

West Hollywood General Plan Baseline Land Use Background Report

This report documents 2008 baseline land use conditions and identifies preliminary land use issues relevant to the update of the West Hollywood General Plan Land Use Element. This information provides a context for exploring opportunities for land use change over the long term (20-year period). The information presented in this report will be used, along with background reports on other topics, to develop land use policies and objectives for the General Plan update.

Geographic Context

West Hollywood is located approximately eight miles west of downtown Los Angeles. The City encompasses 1.9 square miles of land area, with a maximum east-west length of approximately 2.9 miles at the extent of its pan-handle shape. The City of Los Angeles surrounds West Hollywood to the north, south and east, with the communities of the Hollywood Hills, the Fairfax District, and Hollywood, respectively. To the west, the City is bounded by Beverly Hills.

West Hollywood lies at the base of the Hollywood Hills. South of Santa Monica Boulevard, the topography is relatively flat, but moving north from Santa Monica Boulevard, the terrain slopes upward, with fairly steep inclines up many of the streets heading toward Sunset Boulevard.

Major east-west roadways are Santa Monica Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard, and to a lesser extent Melrose Avenue and Beverly Boulevard. No freeways directly access the City, with the nearest freeway, State Route 101, located over two miles to the east and accessed via either Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles or Highland Avenue near the Hollywood Bowl. The City is served by major bus lines operated by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Los Angeles County (Metro). Metro operates Metro local and Metro rapid buses through West Hollywood, and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation operates a DASH bus through the City. West Hollywood also operates its own bus system, the Cityline bus system. Cityline offers public transportation within the City for 25 cents and has two routes, with lead times of approximately 40 minutes.

West Hollywood is built out, with only 5 acres of vacant land. There are additional properties with vacant structures, but most of these have pending or approved plans for development. Approximately 316 acres (26%) of the City is used for public streets, sidewalks, parkways and alleyways.

Historical Land Use Trends in West Hollywood

The area that is now the City of West Hollywood began developing an agricultural economy in the late 1800s inside large unincorporated Los Angeles County. By the 1890s, the Pacific Railway Company was operating the Los Angeles electric car line along Santa Monica Boulevard in what is now known as West Hollywood. The area was called Sherman, after Moses H. Sherman, the owner of the Los Angeles Pacific Railway. The site near the corner of Santa Monica and San Vicente Boulevards was used as the company headquarters and rail yards. Nearby housing for the rail yards helped the modest village of Sherman to prosper and grow through the next decades.

In the early 20th century, the newly-emerging film industry spurred change in all of the areas surrounding Hollywood. Newcomers were attracted by the thriving film, oil and transportation industries, and the population of Sherman began to rise. In 1925, the area known as Sherman changed its name to West Hollywood to portray the changing times and capitalize on the fame of its neighbor to the east.

The growth in auto ownership and desire for single-family homes in the Roaring Twenties led to vast expansion of roads and development that determined much of West Hollywood's street and development patterns. Development along Santa Monica Boulevard was particularly dramatic between 1922 and 1926, as illustrated in these photographs.

West Hollywood with Hollywood hills in the background, circa 1922



West Hollywood, circa 1926. Dramatic increase in housing development.



The Sunset Strip also emerged around this time as a fashionable district for entertainment and hospitality, drawing a large residential and visitor population. Elegant apartment complexes to house Hollywood's new elite began to pop up in the areas surrounding the Strip. Adorned with clubs, billboards and movie stars, the success of the Sunset Strip continued for decades.



*Sunset
Strip, circa
1939.*

By mid-century, the railroad industry was becoming defunct, however, the physical transformation of the City due to the railroad and other attractions had forever changed the area from a rural form to an urban community. The tracks were still visible on parts of Santa Monica Boulevard until the reconstruction in the 1990s.

World War II signaled the end of the free-wheeling extravagant "Hollywood" lifestyle. The entertainment district of the Sunset Strip took a downturn, and clubs began to close. This was partly the result of more "home-based" forms of entertainment as the television industry grew. Political reform and the McCarthy era also led to lower profiles among celebrities.

In the 1960s and 70s a new wave of clubs opened as the music industry gravitated to the Strip. The Rainbow, Roxy, Gazzarri's and the Whiskey featured up and coming rock bands that drew a young counterculture crowd. The limited government oversight from Los Angeles County also helped to fuel the growth of a vibrant social scene. More recently, a wave of designer hotels and star-chefs has been felt on the Strip with The Standard hotel, major renovations at the Mondrian, Argyle, Hyatt, and The London.

In the 1970s, the areas around Beverly Boulevard and Robertson Avenue attracted large concentrations of design showrooms, leading eventually to the location of the Cesar Pelli-designed Pacific Design Center in 1975. This 750,000-square-foot facility became home to many

small businesses within the arts and design industry. This stage of design, bohemia, low rents, and lack of government oversight (and the area's location outside of jurisdiction of Los Angeles City police, where harassment against gays and minorities prevailed) facilitated an artful play of progressive, open, and accepting activities that supported a rising gay community in Los Angeles. As early as 1980, the area along Santa Monica Boulevard east of Doheny Drive became known as "Boystown."

In the 1980s, multiple political pressures encouraged the residents of then-unincorporated West Hollywood to begin an incorporation drive. First, Los Angeles County's rent control ordinance was scheduled to expire in 1984. Residents of the West Hollywood area were overwhelmingly renters, with one survey at the time showing 90 percent renters, causing widespread alarm about the pending rent control expiration. Also, lax standards from the County led to development of multi-family housing with limited design character and quality. A group of local renters and seniors developed a cohesive, area-wide strategy with the area's lesbian and gay community to support rent control and West Hollywood's 1984 incorporation.

