



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting
August 7, 2008

West Hollywood Park Auditorium
647 N. San Vicente Boulevard, West Hollywood, California 90069

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Altschul called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:33 P.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: John D'Amico led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Bernstein, D'Amico, Guardarrama, Hamaker, Yeber, Vice-Chair DeLuccio, Chair Altschul.

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Present: Francie Stefan, Senior Planner, Susan Healy Keene, Community Development Director, John Keho, Planning Manager, and David Gillig, Commission Secretary.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

1) Pull and remove Item 13.A. (General Plan Update).

ACTION: Approve the Planning Commission Agenda of Thursday, August 7, 2008 as amended. **Moved by Vice-Chair DeLuccio, seconded by Commissioner Hamaker and unanimously carried.**

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

A. July 17, 2008

ACTION: Approve the Planning Commission Minutes of Thursday, July 17, 2008 as presented. **Moved by Vice-Chair DeLuccio, seconded by Commissioner Hamaker and unanimously carried; notating the abstention of Commissioner Guardarrama.**

6. PUBLIC COMMENT.

SVEN TOORVALD, WEST HOLLYWOOD, commented on the formation of a new residents association; West Hollywood South Residents Association.

7. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS.

Commissioner Yeber commented on the West Hollywood National Night Out festivities.

Commissioner Hamaker commented on the West Hollywood National Night Out festivities.

Commissioner Bernstein congratulated Commissioner D'Amico and Commissioner Guardarrama on their recently recognized legal marriages.

Chair Altschul congratulated Commissioner D'Amico and Commissioner Guardarrama on their recently recognized legal marriages and commented on the West Hollywood National Night Out festivities.

8. CONSENT CALENDAR. None.

9. PUBLIC HEARINGS. None.

10. NEW BUSINESS.

A. General Plan Update Project.

Susan Healy Keene, Community Development Director, provided a brief history of the current General Plan activities.

Francie Stefan, Senior Planner, provided background information as presented in the staff report dated Thursday, August 7, 2008.

In August of 2007, the City Council initiated a collaborative program to comprehensively update the City's General Plan for the first time since adoption of the foundation 1988 document. The approximately two-and-half-year update program now underway will build upon the vision of that first Plan, and will respond to evolving community needs and objectives. The program has these phases/tasks:

- **Phase 1: Curiosity and Clarity - Document Baseline Conditions**
Solicit community input and participation to identify key issues to be addressed in the project, shared ideas for how West Hollywood can be even better, and key challenges we face. Prepare technical background reports on land use, circulation, housing, economic development, and other topics. The reports document existing conditions and describe opportunities and constraints from a long-term perspective.
- **Phase 2: Creativity – Identify Alternatives**
Identify land use and circulation alternatives that consider economic policy, environmental considerations, urban design, public facilities, housing needs, and other factors. This task leads to the selection of a preferred land use/circulation alternative as the basis for preparing the Draft General Plan.

- **Phase 3: Confidence - Building the Plan**

Prepare a General Plan that contains elements, goals, policies, and a glossary. Also prepare an implementation plan and environmental (CEQA) clearance.

Key outcomes of the General Plan update project are a complete revised General Plan, Implementation Plan and CEQA documentation. Also key to the project is extensive public participation from a diverse and broad community base. In support of those two efforts, this staff report documents the results of community outreach to date.

ACTIVITIES IN PHASE 1 PUBLIC OUTREACH

Between August 2007 and April 2008 the General Plan update team engaged with over 600 people during the Curiosity and Clarity phase of the program, including:

- The General Plan Fair held on February 23, 2008 and attended by **over 200 people**,
 - Three focus group sessions that included **26 people**, including two sessions with residents who were solicited by telephone, and one with non-profit providers and business stakeholders,
 - One-on-one stakeholder interviews with **over 125 people**,
 - 1,400 visioneering cards gathered from **500 people** including residents and businesses.
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- Executive Summary of Findings,
 - Community Fair Summary,
 - Focus Group Summary,
 - Interview Comments, and
 - Visioneering Responses.

As the program moves into the Creativity phase, staff and the consultant team will use the input from the Curiosity and Clarity exercises to develop alternatives for consideration by community members and City decision makers.

As with most public participation, this project depends on the volunteer time of residents and stakeholders who choose to participate. It is a perennial challenge to reach a broad constituency of stakeholders that reflect the diversity of community opinion. Notices and information were widely publicized to maximize the range of participants.

