

## Eastside Working Group #2 Notes

On March 22, 2016, the City of West Hollywood and Raimi + Associates (the consultant hired by the City) hosted and facilitated the second working group meeting for Phase 2 of the Eastside Community Plan. Thirteen of the 15 Eastside Working Group (EWG) members attended the meeting. The primary purpose of the meeting was to present information on economic development and to obtain feedback from the EWG on various strategies that could be used to enhance the economic performance of the Eastside and ensure that new development supports the vision of the community. Also in attendance was RSG, the firm hired to lead the economic development portion of the project.

The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance and the swearing in of one Eastside Working Group member who was not in attendance at the first meeting. This was followed by public comments from several members of the public in attendance. RSG then lead a discussion on economic development. This included a presentation on current economic and market conditions and several discussion questions. At the end of the meeting, Raimi + Associates and City staff provided a brief update on the community event.

The remainder of the document lists the overall comment and suggestions of the EWG on economic development.

### **Economic Development**

RSG presented background information about economic development on the Eastside and asked the EWG to weigh in our various topics through targeted discussion questions. Below is a summary of the discussion and findings:

#### Issues/Threats

- Poorly designed retail
- Lacking basic services on Eastside like a dry cleaner
- Unappealing architecture in new developments
- Slow turnaround for opening a business
- High rents in new developments
- Not enough mom and pop shops
- Vacant storefronts do not have a “community feel”
- New developments have retail spaces that are too large
- Parking requirements lead to underutilized buildings
- There is no policy that requires that retail space be filled before housing is opened
- New developments don’t fit the neighborhood character
- Not enough cool nightlife
- Need more food options

#### Strengths/Opportunities

- Overlay zone of parking
- Opportunity to marry the “old” and the “new”

- Adaptive reuse of older buildings
- Design review board might improve design of new buildings
- Create spaces to serve the neighborhood, not the new development
- Dedicate small spaces in buildings for new businesses
- Business/city bus cross-promotion
- Incentivize developers to reuse buildings and fill vacant spaces
- Encourage a good mix of office and retail
- Incentivize property owners to invest in their properties
- Minimize hurdles for small businesses
- Create a list of “bad” buildings and spaces and use code enforcement to try to bring them up to code so businesses can move in
- Shared parking arrangements
- Incentives for desired businesses
- Community benefits with new developments
- Defer startup costs for new businesses
- Desire creative businesses
- Create an urban village feel
- Utilize vacant spaces for pop-up businesses
- More dining in street
- Create a façade improvement program
- Need “cool, funky, neighborhood-serving” uses
- Local chains would be acceptable
- A walking tour may help identify desired uses and architecture

### **Community Event Update**

At the end of the meeting, City staff and Raimi + Associates provided a brief update on the community event. After feedback from the community, the venue was changed to the public parking lot on the corner of Spaulding and Santa Monica Boulevard. Additionally, due to multiple conflicts, the date of the event will be changed from April 24, 2016 to the Fall on a date to be determined. Information the date and the specific activities will be provided to the EWG as the date approaches.

### **Public Comments**

At the beginning and the end of the meeting, members of the public could provide comments and feedback on any item not on the agenda and on the topics discussed by the EWG. The comments are summarized below.

- The City should not consider changing policies to keep people out. Rather, the conversation should be around sensible development with excellent architecture. Recent projects do not meet the City’s high design standards.
- There is very little neighborhood serving retail but lots of new housing going up in the City. The City was promised a lot by the developers but the local retail has yet to materialize. The City should take steps to ensure that it receives what was promised.

- A question was raised about the amount of retail and businesses needed to serve the current population on the Eastside.
- A process should be developed to identify the dead zones and areas of blight and take steps to improve these areas.
- The Eastside should maintain an urban village feel. Development should be moderated to ensure that the urban village feel is not lost.
- There should be an effort needs to be done to work with ethnic businesses to make them appealing to a broader audience.
- More non-profit organizations should be brought to the City and the Eastside.
- Community engagement should occur at the Arbor Day event on the Eastside.

**The next meeting will be held on April 26, 2016 and will focus on mobility.**