Baseline Land Use Survey (2008)

In January 2008, City and consultant staff conducted a city-wide parcel-specific land use survey. The survey was undertaken to establish baseline data regarding what land uses, densities, and heights of buildings exist on the ground as of 2008. The data was collected through a walking visual survey. Additional data from the Los Angeles County tax assessor was also obtained and used along with the City's parcel data to create the report presented below. In addition to informing future land use planning, this data was also used in the creation of a West Hollywood-specific traffic model. The traffic model is being created by the Transportation Division as part of the General Plan update to better predict land use and circulation relationships.

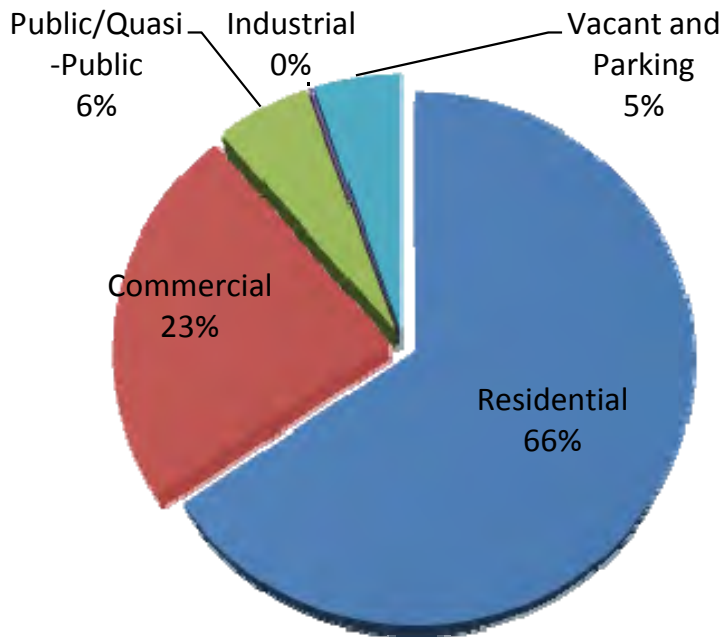
Distribution of Existing Land Uses

The land use patterns in West Hollywood today reflect the City's historic development trends established when the City was an unincorporated part of Los Angeles County. This includes a mix of commercial uses and a range of housing types and densities. This has contributed to creation of a vibrant urban village, with commercial destinations that are known around the world.

The Sunset Strip is a renowned urban corridor, with destinations that attract tourists from around the country and abroad. The Santa Monica Corridor also supports diverse commercial uses, with the west end sometimes referred to as "Boystown" for its concentration of gay-oriented stores, bars and restaurants, and the east side noted for ethnic service and retail businesses focused on the local Russian community. The Melrose/Robertson area is home to many high-end design and furnishings businesses, and the neighborhoods surrounding all of these areas provide easy access to nightlife, entertainment, and daily needs.

Figure LU-1 identifies the distribution of existing land uses as of January 2008, and Table LU-1 indicates the acreage by land use category. Figure LU-2 is a map showing the interrelationships and distribution of the existing land uses. All acres are based on the net developable land in the city, which does not include streets, roads or alleyways.

**Figure LU-1
Land Use Distribution (2008)**



Source: Baseline Land Use Survey, 2008.

- Residential development represents the predominant land use in West Hollywood, with 586 acres of housing covering 65 percent of the City's land area.
- Commercial uses occupy the second largest land area, with 212 acres (24 percent)¹.
- Public facilities, parks, schools, mixed-use, and religious institutions each occupy a small percentage of land (between 0.5 and 2 percent each).
- Parking lots, both municipally and privately operated, occupy almost 16 acres in West Hollywood.
- Very few vacant properties are available. Of the 31 acres categorized as vacant, nearly half are vacant buildings, often in transition to another use. Over one-third were actively under construction in January 2008, and only 5 acres (16 percent) were vacant without structures.
- An additional 316 acres in the city, or 26% percent of the land area, is used for streets, alleys, and other public rights-of-way. Figure LU-1 is based on net developable land, so the PROW is not included in the calculations above.

¹ Included in the Commercial category are 8.79 acres of mixed use, which contain 121 dwelling units and 251,378 square feet of commercial space.

**Table LU-1
Baseline Land Use Distribution – 2008**

	Baseline Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	Very Low Density (0.1 – 8 du/ac)	48.3	5%
	Low Density (8.1 – 17 du/ac)	121.9	14%
	Medium Density (17.1 – 22 du/ac)	35.2	4%
	High Density (22.1 – 36 du/ac)	79.5	9%
	Very High Density (36.1 – 50 du/ac)	301.4	34%
	Residential subtotal	586.3	65%
Commercial	Commercial Retail and Service	32.8	4%
	Office	39.6	4%
	Commercial Entertainment	17.0	2%
	Specialty Commercial (Design and Art)	16.1	2%
	Hotel	10.6	1%
	Multiple Commercial Uses	84.3	9%
	<i>Commercial Retail and Service</i>	<i>37.4</i>	
	<i>Office</i>	<i>18.4</i>	
	<i>Commercial Entertainment</i>	<i>12.5</i>	
	<i>Specialty Commercial (Design and Art)</i>	<i>11.89</i>	
	<i>Hotel</i>	<i>2.1</i>	
	<i>Vacant Building</i>	<i>1.1</i>	
	<i>Under Construction</i>	<i>0.2</i>	
	<i>Museum</i>	<i>0.5</i>	
	Mixed Use	8.8	1%
Commercial subtotal	209.2	23%	
Public/Quasi Public	Public Facility	17.9	2%
	Park	16.6	2%
	Religious Institution	4.2	0%
	School	12.7	1%
	Public/Quasi Public subtotal	51.4	6%
Other Uses	Industrial	1.8	0%
	Parking	15.9	2%
	Vacant	31.1	3%
	Other Uses subtotal	48.8	5%
	Grand Total	895.7	100%

Source: Baseline Land Use Survey, 2008.

Notes: Net acres-does not include acreage of streets and other rights-of-way.

