human Services and Rent Stabilization Department Director Elizabeth Savage, and Project Development Administrator Andi Lovano, from the City of West Hollywood. The meeting was attended by twelve Eastside Working Group members, including residents, business owners, and community-based organization representatives. At the meeting, City staff provided a brief overview of the results of Working Group Meeting #3 that occurred on June 11, 2014. The Working Group received a presentation from Andi Lovano and Elizabeth Savage regarding the City's current housing programs and policies. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to reviewing and finalizing the draft Topic Recommendations Memo for presentation to the City Council. In addition, the public was invited to share comments at the beginning and end of the meeting.

## MEETING #4 RESULTS

### MEETING AGENDA

- Call to order, pledge of allegiance, and roll call
- Public comment
- Welcome and introductions
- Approval of minutes
- Working Group Meeting #3 summary
- Rent stabilization and Housing discussion
- Review of Draft Topics Recommendations Memo
- Schedule and next steps

- Comments and adjournment

## RENT STABILIZATION AND HOUSING DISCUSSION

Project Development Administrator Andi Lovano presented information about West Hollywood's housing programs and reviewed the goals and policies regarding rent stabilization and inclusionary housing. The goal of rent stabilization is to protect tenants from unreasonable rental conditions while ensuring a reasonable return to landlords. Inclusionary housing's aim is to encourage the production of low and moderate income housing as well as housing for disabled and older residents. The presentation also gave a snapshot of the number of inclusionary units that are built, under construction, and entitled. Lastly, Andi presented the goals and requirements of the Housing Element, which includes providing an assessment of both current and future housing needs. Human Services and Rent Stabilization Department Director Elizabeth Savage addressed questions and comments from the Working Group.

Some Working Group members expressed concern that moderate-income and low-income populations are not assisted as much as the very-low-income due to the lack of economic incentives to developers. Members expressed interest in exploring zoning bonuses to encourage more inclusionary units to be built. Others raised concerns regarding the enforcement of exterior maintenance of residential buildings.

## TOPIC MEMO REVISIONS

The Working Group reviewed the Draft Topic Recommendations Memo, prepared by City staff. The recommendations in the Draft Memo are meant to reflect general goals for the Eastside without listing specific or detailed strategies to achieving these goals. Content of the draft memo was based on discussions from the last three meetings as well as the Eastside Tour. City staff will prepare a staff report to accompany the memo, which will summarize the process during the first three meetings, as well as how the recommendations will be used to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit a consultant team for the next phase of the project. The Working Group discussed key sections of the Draft Memo and made changes as needed based on the consensus of the group.

### EASTSIDE COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Some Working Group members commented that the borders of the Eastside neighborhood are not well-known. The Working Group modified the Draft Memo to emphasize the need for additional City signage and branding in the Eastside.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Working Group members expressed interest in using zoning incentives to attract neighborhood-serving businesses to locate in the neighborhood. Members expressed varying opinions about the desirability and appropriateness of various specific business types, particularly big-box stores. This issue was flagged as important for future discussion during the Community Plan development phase of the project. In addition, pawn shops were noted as a nuisance business and some members inquired whether a moratorium was possible. The Draft Memo was modified to specify marijuana dispensaries

and pawn shops as examples of nuisance businesses that should be limited (as opposed to bars, which members noted can operate very responsibly).

#### MOBILITY

The Working Group discussed a range of issues related to mobility improvements, including concern for congestion relief, desire for improved safety, and a debate over mid-block versus corner crosswalks, each of which can be further addressed in the Community Plan. Additionally, because Los Angeles borders the Eastside on all sides, the Working Group emphasized the importance of coordinating with Los Angeles traffic controls to ensure safety, particularly on Fountain Avenue.

#### URBAN DESIGN AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Working Group members discussed the distinction between what is “historic” and what creates “neighborhood character”. The current process to develop design guidelines for single-family zones in West Hollywood West was mentioned, and some members encouraged the Working Group to support a similar process in the Eastside neighborhood.

