

## **WNC WLA COMMUNITY PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Planning Department's Proposed "Emerging Vision Statement:"

West Los Angeles is a vibrant community of unique diverse neighborhoods with thriving employment and cultural offerings. Building upon its multiple residential legacy neighborhoods, the plan welcomes improved open space, increased walkability, and appreciation for historic and cultural preservation, while acknowledging the need for multiple forms of housing. With consideration for the evolution of work and technology, the plan envisions industrial and mixed-use commercial areas gradually evolving to ensure access to quality jobs, housing equity, and environmental sustainability for current and future generations.

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## **REFINEMENTS OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

**Housing: Increase (and preserve) housing opportunities at different affordability levels.**

Preserve R1 residential areas in full in the WNC area of the WLA Community Plan.

Los Angeles should first investigate all other means to provide ample housing in our communities before considering the possibility of up zoning single-family neighborhoods.

Create opportunities for construction of workforce and "missing middle" housing. Explore opportunities to lease (not sell) City owned property for this housing. Explore possible development incentives for select identified corner commercially zoned properties on major corridors.

Preserve existing affordable and "missing middle" housing. Promote and support anti-displacement policies.

Update TOC Guidelines to be more sensitive to adjacent properties and the community

Limit placement of higher density buildings and those with height (how high is high?) on major corridors with respectful stepbacks (tiering) and setbacks for adjacent properties of lesser height. Use landscaping, setbacks, stepbacks and articulations/breaks in building design to lessen the negative impact of new construction.

All construction shall be done with consideration of and in proportion to lot size and shall be in proportion to street and sidewalk width, neighborhood character and adjacent properties.

Explore new building form opportunities.

New construction on Santa Monica Blvd. shall have stricter, codified development standards

that require better design in line with scenic roadway guidelines. As a wide divided boulevard with frontage roads, Santa Monica Blvd. has the character and capacity to “host” larger scale mixed use or residential buildings. Seek oversight by Westwood Design Review Board.

New construction on Westwood Blvd. shall have stricter, codified development standards to promote better design and avoid construction of cheap looking cubes. Same for Pico. Streets that fall within PODs and NODs should have added design criteria mindful of their pedestrian orientation.

Explore, encourage and promote opportunities for adaptive re-use of office space, hotels/motels, and other commercial and residential properties to provide housing over less environmentally sustainable and more damaging demolition. Encourage environmentally sustainable practices, including onsite solar installation and the preservation of neighboring property’s solar installation rights.

Property owners who choose to develop under the City’s RAS (Residential Accessory Use Zone), a zone implemented to allow for residential uses on former commercial corridors, are not required to maintain ground floor commercial uses even though this zone is viewed as a “mixed use” zone. For the properties that lie within the Pico Westwood Neighborhood Oriented District (NOD) and our NMU zone, we are recommending that all developments include at least a minimum amount/percent of active ground floor pedestrian-oriented uses. In past years, all ground floor uses were sought to be those active uses; however in the current pandemic and with the ever-growing presence of Amazon replacing many brick and mortar businesses, it is time to consider whether a percentage (or sliding scale of square footage depending on the nature of the use) can be established as a part of this Community Plan.

The provision of off-street parking serves many purposes and should not summarily be eliminated under the guise of “proximity to transit.” Lack of off-street parking negatively impacts neighborhood beauty, relations with neighbors, and personal safety in exchange for reduced construction costs. Establish minimum parking standards in areas already “parking poor” for new duplex, multi family and ADU units. (How does one charge an EV vehicle without a dedicated on-site parking area?)

QUESTION/FOR POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION re: ADU

The State provides those who build a ground level ADU with a bonus of up to 850 sq. feet of additional FAR for a separate ADU unit. Los Angeles grants up to 800 square feet. However, the additional bonus square footage comes with the requirement that the ADU be at ground level which perhaps inadvertently creates an incentive to consume valuable yard/ open space when an ADU could, just as well be built over a garage if one is available.

