

West Hollywood **General Plan 2035**

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT



June 25, 2010

City of West Hollywood



June 25, 2010

RE: Public Review Draft General Plan

Dear West Hollywood Community Member,

Thank you for taking the time to review the Public Review Draft General Plan. This Draft is the first consolidated version of the updated General Plan. It reflects public input received to date, as well as consultant and staff expertise. The Public Review Draft General Plan will be modified to reflect the additional input of community members and City decision-makers during the public hearing process and prior to the adoption of the final document by City Council in the fall.

The Draft General Plan will be available for public review and comment between June 25 and August 9, 2010. A series of public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council will take place this fall. Please check the General Plan website, www.weho.org/generalplan, for information regarding upcoming community meetings.

The General Plan is a broad policy document with general policies to guide how we will use and manage our physical, social, and economic resources over the next 25 years. The General Plan is implemented in conjunction with other, more detailed documents, particularly the City's Zoning Ordinance. The details of the broad policy goals in the General Plan will be defined in the Zoning Ordinance. Following adoption of the updated General Plan by City Council, the Zoning Ordinance will be modified to reflect any changes in General Plan policy.

Sincerely,

Anne McIntosh

Deputy City Manager/Director of Community Development



elcome

The City of West Hollywood has a rich history and unique urban fabric that is known throughout the country and the world.

After only two and a half decades of Cityhood, West Hollywood has established itself as a statewide leader in providing social services to its residents; protecting the rights of all citizens regardless of age, ethnicity, income, or sexual orientation; promoting environmental programs; and implementing progressive housing policies. With a land area of only 1.9 square miles, the City is widely known for its entertainment, arts and design scene and eclectic urban character.

The West Hollywood General Plan 2035, adopted in 2010, provides a roadmap for the City to continue building on its success. It is intended to provide guidance for the next 25 years, with long-term strategies that address the unique characteristics and needs of West Hollywood.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thank you to our City staff who worked diligently together across all departments and divisions, and throughout the chain of command to create a visionary General Plan. Also, a special thank you is owed to our dedicated interns and volunteer who worked tirelessly on this plan. Thank you to the community members who attended the workshops and hearings and gave staff valuable input that helped to shape this General Plan.

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Rent Stabilization Commission
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01 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter describes the purpose and content of the General Plan, as well as the forces, values, and processes that have shaped the City over time. The chapter includes a discussion of the role of the General Plan in West Hollywood, the statutory requirements of California General Plans, and a description of how to use the West Hollywood General Plan. Following a summary of the process of updating the West Hollywood General Plan are an overview of the history of the City and existing conditions that set the context for West Hollywood General Plan 2035.

ROLE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan provides a future vision, policies, and proposed actions to guide decision-makers, staff members, project developers, businesses, and residents in West Hollywood. For City staff, the General Plan acts as a reference guide in evaluating projects, structuring City programs, and deciding whether to pursue new opportunities. City officials use the General Plan as the basis for decision-making and to guide the development of new policies, ordinances, programs, initiatives and capital expenditures.

The West Hollywood General Plan 2035 informs and is implemented by the City's various ordinances, specific plans, programs, and ongoing activities. It sets overall City policy and priorities for how to use and manage its physical, social, and economic resources. Developed through an extensive public involvement process, and through analysis and review by community advisory boards and commissions, City staff, and elected officials, it documents a shared vision for the future and sets the policies and programs to achieve that vision.

The General Plan also informs community members of the ground rules that guide physical and social development within our community. West Hollywood residents use the General Plan to understand the predominant community consensus regarding how, when and where the City should develop and change as a place to live, to work, and to invest. Businesses use the General Plan to understand economic development priorities and available resources, while developers use it to understand the City's development needs, preferences, and physical parameters.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The General Plan is governed by California Government Code, which requires that “each planning agency shall prepare and the legislative body of each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city” (California Government Code §65300). Seven topics are mandatory for the General Plan. These include the following:

- **Land Use.** What are the types, intensities, and distribution of uses in the community?
- **Circulation.** How do people, goods, and services move throughout the community?
- **Housing.** Where in the community should future housing be located? What types of housing should be provided? How will the needs of all income groups and special needs households be addressed?
- **Conservation.** How do we manage resources such as water, air, landscape, and other natural resources?
- **Open Space.** What areas in our community should be preserved or restored as open space and/or parks?
- **Noise.** What can the community do to control the impacts of noise from cars or businesses on our residents?
- **Safety.** What steps can the community take to protect residents from natural disasters such as flooding, earthquakes, and landslides, and to address crime and personal safety?

In addition to the required topics, the West Hollywood General Plan 2035 addresses additional non-mandatory topics that are of particular value to the community. This is sanctioned by California law, which allows a general plan to “include any other subjects [that] relate to the physical development of the...city” (California Government Code §65303). These topics include urban form, governance, economic development, infrastructure, social services and arts and culture.