To supplement the input gathered to date, a telephone survey will be conducted during the summer/fall of 2008 to probe issues which generated varied responses and opinions, and to obtain statistically-accurate information to be considered with all other input received.

KEY FINDINGS

Participants shared a diversity of opinions on most topics. The topics ranged from those ordinarily addressed in a General Plan – land use/urban design, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety – to issues that people see affecting them every day, such as social service needs, rent control, and construction activity. The statements made represent the beliefs and perceptions of the community and are not presented as facts or absolutes. They do, however, identify real concerns and passions about the City. No tabulations were made, as the outreach activities did not include a scientific sampling of West Hollywood residents and business people.

If a ranking of issues could be inferred based on the number of comments made regarding particular issues, that order would be (from most commonly expressed to least common):

- **Scale:** Concern about the scale and intensity of new buildings and uses, but no consensus on preferred scale.
- **Traffic:** Concern about the level of traffic throughout the City, and interest in seeking solutions that address public transit, shuttles, cars, bikes, and pedestrians.
- **Housing:** Concern about the possible loss of affordable housing opportunities due to recycling of residential properties, and strong support for diverse income levels in new development including housing for workers in the arts and entertainment fields.
- **Parking:** Feelings that parking is not available or adequate.
- **Community:** Mixed thoughts about whether West Hollywood will be able to maintain its socio-economic diversity and the community values which were crucial to the City's founding.
- **Land Use:** Generally positive feelings about mixed-use development at strategic locations.
- **Community:** Strong optimism about the ability of the community members and leaders to find solutions.
- **Open Space:** Interest in creating additional open space and parks.
- **Social Service:** The importance of maintaining the City's social services.
- **Government:** Ensuring a transparent decision-making process that provides a high level of community input.
- **Historic Preservation:** Historic preservation as an emerging issue needing to be addressed.

- **Community:** Concern about loss of LGBT identity, and desire to continue focus on LGBT needs and issues.
- **Safety:** People feel safe in West Hollywood, and support police personnel.
- **Community:** Concern about change and desire to condition any change on providing benefits to existing community members.
- **Economic Development:** Support for small businesses that are unique and accessible to residents.

The General Plan update strives to define a shared vision for how West Hollywood can look, function and grow over the next 20 years. A number of prior efforts will be used to set the framework for that, including the Strategic Vision 2020, the Redevelopment Area plan and other documents.

Some of the key questions that will need to be addressed include:

- How do we balance the needs of cars and parking with mobility solutions and land uses that support transit, walking, and bicycling?
- What local policies and programs exist to address regional issues such as housing affordability?
- How do we define “overdevelopment”? (loss of seniors/youth/diversity, density and buildings; inadequate supportive services and infrastructure; loss of affordability)
- How do we ensure a healthy environment locally, and support sustainability at a regional and global level?
- What land uses do we need to encourage to be fiscally sustainable and continue providing a high level of community and social services?
- How do we continue to welcome, celebrate and support our diverse community?
- How can we balance all of the community’s goals, looking for projects/programs that achieve multiple goals?

Next Steps

The project team is wrapping up Phase 1, and beginning Phase 2 which will focus on alternatives development. Key tasks during the next 6-10 months are:

- **Technical Background Reports:** Completion of technical background reports that provide baseline information and identify opportunities and constraints from a planning perspective. Topics include land use, circulation, housing, economic development, social and cultural services, and more. The reports will be presented to the City’s boards and commissions during August and September.

- **City-wide Newsletter:** Staff will be working on a city-wide special newsletter about issues addressed in the General Plan. The newsletter will be sent out to each household in the City in September. Staff will also continue to include General Plan update information in other City mailings.
- **Phone Survey:** Completion of a telephone survey and summary report. The survey will provide additional quantitative data to support the outreach in Phase 1. The phone survey will query areas of diverse opinions and other key topics. The summary will be presented to the City Council by October.
- **Developing alternatives:** Develop a range of alternatives for discussion and consideration. Each alternative will address economic policy, environmental considerations, urban design, public facilities, housing needs, and other factors. The goal is to lead to the selection of a preferred land use/circulation alternative as the basis for preparing the Draft General Plan. Some key steps to developing these alternatives will be:
 - Identify areas of the city that are unlikely to change during the life of the plan,
 - Look at range of transportation and mobility opportunities and the infrastructure necessary to support them,
 - Identify opportunity areas for strategic infill in the commercial and residential zones to meet housing needs,
 - Pursue supportive urban design principles for private and public property, and
 - Identify opportunities for unique and dynamic commercial development that serves neighborhood as well as destination commercial needs.Alternatives development will also include consideration of human service and cultural resources, safety, conservation and other key policies.
- **City-wide community meeting:** A second community-wide meeting is planned during Phase 2 to discuss alternatives and policy options for the draft plan. The team's goal is to hold this meeting in November 2008, pending the availability of key information and facilities.
- **Continued Public Information:** Staff will continue to provide regular public information about the General Plan through the monthly bulletin, standing agenda items for Boards & Commissions, and on the project website: www.weho.org/generalplan.

