

Meeting Summary

Westside Community Plans Advisory Group (WCPAG)

Planning the Westside

Meeting 1: April 3, 2023, 5PM-7PM

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Overview

On April 3, 2023, Los Angeles City Planning's Westside Community Plans Update team hosted the [Westside Community Plans Advisory Group's \(WCPAG\)](#) first meeting via Zoom.

The meeting opened with a staff presentation on Community Planning, Housing Needs, relevant State housing laws, and an Introduction to Missing Middle Housing. The Advisory Group was tasked with providing feedback on the Community Plan Policy Document and the General Plan Land Use and Zoning Residential maps. The 52 WCPAG members represent organizations and individuals from the following four Westside Community Plan geographies:

- Palms - Mar Vista - Del Rey
- West LA
- Westchester - Playa Del Rey
- Venice

Composed of a diverse group of community leaders, residents, students, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, business leaders, neighborhood councils, and housing development experts, the Advisory Group serves as a sounding board to assist

planning staff in evaluating land use policy and zoning at different stages of the [Westside Community Plan Update process](#). The next WCPAG meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 5, 2023.

Please review the [WCPAG announcement letter](#) for a full list of selected members to the Advisory Group. For more information on the Westside Community Plan Update and the WCPAG, visit the [website](#) for additional resources and to sign up for updates.

WHERE AND WHEN

Monday, April 3, 2023, 5:00pm - 7:00pm
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Background

Members of the Advisory Group have the opportunity to serve as a community sounding board to provide feedback on draft materials shared by planning staff. Each member of the Advisory Group brings with them a unique perspective, set of experiences, and expertise. The Advisory Group is not a decision-making body and will assist planning staff in evaluating initial draft community plan materials – such as new draft General Plan Land Use (GPLU) maps, New Zoning, and Draft Policy Documents.

Structure of Meeting

The WCPAG meeting consisted of three parts: (1) presentations from planning staff on various topics and relevant materials, (2) small, staff-facilitated, breakout group discussions to allow for more focused, in-depth dialogue, and (3) large group report backs that will allow all members to hear what other groups discussed. In addition to these meetings, members are tasked with providing targeted feedback on the key deliverables, such as the draft Residential General Plan Land Use (GPLU) maps, draft zoning regulations, and draft emerging vision statements and guiding principles. Breakout groups were tailored by geography: Group 1: Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey, Group 2: Westchester-Playa Del Rey, Group 3: West Los Angeles, Group 4: Venice, and Group 5: Regional (this regional group covered topics concerning the four plan geographies).

Summaries

The summaries represent a condensed version of the staff presentations and comments shared by advisory group members during the meeting. They represent various comments from different members, and not the overall opinion of the advisory group.

MAIN ROOM SUMMARIES

- The meeting began with an opening presentation by staff that covered various topics including an overview of Los Angeles City Planning, Community Planning, the Westside Community Plans Update program, housing needs, relevant State housing laws, and an introduction to missing middle housing. Recording and materials for the meeting can be found [here](#).
- The presentation was followed up by a short Q&A which included some of the following questions and comments:
 - Question regarding coordination between housing element program incentives and community plans -- how do they relate? Once a community plan is completed, there are concerns that the housing element program will change the community plan.
 - Concern about how community plans are actualized after the plan update is done. There is a need for an accountability tool to show how community input is reflected in discretionary approvals.
- The presentation was followed by two breakout sessions each with 5 breakout groups.
 - **Breakout Session 1** - consisted of a guided discussion on draft policy materials including emerging vision statements and guiding principles. These materials will be included in the Draft Policy Document.
 - **Breakout Session 2** - consisted of a guided discussion on draft residential maps and draft zoning summaries. The draft maps and draft zoning options covered topics such as housing location, scale, density, heights, missing middle housing, and neighborhood scale commercial amenities.

BREAKOUT SESSION 1 - SUMMARIES BY BREAKOUT GROUP/ROOM

Breakout Group 1 - Session #1: Palms Mar-Vista-Del Rey

Feedback on Emerging Vision Statement:

- Ensure appropriate transitions between higher and lower transitions of buildings, for example see Westchester Statement, so no project with single family is next to a 7 story building.
- Vision statement needs to be more direct and explicit about building more affordable housing. The concern is that we need to build more units, how does the vision statement support building more housing?
- Support for language about connections to open space but also need to create additional open space in the community through zoning.
- Historical communities being densified, need more affordable, Some of these communities have been some of the most affordable in the westside, we need to preserve them.
- Recommend removing “eradicate homelessness” - use a more appropriate term language could be “prevent and end”.

- Need clarification on what a restorative community means - clear actionable and measurable policies - what do we mean by equity? Make sure we can measure goals overtime.
- Add effort in building mix use, walkable areas, or other things besides housing. Include open space, amenities, and accessibility. People live here and play in the neighborhood too.
- Continue to encourage mom and pop stores with affordable rents along corridors. The presence of these stores will create sustainability by meeting the needs of the community.