The mandatory sections of a General Plan, as described above, are referred to by the State as “elements.” The State permits mandatory elements of a general plan “be adopted in any format deemed appropriate...including the combining of elements” (California Government Code §65301). These mandatory general plan elements are incorporated into various chapters of the General Plan 2035. The terms “element” and “chapter” can be used interchangeably. Sometimes the name of the state-mandated element and the name of the General Plan 2035 chapter overlap. For example, the “Land Use and Urban Form” chapter of General Plan 2035 contains the mandatory “land use” element. Other times, the mandatory element is located within a chapter assigned with a different name. For example, the mandatory “open space” element is housed in the “Parks and Recreation” chapter of



The City’s many cafes with outdoor dining help to create a vibrant pedestrian environment.



City parks offer access to green space as well as public art installations.

General Plan 2035. The organization of the General Plan into chapters that house both mandatory and non-mandatory elements makes General Plan 2035 more user-friendly.

Recognizing that the context in which the General Plan is implemented changes over time, State regulations allow mandatory elements of the General Plan to be modified up to four times per year. Proposed changes must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council at public hearings, and the potential environmental impacts of the proposed changes must also be evaluated pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. The State advises cities and counties to comprehensively update general plans approximately every 20 years.



Residential neighborhoods feature an eclectic mix of older and contemporary buildings.

CONTENTS

This General Plan is organized into the following 11 chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview.** This chapter introduces the General Plan. It provides an overview of the purpose, content, and context of the General Plan.
- **Chapter 2: Governance.** This optional chapter presents the goals and policies for how the City is governed and how it engages with the public.
- **Chapter 3: Land Use and Urban Form.** This chapter presents the General Plan land use designations, the vision for the City's neighborhoods and commercial corridors, and policies to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the community. The chapter addresses the majority of topics in the state-required Land Use Element.
- **Chapter 4: Historic Preservation.** This optional chapter provides the City's approach to preserving and protecting its cultural resources.
- **Chapter 5: Economic Development.** This optional chapter presents the goals and policies to expand the economic diversity and fiscal stability of the community.
- **Chapter 6: Mobility.** This chapter presents the City's vision for a multi-modal transportation system and includes the required topics of the Circulation Element.
- **Chapter 7: Human Services.** This optional chapter provides goals and policies for social services, arts and culture, and schools and education.
- **Chapter 8: Parks and Community Facilities.** This chapter includes topics required in the Open Space Element and discusses the management and expansion of the City's parks and other community facilities.
- **Chapter 9: Infrastructure, Resources, and Conservation.** This chapter describes the City's management and provision of infrastructure resources in a sustainable manner. It covers topics such as water infrastructure and conservation, energy conservation, climate change, storm water, and management of the streets and other public and private infrastructure necessary for a high-quality urban development. This chapter addresses two topics from state-required elements—infrastructure, a required topic in the Circulation Element, and conservation of natural resources, a required topic in the Conservation Element.
- **Chapter 10: Safety and Noise.** This chapter includes a range of topics that impact the health and safety of the community including police and fire services, emergency management and noise. It includes the State requirements for the Safety and Noise Elements.
- **Chapter 11: Housing.** This chapter includes the State-required Housing Element. The Housing Element includes goals and policies related to the provision of new housing and the preservation of existing housing, including affordable housing. Unlike other chapters, this chapter includes all relevant implementation actions. Detailed technical information on housing is included as a technical background appendix.

HOW TO USE THE GENERAL PLAN

Chapters in the West Hollywood General Plan 2035 have a similar structure. Following an introduction, they describe which, if any, of the topics discussed are mandatory under State law. They then provide a context discussion for the topic, often by summarizing the existing conditions in the City at the time that the General Plan was developed. Finally, each chapter includes a section with specific goals and policies for the City for each particular topic. Each goal also includes an intent statement to help clarify the overall purpose of the goal and underlying policies. The intent statements are not statements of policy and should not be used or cited independently of a goal or policy as the basis for decision-making. Rather, the intent statements are clarifying statements to help interpret the goals and policies, describing the purpose and need of each goal to help the public and decision-makers understand how the goal reflects community values.

Not every chapter follows the exact structure described above. Some chapters, such as Land Use and Urban Form, contain unique sections, such as the land use designations and map. Other chapters that contain multiple topics are organized in a slightly different way.

Goals and Policies

Each chapter of the General Plan contains goals and policies to guide decision-making. The language used in the goals and policies are as follows:

- **Goals** are general direction-setters. They provide a long-term vision that may or may not be realized. An example of a goal is:

Improve, enhance, and expand parks throughout the City.

- **Policies** support the stated goals by mandating, encouraging, or permitting certain actions. The following are examples of policies in the West Hollywood General Plan:

The City should work with local schools (public and private) to provide park and recreational space to the public through joint use of school grounds.