Chair Altschul opened public comment for Item 10.A.:

JEANNE DOBRIN, WEST HOLLYWOOD, has concerns regarding this item. She spoke regarding “world class cities” and access to public transportation.

ACTION: Close public comment for Item 10.A. **Motion carried by consensus of the Commission.**

Discussion was held regarding the various aspects of the proposed General Plan update. The following ideas and issues were suggested to further participation:

Commissioner Hamaker commented on the following:

- Shuttle transportation
- Workforce housing (definition)
- Developing units and cost of developments
- Rent control and the cost of building maintenance
- Communication, newsletters
- Fountain Avenue – sidewalks
- Eastside PAC, anonymous rent-a-car
- Land costs have escalated
- Loss of mom and pop businesses

Commissioner Bernstein commented on the following:

- South and East of City Hall needs modest growth, but not extreme
- Parking maximums and over parking
- Walkability
- Over parking
- Impacts of Rent Stabilization
- Is City able to help with maintenance costs
- Subsidized affordable housing (smaller units)

Chair Altschul commented on the following:

- Walkability (present versus in next twenty years)

Commissioner Guardarrama commented on the following:

- West Hollywood as a destination
- Housing and parking

Commissioner D'Amico commented on the following:

- Walkability
- Commercial Business Overlay
- Housing and parking
- Annexation is not possible
- Los Angeles will maximize height limits on the borders
- Transportation issues
- Density and aging
- Possible live-work area neighborhood re-zonings

Vice-Chair DeLuccio commented on:

- West Hollywood West unlikely to change
- More mixed-use
- Transportation and congestion
- Incorporate meaning into the new General Plan

Commissioner Yeber commented on:

- Aging and social services
- Empty nesters are moving into the city
- Architectural styles
- Local businesses versus chain stores
- Disconnect between businesses and residents
- Development and transportation issues
- Community participation

The following issues were discussed and questioned:

- Older buildings must be updated
- Infrastructure is failing
- Additional urban blight in the Eastside
- Affordable housing
- Subjectivity
- Land costs
- Patterns of density
- Sensitive areas
- Opportunities for change
- Additional transportation issues
- Year 2030

ACTION: Receive and file. **Motion carried by consensus of the Commission.**

B. General Plan Technical Reports.

This item was combined with Agenda Item 10.A. (General Plan Update Project) for presentation and discussion. **Motion carried by consensus of the Commission.**

11. UNFINISHED BUSINESS. None.

12. EXCLUDED CONSENT CALENDAR. None.

13. ITEMS FROM STAFF.

A. General Plan Update.

This item was pulled and removed from the Agenda as part of the amended agenda. **Moved by Vice-Chair DeLuccio, seconded by Commissioner Hamaker and unanimously carried.**

B. Director's Report. None.

C. Planning Manager's Update.

John Keho, Planning Manager, provided an update of upcoming projects tentatively scheduled for Planning Commission. He stated there will be a reality television show filming at the next Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, August 21, 2008.

14. PUBLIC COMMENT.

JEANNE DOBRIN, WEST HOLLYWOOD, commented on public meeting attendance and the City of West Hollywood's tax base.

15. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS.

Commissioner Guardarrama thanked staff for all the hard work on the General Plan Update.

16. ADJOURNMENT: The Planning Commission adjourned 8:12 P.M. to a regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission, which will be on Thursday, August 21, 2008 at 6:30 P.M. at West Hollywood Park Auditorium, 647 N. San Vicente Boulevard, West Hollywood, California. **Motion carried by consensus of the Commission.**

APPROVED BY A MOTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON THIS 4TH DAY OF
SEPTEMBER, 2008.



CHAIRPERSON

ATTEST:



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR