



City of West Hollywood

## **Avenues Streetscape Project Street-side Open House**

### Summary of Public Comments

12/11/12

Attached to this document are verbatim comments collected from the Avenues Streetscape Open House, which took place on October 13, 2012 between 10am – 1pm. The open house was a street-side event, which utilized a vacant storefront at 8646 Melrose Avenue and the sidewalk in front of it, to display the preliminary plans for the Avenues Streetscape Project. The public right of way was temporarily converted into public gathering space, complete with a food truck, street furniture, and café tables to create a festive atmosphere and also to demonstrate how the project could improve the streetscape of the area. The activity on the street helped to attract many passers-by to the open house that otherwise may not have attended.

The vision for the project was created in concert with a stakeholder group called the Avenues Working Group, which consisted of local merchants, residents, commissioners, and members of the Avenues Business Improvement District. The Weho Bicycle Coalition also attended the event to promote their mission and discuss the bicycle related elements of the project with the community.

#### Noticing & Public Outreach:

To advertise the Open House, City staff sent a letter with a project summary, map, and invitation to all residents, property owners, and occupants of the project area (an area approximately bound by Doheny Drive, Beverly Blvd, La Cienega Blvd, and Sherwood Drive). Staff also canvassed Robertson Blvd and Melrose Avenue to solicit feedback on the project from store managers, property owners, employees and store patrons – and also to promote the street-side event to those individuals.

The City utilized all means possible to promote the event, including public noticing at City facilities, a press release, an article in the Weho News prior to the event, prominent positioning on the City's website, listing on the City calendar, an announcement on the project website ([www.weho.org/avenuesproject](http://www.weho.org/avenuesproject)), announcements on Facebook, Twitter, and a thorough email outreach campaign (the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, The Avenues Business Improvement District, the Weho Heights Neighborhood Association, the West Hollywood West Residents' Association, and the Weho Bicycle Coalition). Emails were also sent to all individuals who have been following the project and have added their emails to our project notification list.

Staff gave a presentation on the Avenues Streetscape Project to the Planning Commission and Transportation Commission prior to the event, and commissioners and members of the public were encouraged to attend the street-side event. Also, Avenues Working Group members that represented various commissions or constituent groups presented information on the project to their respective commissions and groups, and invited their colleagues and members of the public to attend to the open house.

Additionally staff gave a presentation on the project to the West Hollywood West Resident's Association the week prior to the open house to both inform the neighborhood group about the proposed project as well as to publicize the event.

Overview:

The open house was well attended. Approximately 100-150 guests were in attendance during the course of the event (between the hours of 10am – 1pm). Avenues Working Group members attended to discuss the project with neighbors and business owners. Large vision boards were created that showed proposed street sections, plans, 3D sketches, and text explaining the goals of the project, and the preferences of the Avenues Working Group. Participants were encouraged to write and draw on the vision boards, and some completed comment cards as well. The feedback in the verbatim comments also includes some communication with staff via email and voicemail left by individuals unable to attend the event that desired to leave a specific comment.

“Attachment A” lists verbatim comments from the Open House separated by topic area and geography:

1. Paving and Crosswalks/Furnishings
2. Gateways and Art Comments
3. Wayfinding/Signage Comments
4. Street Trees/Lighting Comments
5. Mobility Comments
6. Gathering Places
7. Robertson Boulevard Comments
8. Beverly Boulevard Comments
9. Melrose Ave Comments
10. Other/General Comments

For reference purposes, all of the vision boards and materials displayed at the open house are available as PDF documents on the project website: [www.weho.org/avenuesproject](http://www.weho.org/avenuesproject).

**Comment Summary:**

The purpose of this document is to summarize the key issues that received the most attention at the open house, whether through verbal comments, written, etc. As some of the above topic areas received relatively few comments, the summary will focus on the principal areas of interest to the community. The full list of written comments is attached, and is categorized by topic and geographic area.

Public Gathering Places:

*Norwich*

*& Melrose:* Generally, comments are supportive of this public gathering space, echoing comments received from the community during the general plan process - that the City should create more public open spaces citywide. Some expressed concerns that the proposed public gathering space at Norwich Drive should

not exist only for outdoor dining, and that in this area should be maintained as a true amenity for the public. Other comments for this public gathering space indicate that public safety should be a key component of the final design, to prevent illicit activities near Norwich Drive/Melrose Avenue in the late evening. Finally, comments were received that express concern about the extent of outdoor dining adjacent to the neighborhood, and suggest limiting outdoor dining on the sidewalks along Norwich Drive commercial properties.

*Bonner*

*& Beverly:* Generally, comments for the public gathering place at Bonner Drive and Beverly Blvd have also been positive, with some indicating the desire to have more of these types of spaces throughout West Hollywood. Similar to the proposed gathering space on Melrose Ave at Norwich Drive, some comments also indicate concern over homeless congregation in this area and the potential for illicit activities. Comments have been received asking for the final design to buffer residents of Bonner Drive from any potential noise or activity at the gathering space.

*\*Both of the above mentioned public gathering places will require a separate public process prior to final design and construction.*

#### Mobility Comments:

Comments received on the mobility element of the Avenues Streetscape Project generally center around two specific areas. The center-left turn lane on Melrose Avenue (between Huntley and West Knoll Drives), and addressing the potential for motorists to use Rosewood Avenue as a bypass. Suggestions have been made to address the potential for cut-through traffic from La Cienega Blvd through Rosewood Ave. Many participants of the open house expressed more support for an altered version of the proposed street layout of Melrose Avenue – to include left turn pockets in lieu of completely eliminating the center-left turn lane. Many comments were received on the safety of crosswalks, and support for pedestrian activated flashing beacons, to increase safety.

#### Wayfinding Signage:

The overall message from community members regarding district signage was “less is more.” Participants preferred the examples portrayed at the open house that featured subtle messaging of the district, with simple contemporary graphics versus other options shown with more loud, colorful graphics.

#### General Feedback:

Overall, comments received on the Avenues Streetscape Project have been very positive. Residents and business owners look forward to improvements to the streetscape and are very optimistic about the future of the district. Most community members are enthusiastic about adding bicycle lanes and amenities, and also support increasing safety for pedestrians. Increasing the tree canopy and walkways throughout the district are also very popular components of the project proposal.

Some comments were received that are outside of the scope of the project, such as the height, scale and design of new buildings constructed along Melrose Avenue. While the Avenues Streetscape Project cannot address these concerns, the Long Range & Mobility Division will be conducting a study in the future that will address land use issues.

**Next Steps:**

Staff is currently working on a draft plan that incorporates feedback from the community open house, as well as other public outreach efforts. A final public presentation will be scheduled (tentatively for January 2013) to present information about the project, and illustrate how public input has been incorporated into the draft plan. After that time the project will be scheduled for City Council consideration.