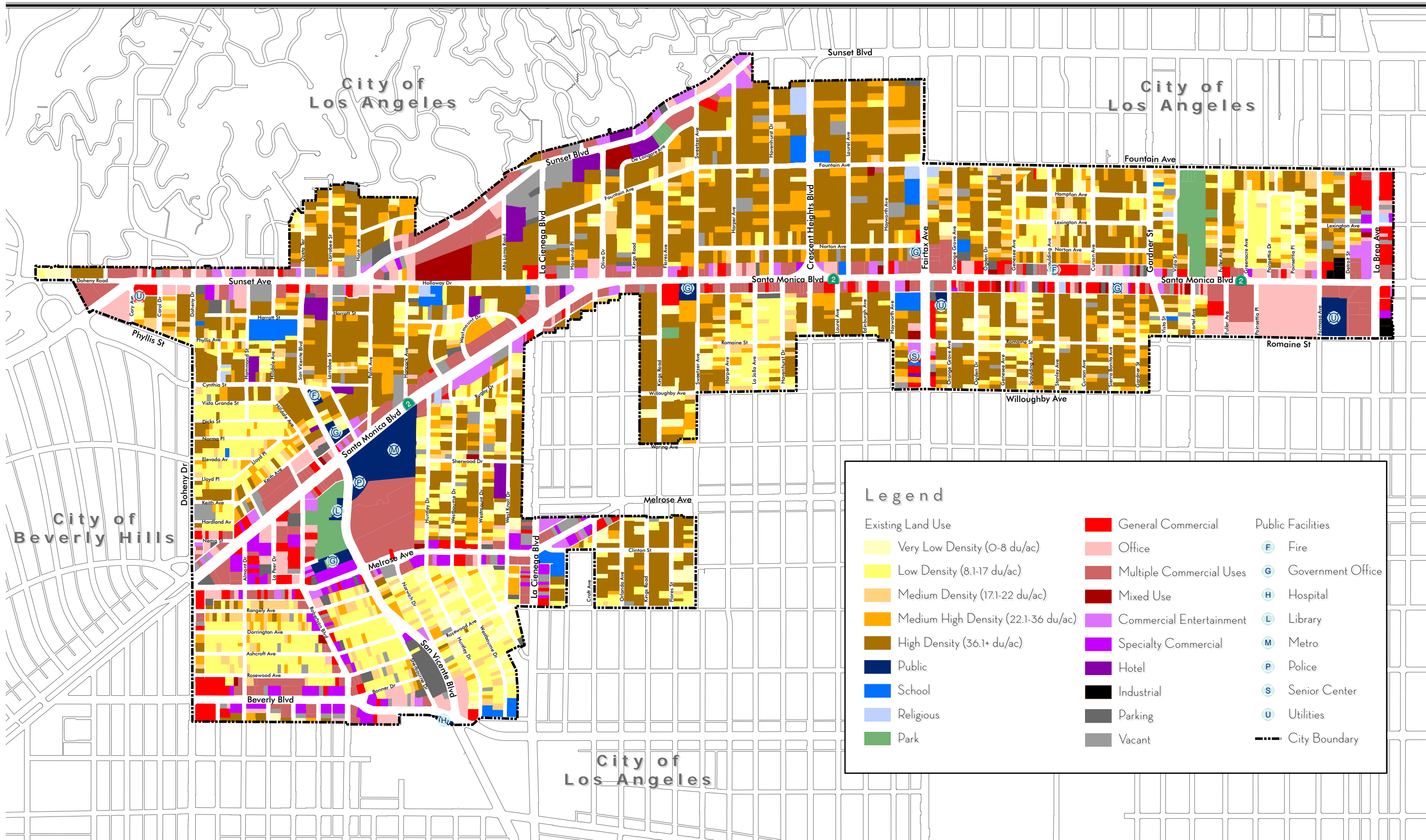


FIGURE LU-2 EXISTING LAND USE 2008

Source: West Hollywood, GIS December 2007.
 0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

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Residential

The number of housing units was collected through the baseline land use survey by observing properties from public areas. For multi-family properties with a directory, the directory was used to determine the number of housing units. The data was adjusted after collection only for those properties that are known to contain legalized units because many of these units are not visible from the street, particularly on single-family and duplex properties. Collecting this data from each property in the City was an extensive process, and there is expected to be a margin of error in the data collection. As a result, numbers from the survey may differ from data collected through other sources such as the Census.

Table LU-2 identifies the housing types that comprise the housing stock in West Hollywood. Table LU-3 indicates the percentage of housing units in the City that are occupied by renters and owners, according to the 2000 Census.

Table LU-2
Housing Units and Types

Dwelling Type	Number
Single Family Dwelling	1,108
Multi-Family Dwelling:	
2 units	1,138
3 units	585
4 units	672
5 units or more	21,311
Total	24,814

Source: Baseline Land Use Survey, 2008

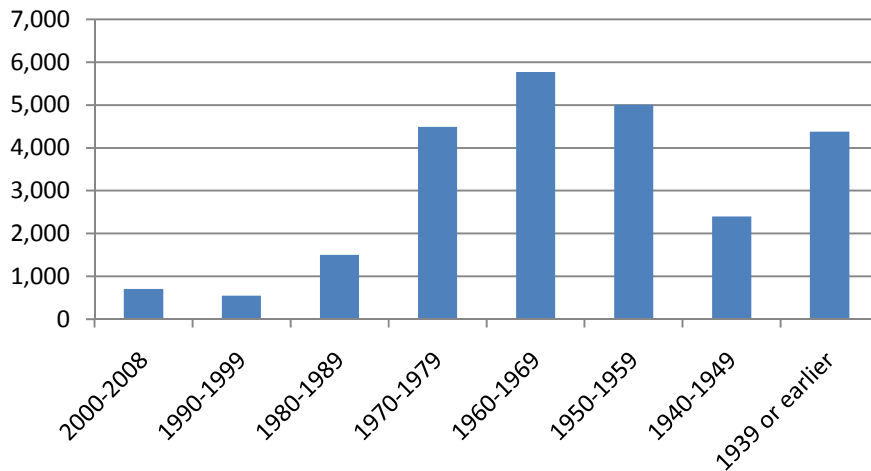
Table LU-3
Housing Tenure

Tenure	Percent
Owner occupied	22%
Renter occupied	78%
Total:	100%

Source: Census, 2000.

The majority of the City's housing stock was built between the 1950s-1970s, as indicated in Figure LU-3. Over 15,000 dwelling units were built during that period, compared to less than 3,000 units in the decades since 1980. Prior to that, the biggest wave of development happened in the period between 1910 and 1930.

**Figure LU-3
Housing Stock Year Built**



Source: Census 2000, West Hollywood Baseline Land Use Survey 2008.

Nonresidential

Commercial

Commercial uses in West Hollywood are located along the City’s main corridors. Commercial activity is a key component of the physical, social and economic environment of the City. The commercial corridors include Sunset Strip, Santa Monica Boulevard, Beverly Boulevard, and Melrose Avenue. They provide neighborhood conveniences used regularly by West Hollywood residents, as well as major destinations for visitors. Figure LU-1 shows commercial uses on these primary corridors.

For the baseline land use survey field work, 12 commercial categories were established. For the purposes of this report, commercial uses were further consolidated into seven primary use categories, reflective of the unique character of West Hollywood. The category composition is outlined in Table LU-3.

**Table LU-3
Baseline Land Use Commercial Categories**

Commercial Category	Uses Included
Commercial Retail and Service	Personal services, retail food, retail non-food, and auto-related services
Office	Professional, medical, and financial offices
Commercial Entertainment	Restaurants, nightclubs and bars, and health clubs and gyms
Specialty Commercial (Design and Art)	Design furnishings and art galleries
Hotel	Hotels and motels
Multiple Commercial Uses	Any of the above uses located concurrently on one property or parcel/lot

Source: Baseline Land Use Survey, 2008

Industrial

There is no industrial category of zoning in West Hollywood. Only two sites in the City were identified as existing industrial uses in the baseline land use survey: Faith Plating on Santa Monica Boulevard at Detroit Street, and the Cemex cement factory on La Brea Avenue. Faith Plating provides custom chrome plating, and Cemex produces cement and aggregates on site. A development company has submitted an application for mixed-use residential and commercial construction on the Faith Plating site.

There is also quasi-industrial activity that occurs at the Metro Division 7 Bus Facility on Santa Monica Boulevard. The Metro site has functioned as a bus storage and maintenance facility since prior to West Hollywood incorporation, and was formerly the Pacific Railway train yards. The 8.5-acre serves as a full-maintenance facility for Metro buses, fueling station, and Metro employee facility. The site is zoned as a public facility because it is owned and operated by a County government agency (Metro).

Public/Quasi-Public

The Public/Quasi-Public category includes private and publicly owned land serving public agencies, such as schools, parks, government facilities, police and fire stations, libraries, and utilities and transit facilities. Public/Quasi-Public lands in West Hollywood encompass 51.4 acres. This category includes West Hollywood Park, Plummer Park, Hart Park, City Hall, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Station, West Hollywood Elementary, and other facilities.

Development Density

Development density is used to describe the extent to which a parcel of land is developed. For residential uses, the number of residential units per acre of land is used. The units may be stand-alone or contained within a single structure or group of structures. For nonresidential land use categories, it can be expressed in several ways, such as the total building square footage, the mass of a building, the percent of lot coverage, or the floor-area ratio (FAR). For the land use survey, FAR was calculated based on reports from the Los Angeles County Assessor on building square footage, divided by the lot size as recorded in the West Hollywood GIS parcel database. The vast majority of commercial parcels in West Hollywood have an FAR of less than 1.0 (67 percent of parcels).

Residential uses are located throughout West Hollywood at varying development densities. More than half of the residential acreage consists of properties development at densities greater than 36 units per acre. These areas are distributed throughout the City, with the exceptions of along major corridors, which are predominantly commercial. Concentrations of high-density residential neighborhoods occur in the central part of the City, especially north of Santa Monica Boulevard. The lowest residential densities are generally located in three areas: south of Melrose Avenue, east of Doheny Drive and north of Keith Avenue, and the Greenacre Avenue/Poinsettia Drive/Poinsettia Place neighborhood in the east portion of the City.

After completion of the first draft of the Technical Report, the consultant team prepared two maps comparing existing density to maximum permitted density with current zoning. One map shows residential density, and one map shows commercial density. These two maps are included at the end of this report as Figure LU-6 and LU-7.

**Table LU-4
Commercial FAR**

FAR	Number of Parcels	Percent
0.0	143	12%
0.01-0.5	348	29%
0.51-1.0	450	38%
1.01-1.5	143	12%
1.51-2.0	42	4%
2.0+	64	5%
Total	1190	100%

Source: West Hollywood GIS 2007; LA County Assessor Building Square Footage, 2007.

Note: 0.0 FAR indicates a lot with no buildings.

In addition to the specific uses documented in the Baseline Land Use Survey, the number of building floors or stories was recorded on every property. The results of this survey are mapped in Figure LU-4. The predominant building type in the City is one-story (45 percent). Over one-third of the buildings in the City are two stories tall, and approximately 10 percent of the buildings are three or four stories tall.

Building height, in number of feet, will vary significantly within each category of number of stories. For example, a typical commercial story is 12-16 feet, excluding parapet, while a typical residential story is 9 feet. Some buildings have a first floor that is elevated from the street, such as over a parking area or over a raised foundation. In these cases, the lower level was not counted if it projected less than 6 feet above the street level. In sloped areas of the City, the number of stories was calculated at or near the main entry of the building. Because of these conditions, the height of buildings (in number of feet) may vary within each category.

**Table LU-5
Existing Buildings: Number of Stories**

Stories	Number of Parcels	Percent
0	346	7.60%
1	2057	45.19%
2	1611	35.39%
3	313	6.88%
4	155	3.41%
5-8	50	1.10%
9-16	19	0.42%
17-32	1	0.02%
Total	4552	100%

Source: Baseline Land Use Survey, 2008.