QUESTION: Should the WLA Community Plan contain a provision that

provides the (up to) 800 square foot bonus for an ADU on the second floor of a garage if that ADU is built with required rear and side setbacks to preserve privacy for adjoining property ? (It is recognized that some garages are grandfathered in with structures at or near the property line).

### **Industrial: Preserve industrial land and support reimagined 21<sup>st</sup> century industrial uses**

The preservation of the light manufacturing/industrial zone that lies adjacent to the 405 provides the land needed for essential services as well as current and future jobs that do not belong in a more traditional office environment. The West LA area is home to a world-renowned university, major medical center and one of the City's 20 city centers in Century City. All these places provide primarily professional and white collar job opportunities. The light industrial zone provides job opportunities for the provision of trades essential to the functioning of a well-rounded community such as animal care concerns, car washes, gyms, wine storage facilities, storage facilities, auto repair shops, body shops, building supply stores, welding shops, and small manufacturing businesses. These are essential services and residents and business people should not have to travel great distances to access these types of concerns. It is not appropriate to locate housing in this zone as housing and housing is often an incompatible use with these concerns which results in friction and endangers the survival of the industrial zone and those operating within it. This zone also provides employment opportunities for blue collar workers at the current time and as the face of business changes, will provide needed land for new forms in industry.

For the health and safety of those working in this zone, it is recommended that building standards include requirements for hi-quality HIPAA filtration in air circulation systems due to its proximity to the 405 freeway.

### **Jobs and Employment: Support a thriving and inclusive economy**

As noted in the population charts presented by the Planning Dept., the WLA Community Plan area is fortunate to benefit from a broad range of employment opportunities within its boundaries or directly adjacent to it. Major employment areas include Century City with many Class A office buildings (one of LA's 20 city centers), Fox/Disney Studios, the UCLA campus and UCLA Medical Center, Westwood Village, the Veterans Administration and Hospital. We will soon have a major Google presence in the former Westside Pavilion location. There is significant office space available on the Olympic corridor to our west and on the corridor in Santa Monica. The City of Beverly Hills with its commercial district, entertainment-related business offices, and tourist destinations is just across the border from Century City.

The presence of these many job opportunities makes our area attractive to future employers as well as being a location where those employees wish to live. Having higher cost residential communities (Santa Monica and Beverly Hills) to our east and west also creates additional

demands on our housing stock as we may appear to be a more “affordable” residential community for those working in those cities.

The employment centers bring a great diversity of residents to our area who wish to live in close proximity to their place of work.

The presence of the Exposition Light Rail line provides access to the employment (and education) opportunities in this community more accessible to those from throughout the region. The completion of the Purple Line to its western terminus will markedly increase access as well with its stops in Century City and Westwood Village – thus reducing travel-related barriers to access for many across the region.

### **Accommodating Growth: Accommodate growth in a strategic, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable manner**

**Accurate** current population data as well as realistic and well-founded population projection data is required to do good planning. Additionally, crafting a community plan without accurate knowledge about current building capacity is not possible.

The ongoing collection of key data is also needed to understand whether one’s policies are accomplishing their intended goals.

Design ongoing data capture mechanisms to measure the performance and impacts of new and existing land use forms. Implement ongoing surveys to establish both baseline and periodic experience of residents in transit-adjacent properties to determine if project conditions are accurately reflecting project behavior and to shape future policy decisions. Design reporting protocols and mechanisms to gather relevant data to establish travel and vehicle ownership behavior of residents living in TOD and TOC developments (any projects receiving additional density based upon proximity to transit). Provide transit density bonuses only in areas where behaviors are shown to warrant such densities.

Seek re-establishment of a coordinated annual (or biannual) City infrastructure evaluation that results in guiding development where there is adequate infrastructure availability.

Require mandatory reporting on the performance of required TDM programs.

Design review processes that monitor compliance with project conditions.

### **Design & Compatibility: Strengthen neighborhood character**

It is not enough to “encourage” good design standards. There must be language that implements and operationalizes it.

Utilize tools in ReCode to establish design standards for our major corridors that result in buildings with articulation, good proportion, harmony with streetscape, and provide all who pass with a pleasant if not memorable experience.