The City ensures appropriate lighting and visibility in all park facilities.

To clarify the degree of certainty or flexibility intended by General Plan policies, certain key verbs are consistently used in the following ways:

- Policies written in **present tense** indicate instances where the City is continuing ongoing practices. These ongoing practices are mandatory.
- **“Will”** indicates that compliance with the policy or action is mandatory.
- **“Should”** indicates that a policy or action is strongly encouraged by the City but not mandatory. Although compliance is voluntary, the particular policy is a recommendation about how to meet the goals in the General Plan.
- **“May”** indicates a permissive rather than required policy.


Together, this General Plan language creates a hierarchy of policies that will be mandated, encouraged, or allowed by the City over the coming decades.

Implementation

The goals and policies of the General Plan chapters are supported by the Implementation Chapter. This chapter lists specific implementation actions for the policies set forth within individual elements of this General Plan. Implementation actions – such as creating an ordinance or updating a master plan – are specific activities that will be completed by a certain time or at regular intervals. Policies differ from implementation actions in that they are ongoing, whereas implementation actions are specific tasks that the City carries out in implementing the vision of the General Plan.

In addition to providing specific implementation actions, the Implementation Chapter prescribes which departments and divisions should be involved in implementing individual actions. It also provides a suggested time frame for implementation, ranging from short- to long-term. Implementation actions will be updated regularly as part of the General Plan.

Sustainability Icons

Environmental sustainability is a key guiding principle of this General Plan. The  symbol is used throughout the General Plan to indicate policies that further sustainability strategies in order to maintain and enhance the City, and achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions.

THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Included below is a summary of how this General Plan was created. This includes a description of how the 1988 West Hollywood General Plan and other City documents relate to the West Hollywood General Plan 2035, an overview of the public involvement process, and a summary of the role of the General Plan Advisory Committee, the City Council, and Commissions.

Update to the 1988 West Hollywood General Plan

This General Plan is an update to the 1988 West Hollywood General Plan, which was formulated soon after the City incorporated in 1984. When the 1988 General Plan was written, the new City did not yet have a full set of implementation documents in place, such as the Zoning Code, specific plans, and other functional plans. As a result, the 1988 General Plan provided very detailed and specific policy guidance for a wide range of strategic and administrative topics. It provided the impetus to establish and maintain many successful social services and public safety programs. It also guided the new government's approach to planning for new development, establishing and maintaining City parks, developing important public infrastructure, and organizing municipal operations and governance.

The General Plan 2035 is written at a very different time in the City's history. Therefore, it contains different content, areas of focus, and levels of detail than the 1988 West Hollywood General Plan, reflecting the City's current needs and vision for its future. The City has had 25 years to develop its identity, the demographics of the City have shifted, West Hollywood's economy has evolved, its identity as an urban space has matured, and the concept of environmental sustainability has become increasingly intertwined with the City's future and well-being.

In addition, since 1988 the City has developed multiple implementing documents and ordinances for specific topics or areas, including the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines ("zoning code"), several specific plans, a Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan, a Green Building Ordinance, a Hazard Mitigation Plan and others. Implementing documents work in concert with the General Plan 2035 and relieve some of the burden on it to provide extensive detail for all topics. The zoning code, one of the City's most important implementing documents, further details and regulates the City's future land use and design vision, as laid out in the General Plan 2035. Many implementing documents, including the zoning code, are likely to be updated regularly throughout the life of the General Plan 2035. Combined with the fact that many administrative processes and infrastructure systems are now more normalized and well-established than they were in 1988, one of the top priorities for the General Plan 2035 has been to make the General Plan more streamlined, user-friendly, and easily accessible for future use.

Public Involvement

Central to the process of creating the West Hollywood General Plan 2035 was an extensive public outreach process. The General Plan is a policy document, but it is also a community document, describing the community's future vision of the City. The goal of the public outreach was to understand how residents, business owners, property owners, and community organizations view current conditions in the City and how they envision West Hollywood for the next 25 years.

Methods

During the process of creating the General Plan 2035, the City engaged with nearly one thousand community members through a series of community events, surveys, and input from the General Plan Advisory Committee. The City also used newsletters and mailings, its website, e-mail, the City's television channel, newspaper advertisements, and other means to communicate with the community about the General Plan update process. Each outreach activity was designed to yield a different type of input, and the wide range of methods used was intended to ensure broad community participation. With the exception of a telephone survey, outreach activities did not include a scientific sampling and tabulation of West Hollywood residents and business people.

The City received input on topics ranging from required components of the General Plan – land use, transportation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety – to those with a particular resonance in West Hollywood, such as social service needs, urban design, and affordable housing. Comments received throughout the public outreach process

represent the community's beliefs, passions, values, and concerns for the City, and directly informed the policy content of the General Plan 2035.

Outreach Events and Timeline

The development of the West Hollywood General Plan 2035 began with a community fair in February, 2008. It was attended by more than 200 West Hollywood residents, business representatives, and others. Attendees participated in interactive exhibits dealing with issues such as urban design, land use, traffic, parking, housing, and sustainability. The event allowed attendees to learn more about West Hollywood while providing feedback to inform the General Plan.

Additional community outreach activities held throughout the General Plan Update process included:

- 140 one-on-one **interviews** with community stakeholders including residents and neighborhood watch captains, business owners and business improvement district (BID) representatives, members of City boards and commissions, social service providers, LGBT service providers and representatives, elected officials and department directors, artists and representatives of the arts community, educators, religious leaders, property owners, parents, and architects and members of the development community;
- **Visioneering**, a process in which community members asked other community members to fill out cards that posed questions about West Hollywood, providing insight into general ideas and concerns, as well as impressions of neighborhood character. Approximately 1,400 cards were collected from 542 participants;
- Three **Focus Groups** with a total of 26 participants, held in March 2008, including two sessions with residents who were solicited by telephone, and one with non-profit providers and business stakeholders;
- Three **neighborhood workshops** in September 2008 to discuss land use issues;
- A November 8, 2008 **Community Workshop** that focused on visions for residential and commercial neighborhoods and was attended by nearly 70 people;



Community members of all ages attended public workshops during the General Plan Update process.

- A **telephone survey** of 440 English and Russian-speaking residents, seeking input on a range of topics to be addressed in the General Plan;
- A January 30, 2010 **Community Workshop**, attended by 100 community members, to present and seek feedback on draft policy frameworks being prepared for the General Plan;
- Ongoing **presentations** to City Advisory Boards and Commissions, Neighborhood Watch, business, and cultural groups;
- A General Plan **website**;
- A General Plan **newsletter**; and
- **Public notices** and announcements of General Plan events.

General Plan Advisory Committee

In addition to its public outreach and workshop efforts, the City convened the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to review and give feedback regarding proposed strategies, goals, and policies. The GPAC was comprised of 43 community stakeholders representing a broad cross-section of the community, including representatives from each City Board and Commission. The Committee held nine meetings between September 2009 and February 2010 to review the work in progress and provide input, with a particular emphasis on urban form and land use.

City Council and Commission Review

Throughout the General Plan update process, the City Council and the Planning Commission were actively involved, receiving numerous informational presentations from staff and members of the consultant team. They also participated in joint study sessions with the Rent Stabilization Commission and Transportation Commission on topics such as land use, climate change, mobility and traffic, economic development, and housing.



Workshop participants gave input on land use and other topics.

Visioning Documents

The West Hollywood General Plan 2035 has been informed by other recent planning efforts in the City, many of which involved the public and key stakeholders. A General Plan Framework (2001) was completed nearly 15 years after the completion of the City's 1988 General Plan. The 2001 framework document was a focused effort to identify key issues of concern to the community, in anticipation of a future General Plan Update process. To the degree that they were still applicable, many of the issues identified in the General Plan Framework document are addressed in the General Plan 2035.

The Vision 2020 Strategic Plan (2003) includes a mission statement, core values, primary strategic goals, and recommended implementation tasks for West Hollywood through 2020. Many of these were carried forward into the General Plan 2035.

West Hollywood Vision 2020 Strategic Plan Core Values:

- Respect and Support for People
- Responsiveness to the Public
- Idealism, Creativity and Innovation
- Quality of Residential Life
- Economic Development
- Public Safety
- Responsibility for the Environment

The Environmental Task Force Report (2008), developed by an ad-hoc committee, recommended short-term and long-term strategic goals and implementation actions for the City related to a variety of environmental issues, including energy use and efficiency, landscape and open space, transportation and mobility, waste reduction and recycling, and water use reduction. Many of the goals and recommendations from the Environmental Task Force Report were carried forward into the General Plan 2035 and the Climate Action Plan.

Content from the Environmental Task Force Report, the General Plan Framework, and the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan, was adapted and combined with input gained from the public involvement process to create Guiding Principles for the West Hollywood General Plan 2035.



Community input is a critical component of the development of General Plan 2035.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through the public involvement process, the community developed guiding principles that discuss the broad direction and vision of the City. Many of these relate to previous vision statements developed for visioning documents such as the Environmental Task Force Report (2008), the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan (2003), and the General Plan Framework (2001). The ten guiding principles described below serve as the foundation for the goals and policies in the West Hollywood General Plan 2035:

1. **QUALITY OF LIFE.** Maintain the high quality of life enjoyed by West Hollywood residents.
2. **DIVERSITY.** Value the social, economic and cultural diversity of our people, and work to protect people who are vulnerable.
3. **HOUSING.** Continuously protect and enhance affordable housing, and support Rent Stabilization laws. Recognize the need for preserving our housing stock as well as understand the need to positively shape new construction to meet our future housing needs. Support diverse income levels in new housing development.
4. **NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER.** Recognize the need to maintain and enhance the quality of life in our residential neighborhoods. Investigate standards to ensure buildings enhance the city's eclectic neighborhoods. Emphasize opportunities to meet housing needs and economic development goals along the commercial boulevards.
5. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.** Support an environment where our diverse and eclectic businesses can flourish. Recognize that economic development supports public services, provides benefits associated with the City's core values, and adds character to our community.
6. **ENVIRONMENT.** Support innovative programs and policies for environmental sustainability to ensure health, and proactively manage resources. Provide leadership to inspire others outside City limits.
7. **TRAFFIC AND PARKING.** Recognize that automobile traffic and parking are key concerns in our community. Strive to reduce our dependence on the automobile while increasing other options for movement such as walking, public transportation, shuttles, cars, and bicycles within our borders and beyond. Continue to investigate innovative shared parking solutions.
8. **GREENING.** Seek new areas to increase park space and landscape areas in our streets, sidewalks, and open areas to create space for social interaction and public life.
9. **ARTS AND CULTURE.** Enhance the cultural and creative life of the community. Continue to expand cultural and arts programming including visual and performing arts, and cultural and special events.
10. **SAFETY.** Protect the personal safety of people who live, work and play in West Hollywood. Recognize the challenges of public safety within a vibrant and inclusive environment.

HISTORY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD

The City of West Hollywood's colorful past has shaped its vision and guiding principles for the future, and continues to resonate today. This section describes many of the key milestones and trends in West Hollywood's history.

Early History

West Hollywood's historical development was focused in two areas: the western reaches of Hollywood and a small town called Sherman. Eastern portions of current-day West Hollywood, as well as immediately surrounding communities, rest upon land that constituted part of Rancho La Brea, granted by the Mexican government in 1828. By the late 1800s, the area that is now the City of West Hollywood began developing an agricultural economy.

The town of Sherman was originally settled on 12 acres of land north of Santa Monica Boulevard, on former barley fields. In the 1890s, as part of his strategy for developing new housing to support the growing Los Angeles metropolis, Moses H. Sherman extended a new line of his Pacific Electric Railway Company along Santa Monica Boulevard through the area. The Metro site near the corner of Santa Monica and San Vicente Boulevards was used as the company's headquarters and rail yards, providing employment for nearby residents and helping the modest village of Sherman to prosper and grow through the next several decades. By 1910, a small commercial district flourished along Santa Monica Boulevard to serve the community of 900 residents. Establishments included the First National Bank of Sherman, a post office, hotel, pool halls, and markets. Most of these buildings were removed in the 1920s as part of a street widening project headed by the Sherman Chamber of Commerce.

In the early 20th century, the newly-emerging film industry spurred change in all of the communities surrounding Hollywood. Newcomers were attracted by the thriving film, oil and transportation industries, and the population of Sherman rose quickly. By 1919, "West Hollywood" was generally considered the area bounded by Beverly, La Brea, Sunset, and Doheny, which included Sherman. Although the nearby town of Hollywood was annexed to the City of Los Angeles in 1910, the town of Sherman voted against annexation by a narrow majority in 1924. The following year, the town of Sherman voted to change its name to West Hollywood, both maintaining its individual identity and merging its future with that of its neighbors to the east.

The growth of the motion picture industry would have a profound impact on Sherman. Both United Artists Studios, founded in 1919, and the Silent Dramas Syndicate established themselves in Sherman. In the same year, Jesse D. Hampton created a full-fledged studio with a stage and back-lot at Formosa and Santa Monica Boulevard. The studio would eventually be known as Mary Pickford Studios, United Artists, Warner Hollywood, and now simply "The Lot." This emerging identity as a center of entertainment – both for production

and nightlife – served as a bridge between the communities of Hollywood and Beverly Hills over time. West Hollywood provided a substantial amount of worker housing for this industry. It also served as a significant production center and as a backdrop for location filming.

The growth in automobile ownership and desire for single-family homes in the Roaring Twenties led to rapid expansion of roads and neighborhood development, determining much of the street and development pattern that survives in West Hollywood today. Neighborhood development flanking Santa Monica Boulevard was particularly dramatic between 1922 and 1926, as illustrated in the photographs below.



West Hollywood with Hollywood in the background, circa 1922.



West Hollywood circa 1926, with a dramatic increase in development.

Hollywood Heritage

The Sunset Strip emerged in the early 20th century 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. Sunset Plaza provided high-end shopping entertainment. The Sunset Strip was also the home of talent agencies and the Screen Actors Guild. Adorned with clubs, billboards and movie stars, the success of the Sunset Strip continued for decades.