Emerging Guiding Principles:

- Affordable housing is ambiguous - TOC in Palms ended up pushing out low people that did not qualify for very low income.
- Affordable housing - is great but we should focus on homelessness prevention strategies. We need areas where homeless people can be, but I don't know that our housing principles should address homelessness as a long term issue but rather should be a temporary strategy.

Breakout Group 2 - Session #1: Westchester-Playa Del Rey

Feedback on Emerging Vision Statement:

- More 3-4 story mixed-use housing on neighborhood commercial streets
- More infill development with ground floor retail and housing above
- Make it easier to get around without a car – incentivize car-free housing near transit
- Mirror European cities, create more sustainable transportation and housing opportunities
- Large projects (7-8 stories and hundreds of units) will negatively impact circulation, traffic, and infrastructure capacity. Ongoing airport construction does not help.
- Implement PDR Specific Plan
- BMO is a useful tool to maintain character and scale; without it, the community is not protected

Feedback on Emerging Guiding Principles (Housing):

- Support pre-automobile, or “15 minute City,” style development
- Add more infill development and mixed-use housing
- More affordable housing, including naturally affordable models of housing

Breakout Group 3 - Session #1: West Los Angeles

Feedback on Emerging Vision Statement West LA:

- Vision statement should add “next to job centers” when mentioning housing.

- Noticed that the statement is much more concise than others. WLA has a lot more going on than other areas so there should be a longer diverse statement.
- Diversity of housing is responding to a diversity of family sizes. Language should be added about different family size units.
- Remove the historic and cultural preservation language. Emphasizing preservation prevents us from adding the housing we desperately need.
- Should retain the cultural and historic preservation language. Plan should preserve job centers and not build housing in those areas, including retaining and preserving the industrial land in this area.
- The social/equity part seems dry, a land acknowledgement should be added.
- Add terms of housing injustice like “redlining”.
- Add language to increase open space and greenery.
- How will schools be affected with new residential development?

Feedback on Emerging Guiding Principles:

- Some members expressed support for the existing draft guiding principles.
- There is a need for more housing at all income levels. Guiding principles should highlight the need to rezone areas for higher density to reach the target units.
- Would change the word incentivize to mandate.
- Need to define what “affordable” means.

Breakout Group 4 - Session #1: Venice

Feedback on Emerging Vision Statement:

- Advance more equitable housing opportunities.
- Expand on different types of displacement.
- Address infrastructure including planting landscape.
- Concern about the impact of more density/traffic on pedestrian accessibility.
- How will the dense parts of Venice address the impacts of SLR?
- Concern with concentration of permanent supportive housing and low income in Venice compared to other parts of CD11.
- What is the context of “more” - needs data to show what it is now, what it has been and what is the future?
- Add statement: Ensure appropriate transitions between higher and lower transitions of buildings (see Westchester Statement).
- Add statement: a concern for historical and cultural preservation (see West LA statement).
- Clarification of where density will go considering lot sizes and height limits.
- Balancing traffic with the influx of more housing.

Feedback on Emerging Guiding Principles:

- More moderate to market rate housing is needed to cover shortage of staff (bartender, small business owners, teachers, etc).

- We are the number two destination in the state, there is nothing about visitor-serving in the guiding principles.

Breakout Group 5 - Session #1: Regional

Feedback on Emerging Vision Statement (WPDR):

- Vision statement should be more focused on the future, not the past
- Add more aspirational language regarding housing and sustainability, such as walkable neighborhoods and density
- Question about where the vision statement will reside and what its purpose is

Feedback on Emerging Vision Statement (Venice):

- Venice heavily impacted by gentrification and displacement, need to emphasize equity and how to recover from these issues
- Emphasize the urgent need to provide housing for a wide range of income levels
- Venice used to have greater density but there has been a greater trend towards low-density development / mansionization.
- Question about the significance of the Vision Statement, and how it could be used within the context of appeals
- Shorten vision statement

BREAKOUT SESSION 2 - SUMMARIES BY BREAKOUT GROUP/ROOM

Breakout Group 1 - Session #2: Palms Mar-Vista-Del Rey

- We don't have a housing shortage we have an affordable housing shortage -this equals to smaller units or subsidized units - to do smaller we need incentives for developers to make projects profitable especially with new high interest rates.
- If we are incentivizing smaller businesses could we promote bonus structures that inherently help developers but also incentivizes the walkable city?
- Nobody builds here without taking a density bonus but it is not a big enough bonus for developers to build housing
- Turn Venice into Wilshire blvd and allow tall buildings there and more low density elsewhere
- This map does not match what is available TOC or 12.22 A, missing opportunity to increase density - should be height density- we have low housing density currently but with high densities we can go higher and get more housing- West of 405 fwy.
- Want to introduce an idea our community has been proposing - RHNA requirements include affordable housing units, not sure how it will pencil out but for land use.