Because Santa Monica Blvd. is a SCENIC ROADWAY, it is appropriate to seek a process to

provide oversight on the design elements of future construction on Santa Monica Blvd. There is a Westwood Design Review Board that has jurisdiction north of Santa Monica Blvd. It is recommended that the DRB's area of attention be expanded to have jurisdiction over both the north and south sides of Santa Monica Blvd. It is awkward to have this important street split between two different community plan areas; by placing the Boulevard under the watchful eye of the DRB any impact of having it fall within two separate community plans can be overcome with a consistent voice addressing ongoing design matters.

Require rear setbacks and tiering where higher density properties abut lower density properties.

Extend and strengthen the language of the Pico/Westwood Neighborhood Oriented District that restricts certain types of signage. Clarify language if needed to result in enforcement of current standards on signs that change messages to result in enforcement of ban on both billboards (off-site advertising) and moving/digitized/scrolling onsite signs.

Consider review of prohibited uses within the NOD.

Adopt an on-site sign program for buildings on all commercial corridors.

Adopt policies that severely limit (or ban) the installation/placement of digital billboards.

Seek historic designation of original Janss properties where eligible and where such contiguous properties still remain.

Create long-range plan to result in the undergrounding of utility wires including requirements and/or incentives for developers and energy providers.

In instances where there might be a change from single family R1 zoning to duplex or other low density residential form, it is imperative that the new housing adhere to those design elements that characterize a single family R1 neighborhood.

Those properties must include onsite parking, front and back yards, a maximum 30 foot height (which allows a two story structure with peak roof, 2-story with rooftop deck, or 3-story).

Can the northern boundary of the Pico Westwood NOD be extended to the alley just south of Santa Monica Blvd.? This would serve to connect the NOD with the Westwood Blvd. POD north of Santa Monica Blvd.

Eliminating On-site Parking at R3 developments (and others) has not increased transit use and reduced fossil-fuel vehicle use. It is imperative to provide needed parking in order to keep vehicles off the street. Removal or unbundling of parking is not stopping those who wish to have a vehicle or drive from doing so. Filling streets with parked cars makes streets more difficult to navigate for all and compromises public safety.

Small Lot Subdivision projects shall maintain the rear and front setbacks of existing homes/adjacent properties. Currently these projects do not relate to the surrounding context. Standards that require breaking down the massing, height and façade of these projects will make them more compatible in their setting.

### **Open Space: Expand access and connections to open space**

This Community Plan should / shall not offer or allow projects to apply for a reduction of open space on the menu of available building incentives.

The Community Plan must have strategies for preserving and creating open space.

Develop mechanisms to raise fees/funds to finance the purchase of new open space.

To date there are no draft concepts that realize this goal. This community is currently documented as being a “park poor” community relative to our population / parkland ratio and in comparison to many other areas of the City.

Acknowledge the fact that open space within 1000 feet of a freeway is not to be considered usable open space due to exposure to fine particulate matter – a public health hazard. Thus, for residential housing within 1000 feet of a freeway, develop mechanisms to capture the value of the required open space and create an escrow fund (or other financial tool) in which to place those funds (and those from other nearby similar developments) to purchase open space, insure, improve or provide security in order to gain access to existing open space (such as to establish a shared use agreement with a local LAUSD campus).

Projects of over a defined number of square feet and projects that seek any variances from established norms shall have the requirement to provide open space that is accessible to the public.

Can mechanisms be developed that translate required open space now provided through rooftop decks to be ground floor open space also open to the public?

### **Mobility: Promote a safe, effective walkable, and multi-modal transportation network**

Just as developers have often been required to widen streets as part of their project conditions during the entitlement process, so too, should the City have tools to require developers to widen the sidewalks adjacent to their properties in the event that such widening would benefit and serve a community streetscape plan. Sidewalks are more inviting when they are at least 6 feet wide. Our current 5 foot sidewalks are often narrowed or obstructed.

Sidewalks should be designed in proportion to the street width and building heights adjacent.

Sidewalks should not be obstructed with utility poles. Do not permit large poles to be placed in the middle of sidewalks (see Sepulveda/Pico adjacent to Anawalt).