With the rise of the movie industry and the onset of Prohibition in 1920, the portion of Sunset Boulevard that ran through unincorporated West Hollywood, with its loose County regulations and lax law enforcement, would eventually be the perfect venue for the development of entertainment industry-related nightlife. Nightclubs—such as the Trocadero, the Mocambo, and Ciro's—flourished from the thirties through the 1940s. The Sunset Strip's association with the movie business was amplified and broadcast by the use of local businesses and sites as filming locations. Indeed, it was West Hollywood's Sunset Strip, not Hollywood Boulevard, which best represented the glamorous image of the entertainment industry's culture in this period.

By mid-century, the Pacific Electric Railway on Santa Monica Boulevard had been gradually dismantled, replaced to some extent by buses but mostly by private automobile traffic. The Railway tracks were still visible on parts of Santa Monica Boulevard until its reconstruction in the 1990s. Further, the physical transformation brought by the Railway and other attractions had forever changed the area from a rural to an urban community.

World War II signaled the end of the free-wheeling extravagant “Hollywood” lifestyle, as 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 1970s a new wave of clubs opened as the music industry gravitated to the Strip. The Rainbow, Roxy, Gazzarri’s and the Whiskey-A-Go-Go were established in this period and spurred a vibrant music scene that extends to the Troubadour on Santa Monica Boulevard and continues today. More recently, in addition to its lively entertainment scene, the Strip has experienced a wave of new designer hotels and star-chefs, with the arrival of The Standard hotel and major renovations at the Mondrian, Argyle, Andaz, Sunset Marquis, and The London.



The Sunset Strip, circa 1939.

Arts and Design

Interior design and decorating established a local presence in West Hollywood by the 1950s. Most of these businesses were located along portions of Robertson Boulevard and Beverly Boulevard. Beginning in the early 1940s, furnishing showrooms that had historically only located downtown started to seek less expensive storefront space in this area. Clark & Burchfield opened a space in 1945 and, in 1949, Herman Miller opened a showroom, designed by Charles Eames, on Beverly Boulevard.

Over the course of the next two decades, the area along Beverly and Robertson grew into a vibrant local design center that eventually extended along Melrose Avenue as well. The interior design community was supported by local craft and manufacturing shops. The initial phase of construction of the Pacific Design Center, a wholesale design market open only to the trades, was designed by acclaimed architect Cesar Pelli on the former site of the Sherman Rail Yard and completed in 1975. The second phase was completed in 1988, with a third phase having begun construction in 2007. The opening of the Pacific Design Center reaffirmed West Hollywood’s position as an industry leader in design, and it maintains that status today.

Impetus for Cityhood

A setting characterized by design, bohemia, low rents, and lack of government oversight (including the area's location outside the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles City Police Department, notorious for its harassment of gays and minorities) facilitated an artful play of progressive, open, and accepting activities that supported the rising Los Angeles gay community. Storefronts all along Santa Monica Boulevard began to cater to the needs of this community, abandoning the light industry and manufacturing that had preceded it throughout the first half of the twentieth century. West Hollywood, along Santa Monica Boulevard, was so clearly identified as the epicenter of local gay culture, particularly gay male culture, that parts of it became known simply as "Boystown." The development of this strong community identification would provide additional fuel and power in the political drive for Cityhood. In the wake of Cityhood and the establishment of progressive municipal laws and policies, West Hollywood has grown into an ever more attractive destination and home to the LGBT community.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, West Hollywood became a regional population center for immigrants from the former Soviet Union. As of 1998, the City was home to between three and four thousand immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The immigrant community was likely attracted to West Hollywood by two combined factors: the abundance of rental housing east of Fairfax Avenue and that area's proximity to the established Los Angeles Jewish community in the Fairfax district immediately to the south. The affordability of rental housing in West Hollywood, institutionalized after Cityhood, along with the new City's progressive social policies and programs certainly underscored the value of that choice.

In a region largely dedicated to homeownership in the conventional form of the freestanding single-family residence, West Hollywood presented a unique situation: renters represented 85% of the area's population in 1978. After failed attempts at incorporation in 1956, 1962, and 1966, with the combined pressure of rising real estate costs and existing County rent control legislation set to expire in 1985, West Hollywood was ripe for the political push for the local control of Cityhood. The Coalition for Economic Survival, the senior community, and the young gay community, with the leadership of Ron Stone, joined forces to advance a referendum on Cityhood before local voters. The referendum passed with a strong majority, and West Hollywood was incorporated as an independent city on November 29, 1984.

In 1984, the newly-minted City of West Hollywood had a population that consisted of the following non-mutually exclusive segments: 50% Jewish, 33% gay, 85% renting tenants, and roughly 40% senior citizens. The newly organized City government promptly adopted a series of socially and politically progressive ordinances to protect tenants' rights, gay and lesbian rights, and civil and human rights. The City has established itself on the cutting edge of important social movements both as a community and as a municipality. Called "the creative city" for its collection of art, design and architecture, it is also creative in its personal and compassionate approach to governance and service to the community.