Note: 0 stories indicates a lot with no buildings.

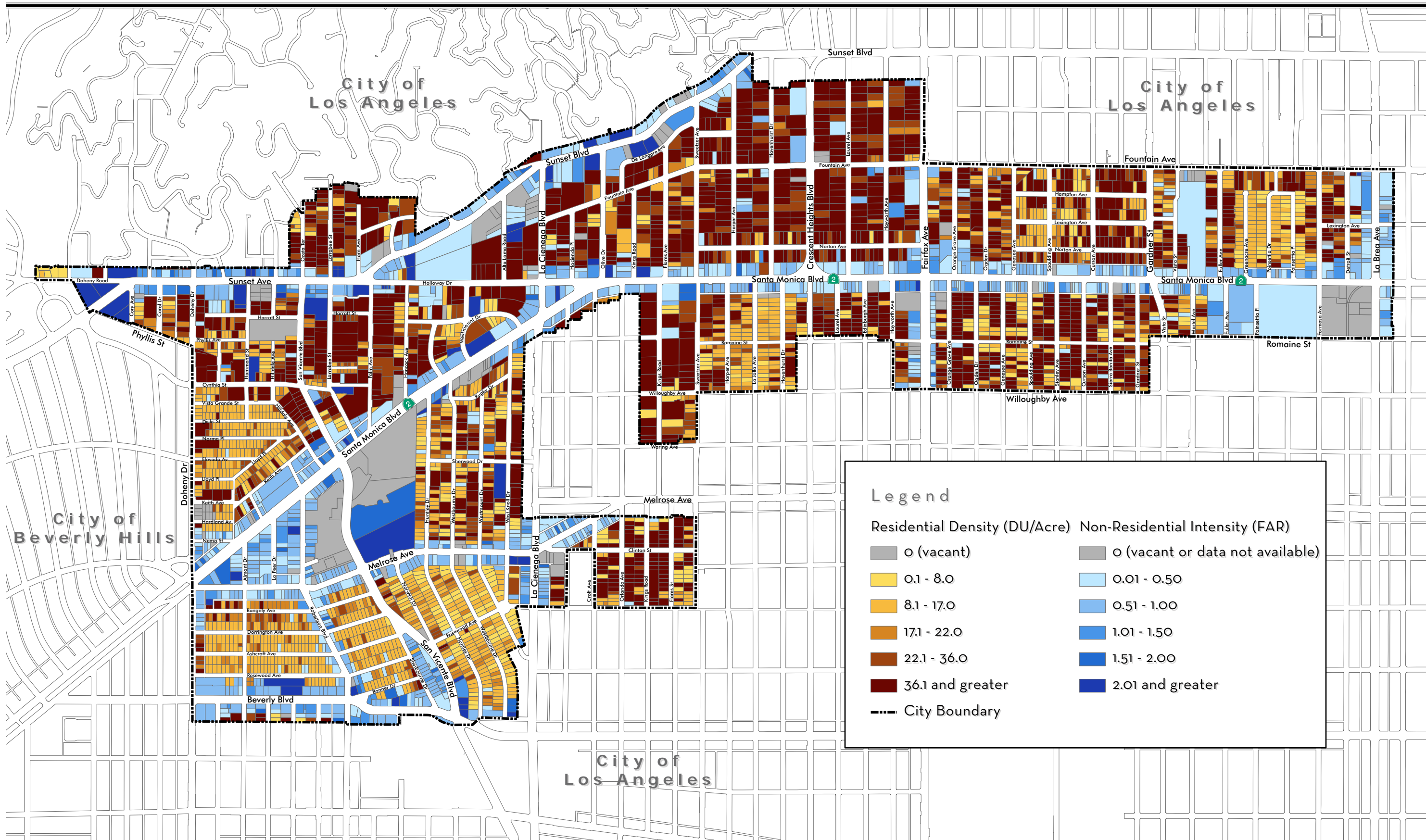
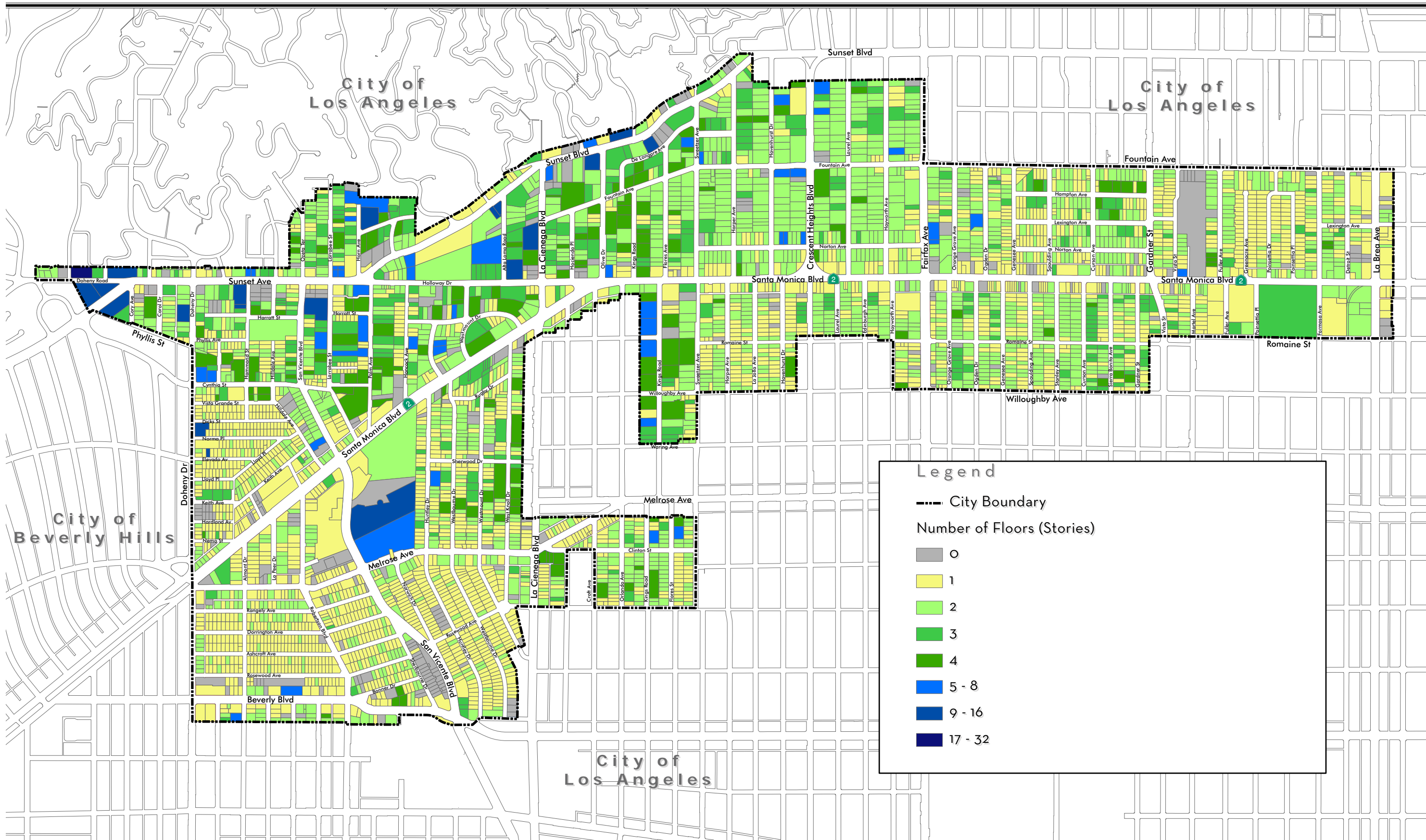