Bus shelters placed on our narrow sidewalks should not make passage difficult. Billboard displays appear to be the rationale for taking up more sidewalk space than a shelter needs to provide seating and shade. Seek shelter redesign. Question utility and placement of “public amenity kiosks.”

Work with policy makers and transit providers to explore need for and potential location for a Westside Mobility Hub/Center. (The so-called Westside Transit Center is located in the Mid-City area at Pico/Rimpau.)

Analyze need for a local micro transit offering to connect potential riders to transit and major local destinations (UCLA Medical Center, EXPO station, Purple Line subway station, major employment hubs (UCLA, VA, Century City)).

Acknowledge that some streets should have priority for vehicles and discourage bicycle and scooter use on those streets to facilitate the flow of traffic and for public safety.

Demands and development on corridors should be reflective of both their physical attributes and the role that they play in mobility. Major arterials such as Santa Monica and Wilshire Blvds. have a different carrying capacity and character than secondary arterials. Pico Blvd. in the WNC portion of the WLA Community Plan is very different from the Pico corridor just west of the 405 freeway and from Wilshire and Olympic Blvds. While a wide street, Olympic is very different from Pico and Santa Monica Blvds. in that it is for the most part (until just west of Century City), a low density residential street.

### **Complete Neighborhoods: Encourage vibrant, healthy, complete neighborhoods**

Ensure the availability of all types of housing to serve people at all different ages and stages of their lives. As the City adds density, it is critical that it remain a City that provides the infrastructure and amenities that welcomes the young and old and all those in between. As density increases (often with housing unit sizes reduced), with little attention paid to the need for parks and open space, will Los Angeles come to be seen as an unfriendly place for those who are looking for a place to raise their family?

One characteristic of a vibrant community is reflected in the presence of a public space where people can gather to share experiences; in Southern California such spaces are often outdoor spaces (different from green open space). One goal of our Community Plan should be to establish such a publicly accessible space whether in conjunction with and on site of a development project or free standing.

### **Climate Change Resilience: Promote resource protection, resiliency planning and climate change adaptation**

Repurpose existing buildings as they become available whenever feasible.

LEED Gold (or Silver?) and installation of solar panels shall be required for all new buildings.

Tree planting requirements shall be increased for all parcels, including those in commercial areas. In-ground planting (as opposed to container planting) shall be required.

Tree preservation strategies shall be strengthened to retain mature trees when healthy and whenever possible. Street widening orders that would result in the removal of mature trees shall only be carried out when contiguous widening can/will be done within a defined period of time. An escrow mechanism shall be established to capture the cost of widening the adjacent street for use in a location within the area (to provide nexus) where a demonstrated need for widening has been shown.

Front double driveways shall not extend past the sidewalk to the curb which, when they do, threaten parkways as unpaved landscape opportunities and the trees on them.

For those properties within 1000 feet of a freeway location, establish HIPA a/c/heating

filter maintenance protocols that are enforced with inspections (HCID to incorporate filters and filter change records/receipts when doing regularly scheduled housing inspections.) Develop language to be given to new tenants of such buildings that informs them of the schedule for filter maintenance and informs them of their right and of the importance of being in a unit/office with filters that are properly maintained (along with a contact number if they are not.

Establish a local urban forestry program designed to protect existing trees, improve local streetscapes (free trees from their restrictive undersized tree wells and their enclosures and promote the good care of and planting of an expanding urban forest. Can landscape minimum standards become part of a community plan?

### **UNADDRESSED / UNANSWERED QUESTIONS:**

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

With the addition of what may be significant density and new incoming population, the ability of infrastructure to meet the related demands that result from that density is seriously being questioned. The City of Los Angeles ceased doing its coordinated annual infrastructure reports that evaluated capacity and the condition of the City's infrastructure some years ago. We are painfully aware of the deterioration of the condition of the infrastructure and of the inability to provide adequate service at the current time – much less in response to added demands.