WEST HOLLYWOOD TODAY: CONTEXT

The characteristics that define West Hollywood today – including its urban context, its social and demographic characteristics, its economic and neighborhood character, and the types of social and community services it offers – set the context for the General Plan 2035. The key characteristics are described in greater detail below.

Urban Context

West Hollywood is a vibrant and eclectic City in the heart of the bustling Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. As is shown in Figure 1-1, West Hollywood is located within Los Angeles County, which is one of the densest urbanized regions in the United States. The City itself covers 1.9 square miles. It is located approximately seven and a half miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, and is one in a network of interconnected communities within the Los Angeles Region. Figure 1-1 shows West Hollywood within its regional context. Figure 1-2 shows the boundaries and extent of the City.

Key regional commercial, entertainment, and circulation corridors run east-west through West Hollywood, connecting it to the greater Los Angeles Region. These include Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard, both of which connect West Hollywood to many other communities within Los Angeles County. Although the Pacific Electric Railway is long gone, West Hollywood's main corridors are served by frequent bus service, and an alignment for Metro's long-planned Redline Subway extension is being considered along Santa Monica Boulevard through the center of the City.

Over time, West Hollywood has evolved as a regional entertainment, shopping, and employment destination. Combined with its central regional location and diverse and active community, West Hollywood is a vibrant and attractive City for visitors, tourists, businesses, and residents alike.

Social and Demographic Characteristics

West Hollywood is a unique and active City, representing a variety of cultures and social groups including the LGBT, and Russian-speaking communities, artists, young professionals, families, and seniors. The LGBT community played a formative role in West Hollywood's history, and approximately one-third of all residents identify as LGBT. Annual street festivals, colorful nightlife, and supportive social networks in West Hollywood all contribute to the City's active LGBT community. The Russian-speaking community ranges from elderly residents to young couples with children. It is concentrated primarily on the east side of West Hollywood, and makes important contributions the City's culture, arts, social networks, and neighborhood-serving businesses.

Economic Diversity

West Hollywood's population shapes and defines its eclectic economy. The City is home to many neighborhood-serving businesses – such as grocery stores, beauty salons, hardware stores, and others. It is also a world-renowned destination for vibrant nightlife, restaurants, and entertainment, which draws locals, visitors, and tourists from across the country and the world. A variety of hotels, concentrated near the Sunset Strip, offer stylish accommodations to visitors. Nightlife venues in West Hollywood are focused along the Sunset Strip and Santa Monica Boulevard. The Sunset Strip is a lively stretch of Sunset Boulevard filled with boutiques, restaurants, colorful billboards, night-clubs, and legendary music venues. One of the most popular LGBT districts in the country is located along Santa Monica Boulevard and is characterized by popular bars and music venues.

The City's arts and design industry has also developed regional and national significance, contributing to West Hollywood's identity and economic edge as a creative city. At the heart of the design industry is the Pacific Design Center, a world-famous furniture and interior design center. The Pacific Design Center has over 130 showrooms and hosts many design-related events for the design industry and the public, anchoring a district of fashion boutiques, interior design shops, furniture stores, and restaurants. West Hollywood's design industry continues to incubate a number of home-based design businesses throughout the City and surrounding communities.

Neighborhood Character

West Hollywood's approximately 37,000 residents live in a densely developed urban setting, never more than ¼ mile from the nearest commercial district. West Hollywood is beloved by its residents for its attractive and eclectic residential neighborhoods. Many of West Hollywood's neighborhoods were originally constructed in the 1920s, and are defined by historic architecture from that era. Over time the City's architectural palette has broadened considerably, with a diversity of architectural styles from various decades and cultural influences that are constantly expanding the City's unique neighborhoods.

