

MEMO

To: Bianca Siegl, City of West Hollywood

From: Andrea Nelson, PMC

CC: Jeff Henderson, PMC
Loreli Cappel, PMC

Date: April 28, 2014

Re: West Hollywood Eastside Community Plan – Working Group Meeting #1 Summary

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum summarizes the first meeting of the Eastside Working Group conducted by the City of West Hollywood and PMC for the purpose of developing a larger community engagement strategy and ultimately an Eastside Community Plan that will identify the community's goals and priorities for the future of the neighborhood. This summary includes the purpose and composition of Working Group Meeting #1, findings established from the meeting discussion, and a transcript of the meeting, and outlines the next steps in the process.

OVERVIEW

The City of West Hollywood and PMC hosted and facilitated Working Group Meeting #1 on April 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 and Mayor Pro Tem Jon D'Amico from the City of West Hollywood and Loreli Cappel and Andrea Nelson from PMC. The meeting was attended by 14 Eastside Working Group members, including residents, business owners, and community-based organization representatives. At the meeting, presenters conducted introductions and discussed the group's purpose, expectations, and schedule, including an overview of Brown Act procedures. In addition, City staff provided an overview on the background of the project, the outcomes of the Eastside Task Force, and an overview of community plan examples conducted throughout the country. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of outreach strategies for the community.

MEETING #1 RESULTS

MEETING AGENDA

The meeting followed the following agenda:

- Call to order, pledge of allegiance, administration of Eastside Working Group member oath of office, and roll call
- Brief public comment forum
- Introductions and discussion of procedures and ground rules
- Background presentation
- Outreach strategy discussion
- Schedule of upcoming events
- Comments and adjournment

WORKING GROUP MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

During the introductions, Working Group members were invited to answer:

1. What do you hope this process and the community plan will achieve?
2. What do you cherish about the Eastside neighborhood?

3. What things that could be improved in Eastside?

A transcription of meeting notes can be found at the end of this document.

Eastside Community Plan Outcomes

Working Group members emphasized the ultimate completion of the Eastside Community Plan (primary goal) that includes a long-term vision which is workable and realistic while catalyzing economic and cultural opportunities. Certain members emphasized that the plan should also preserve what is great about Eastside (see next section) while improving it. Members also indicated that the process should achieve community buy-in and excitement.

Favorite Aspects of the Eastside Neighborhood

Overall, Working Group members cherish and deeply value the Eastside neighborhood. The diversity in the Eastside community is a favorite and valuable aspect of the neighborhood. They also described the neighborhood as vibrant, socially conscious, hip, and evolving. Some members pointed to the walkable nature of the neighborhood; jobs, parks, and commercial and entertainment amenities alike are all within easy walking distance.

Opportunities for Improvement

One major theme of items for improvement was the issue surrounding traffic and circulation. Working Group members mentioned traffic and poor experiences for pedestrians and bicyclists in the area. An additional common theme was the need to improve community, e.g., neighbors know neighbors, and the public in the area getting involved with community issues and events. It was also commented that the neighborhood needs to embrace economic development and modernization, but in a way that retains the history and quaint nature of the area.

OUTREACH STRATEGY DISCUSSION

Working Group members shared a number of community engagement strategies that will work well to reach and engage Eastside neighborhood community members during the Community Plan process. A full transcription of meeting notes can be found at the end of this document. Members emphasized utilizing existing events and social gathering spots including the farmers market, art shows, grocery stores, and schools, and discussed hosting pop-up workshops at existing events and hosting block parties. Group members suggested using social media, newsletters, and multilingual postcard mailings and offering free food to get the word out and boost participation. They supported using the following tools and activities at outreach events: live polling exercises, analogue surveys, and storytelling booths. They emphasized the need to break out of the “public meeting as usual” outreach approach.

NEXT STEPS

This Working Group meeting was the first of three scheduled meetings, the second of which will take place on May 14, 2014, at Plummer Park from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The second meeting will include an overview of Eastside demographics, and the General Plan policy framework that applies to the Eastside, as well as preliminary identification of topics to be addressed in the Eastside Community Plan. City staff will work with Eastside Working Group members to schedule a tour of the Eastside neighborhood in May. Based on the input of the Working Group, PMC and City staff will continue to develop the overall outreach strategy for the Eastside Community Plan and a community profile to provide data and context for that process.

EASTSIDE WORKING GROUP MEETING #1 TRANSCRIPTION NOTES

DISCUSSION

The following are notes from comments made by Working Group members in response to three identified questions.

What do you hope this will achieve?

- Our goals
- A plan—we all feel confident that development and transportation develops as we want it to be developed
- Maintain what is so delightful about Eastside
- Catalyze economic development opportunities (cultural opportunities)
- A workable, realistic plan (aware of limitations)
- Affordable to live and work here
- Long-term vision
- Bring in community outreach and excite community
- Preserve deserving old development: what needs improvement and serves the vision
- Address issues and achieve community buy-in
- Serve the community and make residents aware; draw community together
- A list of priority implementation actions and a tools for the City to use as a guide moving forward
- Save City staff time

What is your favorite thing about Eastside?

- Ever-developing area, so many changes; I especially appreciate the Plummer Park Community Center
- Parks
- “Nothing daunts us city”
- Diversity
- Diversity of housing and commercial
- Creative, diverse, human-scaled
- My home! Important to my health and life
- My home! Gentrifying and exciting area, “the Eastside is the new Eastside”
- My job, diversity, vibrancy, socially conscious
- Soda fountain at Mendocino Farms
- Initially my favorite thing about the Eastside was that it wasn’t Westside; it was a small town. Diversity, sense of neighborhood, safety improvements.
- Green and two blocks away from the middle of everything; you can have both
- Don’t have to get in my car—grocery store, park
- Cool, hip, trend-setting
- Diversity, very special
- Walkable to doctor, gym, dentist, groceries, optometrist

What is one thing you would like to improve?

- Traffic
- All neighbors to meet each other—get out and step out
- Bike and pedestrian experience
- Increase walkability, reduce traffic
- Total economic development (residential and business and branding)
- Expectations

- Involvement of public
- Street-by-street connectivity
- Affordable housing
- Walkability, traffic
- Traffic – take it into consideration with development
- Handle increased residents/traffic
- Drought tolerant, historic preservation, stormwater treatment
- Community awareness
- Embrace modernization, keeping neighborhood quaint and old fashioned

Outreach Strategy Ideas

- Live polling exercises
- Keep a record/template for asking folks about the same issues
- Street-by-street pop-up workshops/street party (with street closed off?)
 - Orange Grove potentially a good spot
- “Analog” surveys
- Social media for all
 - Include links in newsletters
- Media outlets (use WeHo TV to promote and report on the plan development process)
- Tap food delivery service to distribute notices
- Booth at farmers market or art show
- Offer free food!
- Postcard mailings (multilingual)
- Break out of “public meeting as usual”
- Tap existing city events (senior house fair in May)
- Work with LAUSD to engage schools/youth
- Tap grocery stores
- Storytelling booth