We would be remiss if we did not share our concerns about adding significant density without significant infrastructure upgrades. The strain on infrastructure must be fully understood and failures prevented. The added traffic will make many parts of our area impassible. The capacities of water, sewer, landfills, etc. must not be taken for granted. Safety and security of our residents is a critical factor and police and fire resources must be added. Current response times are not adequate and yet when new projects are reviewed, there is seldom mention of current shortfalls – much less discussions of the impacts of added demands.

Westwood Charter Elementary School has been over-enrolled for a number of years and cannot absorb new levels of density being planned. The existing boundary lines for the school were the basis of home buying decisions on the part of many families in the area. Therefore, with LAUSD, there is a need to develop a new policy related to school placement of new students who may not be able to attend Westwood Charter although they have moved into the currently defined district. (Establish a school overlay zone?)

#### **DATA**

In order to do our task which has been framed in large part as being responsible for making recommendations to provide land zoned to meet the current and future housing needs of Angelenos



This is particularly important due to the fact that many believe that there is now amply zoned land to accommodate future population growth figures across Los Angeles for many years to come.

**For each of the following land use categories, we must have accurate data upon which to make future land use planning / zoning decisions:**

R1 Low Residential (Single family)  
R2/R3 combined (Low Medium/Medium  
R4 High Medium  
Commercial up to C4/R4  
TOC Available (Low/Low Medium)  
TOC Available (Commercial)

**DATA NEEDED per category:**

Dwelling units per net acre  
Net acres of zoning  
Number of dwelling units  
Persons per dwelling unit  
Capacity before bonuses  
Capacity after ADU bonus (applied to only 25% of R1 parcels and that percent may change over time as experience is gained)  
Capacity after SB 1818 Bonus (Assume at 35%/maximum bonus)  
Capacity after TOC bonus

What level of population growth should be used to establish 2016 (or later) population from the base of 2010 census figures? Growth rate per year? Historical ACTUAL growth rate? Projected growth rate and numbers?

Population projections with zoning capacity that accounts for density bonuses and ADUs shall be established prior to upzoning areas to determine if upzoning is actually needed to meet goals.

How many more of each needed by 2030? 2040? How many of each, allowed by 1997 Community Plan Zoning, remain un-built? How many Accessory Dwelling Units allowed by State 2017 law remain un-built? Up-zoning is normally used to rejuvenate undervalued, dying neighborhoods. Why is City even thinking about Up-zoning Westside R1 neighborhoods?

Current and historical vacancy factors in the area?

## CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

How will autonomous vehicles and new mobility services affect land use? (Mobility-related)

How to assess post-pandemic travel demand (and its effect on land use and entitlement programs tied to transit?). How to forecast travel demand?

How does the Coronavirus impact current Complete Streets design including planning for walking, biking, etc. to assure safety? How to make streets safer for walking and biking (particularly if people are staying away from shared modes of transit).

What kinds of impacts will be felt as a result of the fiscal impacts of the Coronavirus (vis a vis service delivery, city and transit staffing, etc.?)

What will be the impact, if any, from the shift from LOS traffic evaluation mechanism to VMT?

## HOUSING

How can we incentivize the creation and use of ADUs that would be offered at an affordable rent to provide housing for low or workforce housing?

Is it possible to create disincentives for using ADUs for short term rentals?

Will we need to demonstrate affordability of ADU units in order to count them toward our goals? How will this be calculated: Will we use the SCAG study average, will there be an LA average, or....?

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Those who live and work in West Los Angeles want their neighborhoods to be nice places in which to live and work.

*What makes a neighborhood a nice place to live and work?*

Simple things like:

Well-maintained, clean and tree-lined streets, level and unobstructed sidewalks, safe streets to walk, bike, scoot and drive upon appropriately lit (and without billboards).

Reliable sanitation and utility services.

The ability to travel between one's key destinations (home, work, school, etc.) in a reasonable amount of time.

Laws that are enforced in a prompt and consistent manner.

Governance by elected officials and City employees who place the good of the City above their personal interests.

If these things are not fulfilled, all others are left wanting and our community decays – whether or not there is thriving economic activity, new or heritage buildings, quality jobs, cultural offerings and all the other amenities and elements that define a community.