FIGURE LU-4 DENSITY AND INTENSITY

Source: West Hollywood Existing Land Use Survey, 2008.

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Legend

--- City Boundary

Number of Floors (Stories)

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - 8
- 9 - 16
- 17 - 32

FIGURE LU- 5 NUMBER OF FLOORS

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Land Use and Population Conditions

Current land use and population statistics can be generated based on the land use distribution identified in Table LU-1. Table LU-6 reports the current (2008) number of residential dwelling units as recorded in the January 2008 Baseline Land Use Survey, as well as overall estimated commercial and businesses square footage based on building footprint data and the number of floors recorded during the Baseline Land Use Survey. Population figures were calculated based on the dwelling unit count, housing vacancy rates, and average household size (2008 data from the State Department of Finance).

**Table LU-6
Current Land Use and Population Conditions**

Baseline Land Use		Average Density/ Intensity	Acres	Dwelling Units	Non-Residential Square Feet	Population
Residential	Very Low Density (0.1 – 8 du/ac)	6.6 du/ac	48.3	317		483
	Low Density (8.1 – 17 du/ac)	12.0 du/ac	122.0	1,469		2,239
	Medium Density (17.1 – 22 du/ac)	19.0 du/ac	35.2	670		1,021
	High Density (22.1 – 36 du/ac)	28.9 du/ac	79.5	2,301		3,507
	Very High Density (36.1 – 50 du/ac)	66.2 du/ac	301.4	19,945		30,396
Commercial	Commercial Retail and Service	0.58 FAR	32.8	-	830,000	-
	Office	1.24 FAR	39.6	-	2,143,000	-
	Commercial Entertainment	0.50 FAR	17.0	-	369,000	-
	Specialty Comm. (Design & Art)	0.74 FAR	16.1	-	521,000	-
	Hotel	2.86 FAR	10.6	-	1,321,000	-
	Multiple Commercial Uses	1.13 FAR	84.3	-	4,305,000	-
	Mixed Use	0.55 FAR	8.8	112	210,000	171
Public/ Quasi Public	Public Facility	0.15 FAR	17.9	-	126,000	-
	Park	-	16.6	-	-	-
	Religious Institution	0.63 FAR	4.2	-	115,000	-
	School	0.29 FAR	12.7	-	161,000	-
Other Uses	Industrial	0.89 FAR	1.8	-	63,000	-
	Parking	-	15.9	-	-	-
	Vacant	-	31.1	-	-	-
Total			895.8	24,814	10,164,000	37,817

Source: Baseline Land Use Survey, 2008, LA County Assessor Building Square Footage, 2007, CA Department of Finance 2008 Estimates.

Notes:

- (a) FAR = Floor-Area Ratio (Intensity); DU/AC = dwelling unit per acre (Density)
- (b) Dwelling Unit totals correspond to January 2008 Baseline Land Use Survey.
- (c) Non-Residential Square footage is based on LA County Assessor Data, 2007.
- (c) Population is calculated based on the average household size of 1.589 persons per household and a vacancy rate of 4.09%, according to the Department of Finance (DOF) 2008, Demographic Research Unit.

The total number of dwelling units and population numbers are fairly consistent with the State of California Department of Finance estimates for dwelling units and population counts for 2008 (Table LU-7). Table LU-7 also shows the projections in past General Plan Elements, both in 1988 and in 1998.

**Table LU-7
Department of Finance and Land Use Survey Comparison**

Source	Dwelling Units	Population
Baseline Land Use Survey 2008	24,814	37,817
CA Department of Finance 2008 Estimates	24,499	37,563
Difference	1.3%	0.7%
1988 General Plan Projection for 2000	--	47,564
1998 General Plan Housing Element	--	38,913

Source: Baseline Land Use Survey 2008, CA Department of Finance 2008 Estimates, 1988 General Plan Housing Element, 1998 West Hollywood General Plan Housing Element

Applicable Land Use Plans

General Plan

The City's first General Plan was adopted in 1988. The Housing Element has been updated periodically as required by State law. The current Housing Element was adopted in 2002. The General Plan contains the seven State-mandated elements, as well as optional elements (Table LU-8).