- We are not taking advantage of areas where we could have high density residential to take pressure off residential neighborhoods like Sawtelle, Sepulveda, and Venice.
- We think we can go more dense than what you show on your maps, also we need to be more explicit on bonus incentives for developers to create walkable communities, and we can create creative strategies - state bills say we need a general plan to conform to those.
- Del Rey residents are looking for a proportion of affordable units to reach RHNA - smaller units means affordable housing, if we have to have larger units developers cannot pencil.

Breakout Group 2 - Session #2: Westchester-Playa Del Rey

- Need time to digest and discuss with others
- Challenging to identify ideal areas to accommodate density without negatively impacting circulation / increasing traffic
- Question about what the open space requirements are for missing middle housing
- Question about what placemaking tools are available in the new zoning code
- A good site for mixed-use commercial would be along Lincoln as well as on the south side of Manchester by Airport Boulevard
- Question about feasibility of missing middle projects in Low Medium Residential areas

Breakout Group 3 - Session #2: West Los Angeles

- Would love to see more residential density along Santa Monica Boulevard.
- Not happy with upzoning of R1 properties. More density along Santa Monica Boulevard instead.
- Doesn't agree with upzoning of Olympic Boulevard.
- Doesn't like the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) program.
- Frontage of all new buildings along boulevards should include commercial spaces.
- There is a loss of the missing middle housing in the area.
- Not happy with duplexes/fourplexes being demolished for higher density TOC projects.
- Single family R1 neighborhoods should remain single-family, and upzoning should only take place along major thoroughfares.
- Happy with the upzoning but it should go farther in the LA35 zone. Go taller and denser. The Pico Boulevard section should be upzoned even higher. Kick it up to medium residential in the areas north/south of Pico. Single-family areas should also be upzoned.
- Wants bigger upzoning along Pico Boulevard. Confused about where the mixed use "neighborhood" residential zones are going with corner stores.
- Do the current density bonus programs and housing element incentive programs continue after this community plan update is adopted.

- No high-rises or towers next to duplexes.
- We need as much housing and upzoning as we can get in the West LA area. There is a lack of housing for the UCLA community (students and employees).
- There should be more mixed-use buildings along the major thoroughfares because transit service is better there.
- It is difficult to make a good land use decision when some data is missing from the maps (for example, transit stations, overcrowding, etc.). The map is not useful if other data is not overlaid onto this map.
- Housing should be targeted onto the commercial boulevards, internal neighborhoods should be preserved.
- Upset about upzoning in low density areas. Upset that the planning department isn't providing data like existing density in the area compared to what is being proposed. Upzoning is not needed.
- Planning department needs to provide the target unit numbers for this area. Be transparent.
- There are concerns about displacement near transit.
- Concerned about medical infrastructure with added housing. Long wait times currently at hospitals and emergency rooms. How will more residential units affect this problem?
- Question on how do the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) rules change in the single-family areas? Would like to maintain the current FARs or go higher.
- Would like to learn more about the required automobile access.
- There is a strong need to increase housing capacity in this area. This will help with addressing the issue of homelessness.

Breakout Group 4 - Session #2: Venice

- In support of higher density.
- Re-examine medium neighborhood residential (corner store) proposed on Penmar Avenue and Rose Avenue.
- Potentially reduce parking to be proportional with the new proposed FARs.
- Transitional heights need to be enhanced.
- Metrics are too low to incentive projects, also need 2–3-bedroom projects.
- Concerns about only micro units being potentially built, need to also consider metrics for workforce and family sized apartments.
- Affordable bonus - wants to see net loss expanded.

Breakout Group 5 - Session #2: Regional

- The existing GPLU map has very little High Medium GPLU, which means there's a lack of housing potential.
- Question about whether proposals set a minimum density
- Should be consistent with citywide plans, such as sustainability plans.
- Increase density – 1:1 or 2:1 FAR isn't enough, near transit.

- Increase missing middle housing – needs to be allowed adjacent to corridors and boulevards, not just transit.
- There shouldn't be prohibitions on allowing for 4 units on a lot; mansionization is a problem, need to have room for families.
- Eliminate parking minimums, SB2097 has done so.
- Advocate to add more housing and increase density.
- Advocate for more public green space and pocket parks that are within walking distance of housing.
- Question about whether there are citywide aesthetic/design guidelines.
- Having urban design guidelines to allow for more density in boulevard would be helpful.
- Local Coastal Programs with clear standards will help speed up development.
- Need to think more about Open Space and park maintenance.
- Question about how to build resiliency and sustainability into the plan.