#### PUBLIC SPACES

Working Group members discussed an interest in expanding park and open space in the Eastside neighborhood, and suggested that the City should be encouraged to purchase abandoned properties to create more public spaces. The Draft Memo was modified to emphasize expansion of public spaces.

#### HOUSING

Working Group members discussed ways to encourage moderate-income housing and exterior maintenance of existing buildings. Several members wished to encourage co-op home ownership opportunities and other innovative housing solutions.

#### OTHER TOPICS

Working Group members requested that sustainable principles be reflected throughout each topic area in the Community Plan, and that a demographic-trends analysis be completed to provide important background information for the Plan.

#### NEXT STEPS

The Working Group’s Eastside Community Plan Topic Recommendations Memo will be presented to the City Council for consideration in September 2014. This memo will be used to guide the development of the Eastside Community Plan Request For Proposal and content.

The Working Group was presented with alternative meeting schedules in order to avoid conflicts with other City Boards or Commissions, but voted to maintain the current schedule, meeting the second Wednesday of each month. The next Working Group meeting will take place on August 13, 2014 at Plummer Park from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The meeting will feature a presentation on Code Compliance and other topics.

## EASTSIDE WORKING GROUP MEETING #4 TRANSCRIPTION NOTES

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

### HOUSING PRESENTATION

- There are opportunities for very-low to low-income units in new developments created by tax credits, but moderate income affordable housing has not been as incentivized. Teachers and other workers cannot afford to live in West Hollywood.
- A developer would easily choose low-income over moderate-income because of all the incentives for low-income.
- Encourage proactive code compliance of 7-year exterior maintenance requirement, for rent-stabilized buildings, replacement of flooring in residential units and common areas.
- Concern regarding the Costa Hawkins Act, which resulted in vacancy decontrol.
- Costa Hawkins incentivizes property owners to move out current tenants in order to get market-rate rents.

### RECOMMENDATIONS MEMO

- Eastside Community Identity
  - People don't know the borders of the East side enough. Unification of West Hollywood identity should definitely be incorporated into the memo
- Economic Development
  - Encourage use of zoning code incentives to ensure that new neighborhood-serving businesses can locate here
  - No limitations on big-box retail because Targets, grocery stores, Urban Home, Soup Plantation, etc. can be appropriate
  - What about Walmarts? How can we limit some but not others? Possibly by square footage
  - Pawn shops moratorium (nuisance businesses)
  - Define nuisance businesses or "soften" nuisance word because bars can be operated very responsibly
- Mobility
  - Very opposed to mid-block crosswalks; feels that installing traffic lights are better.
  - In response to "Support safe alternative transportation options, such as bicycle travel on side streets rather than along major thoroughfares," Working Group needs more information to know if the best way to deal with safety is to move alternative transportation to. Instead of saying "reduce congestion" possibly we can think about efficiency in how to move people in and out the fastest and safest.
  - Concerned that Fountain Avenue is dangerous
  - West Hollywood should coordinate with Los Angeles, as the Eastside is surrounded on all sides by LA. Greater coordination with Los Angeles for safer transportation.
- Urban Design/Community Character
  - "historic" vs. "neighborhood character"

- Public Spaces
  - Encourage the City to purchase abandoned properties to create more public spaces.
- Housing
  - Enforce existing programs/laws
  - Incentivize moderate-income housing
  - Strategies for home owners to maintain building facades. In the past (under Redevelopment), home owners could obtain a loan to redo their front facades/exterior facades and if they stayed in the property long enough, they did not need to pay it off.
  - Encourage co-op home ownership opportunities
  - Encourage innovative housing solutions
- Other Topics
  - Sustainability
  - Incorporating sustainability in old buildings

#### NEXT STEPS AND MEMBER COMMENTS

- Move to Fiesta Hall so that the room can accommodate more community members
- Please arrange for a Code Compliance to attend a meeting)
- Please reserve parking spaces for Working Group meetings
- Schedule a pop-up event at local elementary schools for broader outreach
- Once new consultant has been selected, arrange another Eastside tour