**Table LU-8
Baseline General Plan Elements**

Mandatory Elements	Optional Elements
Land Use	Public Open Space Urban Design
Circulation	Economic Development Strategy
Housing	Utilities
Conservation (Energy and Water Conservation)	Education and Cultural
Open Space (Vegetation and Wildlife)	Public Safety: Police and Fire
Noise	Parks and Recreation
Safety (Seismic, Flooding, Natural Gas)	Human Services
	Air Quality
	Historic Preservation

Source: 1988 West Hollywood General Plan

Zoning Code

West Hollywood's Zoning Code serves as the primary implementation tool for the General Plan. Whereas the General Plan is a policy document that sets forth direction for development decisions, the Zoning Code is a regulatory document that establishes specific standards for the use and development of all properties in the City. The Code regulates development intensity using a variety of methods, such as units per acre, floor area ratio, building setbacks, building heights, and building massing guidelines. The Code also indicates which uses are permitted in the various zones, and the amount of parking required. The City is divided into zone districts, as shown on the Zoning Map.

One of the fundamental land use principles adopted in the City of West Hollywood's General Plan in 1988 was to encourage residential use above commercial use on the primary corridors to foster a livable, walkable City. One measure introduced to accomplish this goal was the inclusion of a mixed-use land use designation. This designation was included in the Zoning Code in the form of mixed-use incentives.

In August 2003, the West Hollywood City Council initiated a discussion regarding mixed-use development. At that time, the City's Zoning Code allowed for mixed-use, but few projects had been proposed. The Phase I Framework to the General Plan Update, completed in 2003, identified community support for pursuing mixed-use development on the City's commercial corridors to meet community housing needs. The City Council directed the Community Development Department to establish a project team and a Mixed-use Task Force to review the Zoning Code relative to mixed-use development, and to explore methods to encourage mixed-use projects. After subsequent discussion, the City Council directed staff to continue the exploration in the Redevelopment Area, and to incorporate discussion of mixed-use in the remaining areas of the city through the General Plan Update process. Both of those efforts are currently on-going.

General Plan and Zoning Code Consistency

West Hollywood is a general law city. General law cities are required by Section 65860 of the California Government Code to have zoning codes that are consistent with the city's general plan. Specific plans and any other local plan must also be consistent with the general plan. The various land uses authorized by the zoning code must be compatible with the objectives, policies, general land uses, and programs in the general plan. If the zoning code becomes inconsistent with a general plan by reason of amendment to the general plan, the code must be amended within a reasonable time so that it is consistent with the amended general plan (Government Code §65860).

Specific Plans

A specific plan is a detailed plan for the development of a particular area. Specific plans are intended to provide finite specification of the types of uses to be permitted, development standards (setbacks, heights, landscape, architecture, etc), and circulation and infrastructure improvements that are broadly defined by the General Plan. Specific plans are often used to ensure that multiple property owners and developers adhere to a single common development plan, as well as to provide flexibility in development standards beyond those contained in the zoning code as a means of achieving superior design.

There are currently two specific plans in effect in West Hollywood, the Pacific Design Center Specific Plan and the Sunset Specific Plan. The Pacific Design Center Specific Plan (PDC SP) covers approximately 14.2 acres in the southwestern portion of the City. The PDC was designed in the early 1970s by renowned architect Cesar Pelli. The design consisted of three large buildings, each of a different color, which were accompanied by landscaping and an open plaza space. Two of these buildings have been built, and the third is under construction. The specific plan establishes land use and development standards to protect the architectural landmark nature of the existing PDC buildings, and to enhance the development of design, creative, and office services in the area.

The Sunset Specific Plan was developed to encourage responsible development along Sunset Boulevard. Also known internationally as "The Strip", the corridor serves as a major artery for automobile traffic and a shopping and entertainment district. The Sunset Specific Plan includes urban design standards, density strategies, cultural resource guidelines, and land use and development regulations that require uses remain compatible, and that look to maintain the Strip as a vital district and encourage business development. The Sunset Specific Plan is divided into eight geographic sections, with corresponding development standards and policies.

Redevelopment

Redevelopment is a process created by the State of California to assist local governments in eliminating blight and revitalizing designated "project areas." Redevelopment provides communities with the ability to obtain funding to make infrastructure improvements, acquire property, and otherwise bring about desired development, reconstruction, and rehabilitation. A portion of redevelopment funds must also be used to promote affordable housing opportunities in the community.

Blight is a term used to describe a variety of physical and economic conditions, some of which may not fit the public's general perception of blight. Examples of physical blight include buildings that are deteriorating, aging, or poorly maintained. Blight may also describe buildings that are in good condition but need design or configuration improvements to meet current business needs. Inadequate streets, sewers, and other infrastructure are other examples of blight. Economic blight can be characterized by vacant buildings or land, high tenant turnover rates, residential overcrowding, or the inability to attract or retain businesses in a particular area.

The City has one adopted redevelopment project area. The Eastside Redevelopment Project Area was established in 1997 to remove blight and encourage redevelopment of parcels for both residential and commercial uses. The Redevelopment Agency has used set-aside money to rehabilitate existing residential buildings and to finance numerous affordable housing developments in the City. The Redevelopment Agency funds exterior rehabilitation projects that address the problems of deteriorating and dilapidated exteriors of both single- and multi-family residential buildings. The Agency participates in the development of affordable housing through partnerships with private developers and non-profit developers such as the West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation. These new units add to the community's supply of long-term affordable housing.

Another primary focus of the Redevelopment Agency is economic development within the project area. The City assists with land assembly and promotes the recycling and developing of underutilized parcels to accommodate higher and better economic uses. Through the Redevelopment Plan, the La Brea Gateway Development was completed, adding 250,000 square feet of retail and restaurant uses to the City. The five-acre site incorporates pedestrian-oriented retail shops organized around an oval plaza, and eliminated blight at a highly visible intersection.