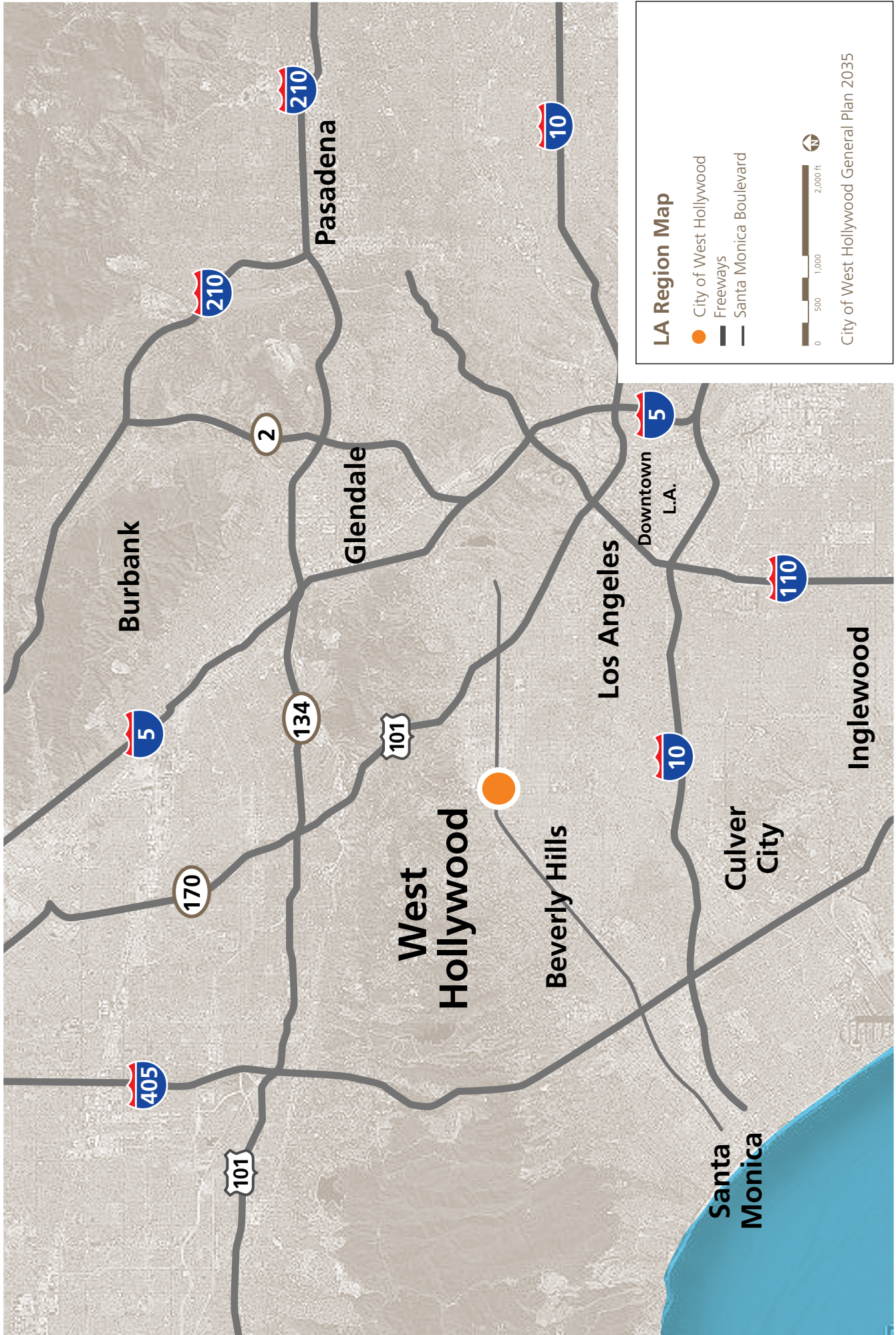
West Hollywood offers a wide variety of housing for individuals, couples, and families at various stages of their lives. Its neighborhoods include a range of single-family and multi-family housing. Mixed-use buildings along some of the City's commercial corridors offer a lively residential experience for those seeking a more distinctly urban living arrangement.

In counterpoint to the nearby bustling corridors and centers, the City is also known for its walkable neighborhood streets. Bicycles are also a visible presence on neighborhood and connector streets.



Residential streets form a network of green public space.

Figure 1-1: LA Region Map



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Many of West Hollywood’s residential streets are lined with mature trees that create green “public rooms” within the neighborhoods, flanked by well-maintained public and private landscaping and well-used sidewalks. It is common to see residents strolling through their neighborhoods, walking to local shops, or to catch the bus to work. West Hollywood’s commercial corridors are also filled with pedestrian activity – supported by the City’s on-going efforts to green streets and calm traffic – and serve as important connectors for residents who chose to walk or stroll to destinations citywide.

Social and Community Services

The City of West Hollywood provides a high level of social services designed to meet the needs of its diverse community. These include specialty services focused on specific demographic groups. West Hollywood’s population is actively engaged in local government initiatives to expand and enhance the rights and well-being of its citizens. There are numerous commissions, boards and advisory committees that represent the many populations of the City. Through abundant input from its residents, the City of West Hollywood actively supports the expansion of human and civil rights on a local, regional, state, national, and international scale. The City’s ongoing dedication to its citizens’ well-being and dignity is influenced in part by its history of social progressivism and civic orientation.



The City’s emphasis on addressing social issues and celebrating diversity remains stronger than ever.

LOOKING FORWARD

The City today is a vibrant urban community and growing economy. West Hollywood’s residents and businesses will continue to enhance the City in years to come. The West Hollywood General Plan is a vehicle for the City’s further development, and draws upon the City’s history, contemporary context, and community values and guiding principles. It is informed by an extensive community planning process that engaged a cross-section of the City’s various communities and stakeholder groups. The West Hollywood General Plan 2035 describes the City’s goals and policies for its future.

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