Preliminary Land Use Issues Relevant to the General Plan Update

Below is a list of preliminary land use issues relevant to the General Plan Update, and a brief discussion of each. These issues were identified through the data analysis as well as the public participation to date. These issues will continue to be explored in the next project phases.

More detail about the public participation and comments provided can be found in the Phase I Public Participation Summary. This is available on-line at www.weho.org/generalplan, and was provided to the City Council and Planning Commission in July/August 2008.

Development Density and Building Trends

As part of the General Plan update process, a critical land use issue to be addressed is the degree to which West Hollywood will continue to become more “urban.” The current General Plan identifies the community as an “urban village”, and a key question to be answered is: What does “urban” mean in West Hollywood relative to development intensity, building form, and the overall appearance and function of neighborhoods and districts?

The scale of development within or near residential areas and in some commercial areas is a concern for some residents. Many people expressed concern about new residential construction in the R-3 and R-4 zones which, although consistent with adopted General Plan policy and adopted zoning regulations, raise concerns about compatibility with existing buildings and issues of tenant displacement. At the same time, numerous residents feel that increased densities are needed to facilitate the construction of additional affordable housing for a range of incomes. The City has adopted an Interim Ordinance for the R3 and R4 zones that regulates multi-family construction. The city is evaluating options for permanent land use regulations that facilitate housing production that better serves the housing needs of the community.

The City’s single-family neighborhoods are mostly composed of small lots, with many of the homes built in the early part of the twentieth century. As home preferences have changed, some new homes are being constructed, or additions made to existing structures, that create proportionally larger structures in these quaint neighborhoods. The City could potentially reevaluate the FAR or height limits for single-family neighborhoods to mediate problems related to massing and privacy concerns.

While considering these issues, the planning context is important to consider. The City is on the tail end of a cycle of residential building activity that, in the opinion of many residents, appeared to be one of the most vigorous since City incorporation. Although consistent with existing policies, the changes may have created conditions different than those to which residents had become accustomed. However, a significant slowdown is being felt in all areas of the economy, with major impacts in the housing market and construction. As a result, the pace of change has slowed dramatically over the last year with no indications of recovery at this time.

Land Costs and Affordability

In West Hollywood, land values continue to rise as developers look for opportunities to build multi-family housing, residential property owners look to extract additional value from their holdings, and major players develop retail and entertainment space in the City's highly desirable commercial districts. Rising land values and lease rates, coupled with the State Costa-Hawkins rules, contribute to the perception that the composition of both the commercial and residential sectors in the City is evolving.

Many residents feel that there is a need for more neighborhood-serving businesses, with goods and services at a modest price point. Small businesses, start-up companies and social agencies may be at a disadvantage in finding good locations due to lease costs. The City may consider assistance or retention programs such as inclusionary fees to retain desired existing businesses, especially those related to social service provision.

If a key goal is to retain the "village" feel of West Hollywood, land use and associated policies and programs will need to consider ways to retain businesses that meet everyday shopping and service needs, and to maintain existing and provide new affordable housing, thereby preserving the diverse character of the community.

Mixed-Use Development

Discussions with the community indicate support for mixed-use projects in strategic locations along the city's major corridors, with the exception of Sunset Boulevard. This is consistent with the findings of the Phase 1 Framework study done in 2003, as well as the preliminary work on the Mixed-Use Overlay Zone. Mixed-Use is seen as a key way to achieve affordable housing and commercial development goals in a manner that minimizes disruption in the city's residential zones. Many residents express a concern about heights for mixed-use projects, and believe that a high level of design standards should be established for new construction.

Parking, Circulation and Land Use

Most of the housing and commercial building stock in West Hollywood was constructed prior to incorporation using the regulations of Los Angeles County. The County imposed minimum parking standards in the early 1960s, well after most buildings in the City were complete. Some developers provided parking on-site but usually at rates well below the current City requirements. As a result, West Hollywood city streets accommodate over-flow parking from residential and commercial uses. In many residential areas permit parking districts help to limit the impacts of over-flow commercial parking. However, adequate parking is identified as a major concern for many residents and businesses.

Current land use regulations require significantly more parking spaces for residential and commercial uses than most existing buildings currently provide on-site. In some cases, the absence of parking for existing buildings influences lower lease and rental rates and helps to promote affordability. Grandfathering rights allow these existing buildings to continue to be used and remodeled. However as redevelopment occurs, new structures are required to provide the minimum code requirements for parking.

The City actively addresses the parking shortage and has worked with a number of new developments to build surplus parking for surrounding uses. The City's 25th Anniversary Capital Campaign projects will also be adding parking spaces in the west, central and eastern portions of the City.

Although parking may not be considered a land use issue per se, land use drives parking demand and, conversely, the ability to provide parking can drive land use choices. For example, the land area needed for parking (and circulation areas) and the cost of providing parking may influence the type of uses possible on a site. For existing buildings, certain land use changes are impossible without providing more parking, and for new buildings the cost of parking will influence the density needed to finance construction.

Possible approaches to addressing citywide parking concerns and long-term needs will have to be defined in the General Plan, particularly with respect to making the City accessible to residents and visitors. These may include programs such as parking districts, shared parking, and transportation demand management strategies. Circulation strategies, or whether we choose to walk, bicycle, drive or take transit to our destinations are also linked to all of these strategies and the demand and influence of parking on land use.

Metro Bus Facility

The Metro bus facility on Santa Monica Boulevard represents the largest piece of underutilized land in the City, a use that does not "fit" along a vibrant urban corridor, and a use that does not contribute to local revenues. The Metro site has been the focus of discussion in West Hollywood for years. The City is working with Metro to identify methods for reconfiguring the existing uses into a smaller footprint, while still accommodating bus maintenance, storage, fueling, and cleaning. If residual site area is identified, the site has the potential to recycle to a higher and better use that would revitalize this section of Santa Monica Boulevard and provide greater economic and other benefit to the City.