

Eastside Working Group #1 Notes

On February 22, 2016, the City of West Hollywood and Raimi + Associates (the consultant hired by the City) hosted and facilitated the first working group meeting for Phase 2 of the Eastside Community Plan. Thirteen of the 15 Eastside Working Group (EWG) members attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to reinitiate the Community Plan process, introduce the EWG to consultant team, and discuss the community event for the Eastside scheduled for April 24, 2016. Also in attendance was Community Arts Resources (CARS), the firm hired to lead the community event.

The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance and the swearing in of the Eastside Working Group members in attendance. This was followed by public comments from 3 members of the public in attendance. After the public comments, working group members were asked to provide a brief introduction that included their name, how long they have been living in West Hollywood, a brief story that characterizes the Eastside and one issue or challenge facing the Eastside.

City staff and the consultant team then provided a presentation that included the purpose of the Community Plan, the roles and expectations of the EWG, results of Phase I of the process, recent city initiatives and the scope of work for the consultant team (including major phases of work, deliverables and community engagement activities). The last item on the agenda was a presentation and discussion of the upcoming community event led by CARS. This included feedback and suggestions by the EWG on the event.

The remainder of the document lists the overall comments and suggestions of the EWG, organized by topic.

Introductions

Each EWG member was asked to provide an introduction that included what they liked about the Eastside and one issue or challenge facing the Eastside. The following are the comments.

Issues/Threats

- Losing single family homes
- Significant new development
- Viability of existing businesses
- Challenge of adding new businesses to Santa Monica due to City regulations (especially parking)
- Lack of lighting
- Public safety; crime (mentioned by multiple people)
- Safety around Plumber Park
- Existing housing stock is falling apart; needs repair.
- Design/architecture of new construction is lacking. It is average and the City should have better.
- Improvements needed to bike and pedestrian infrastructure to improve safety
- Visual improvements are needed to make the Eastside more attractive



- Transient population
- Traffic congestion
- Need to figure out how to integrate movie studio into the fabric; interface along Santa Monica does not activate the street and creates a dead spot.
- Need more places/destination for people to go, meet, shop, etc.
- Demographics are changing - Russian Jews are moving out
- Housing costs are increasing; lack of affordable housing.
- Landlords are finding ways to evict low-income tenants
- Find information on the number of households that are low income and rent burdened.

Strengths/Opportunities

- City is centrally located
- Walkable and transit accessible
- Diversity of people and businesses (mentioned multiple times)
- There is a lot of potential for great things to happen.
- Change on Eastside is happening and this is a good thing
- Lots of opportunities to “bring the funk back to West Hollywood”

Community Event Discussion/Comments

CARS provided a summary of the community event scheduled for April 24, 2016. The purpose of the event is to obtain information that will help guide the plan and to demonstrate a type of event that could be replicated in the future to celebrate the Eastside and bring residents together. CARS described the location, types of activities and general characteristics of the event, as it is now envisioned. EWG members provided this feedback, as described below.

- Need to make the event compelling for people to come to
- Needs to be interesting, accessible
- Create a hook to get people interested
- Greenacre will not attract walk-by pedestrian traffic; find another location; perhaps on Formosa, that has more pedestrian traffic.
- Consider holding the event on “The Lot” or the City Parking lot
- Have food that is Kosher for Passover
- Make the event bigger and more interesting - “think big or dont do it”
- Have yoga and other activities
- Look at partnerships with local businesses; critical to involve businesses
- Free food is a good idea; like the idea of completing activities and getting food
- Like the idea of bread baking stations as art and an attraction to get people to the event
- Marketing is key - need to get businesses to participate and make it attractive/interesting for the community to attend.
- City should provide something to residents to get them to attend. Then quickly follow up and implement the suggestion to show that the City is listening. Ideas:
 - Signatures for permit parking
 - Locations for “doggie stations”
 - Locations for new trash cans

- Signatures for traffic calming
- Create a pop-up dog park
- Provide information on City programs to the community as part of the event
- Provide advice to potential business owners - local businesses owners and the City can have a booth to provide information and advice.
- Need to reach out to people who live in The Dylan since they do not participate in community events.

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.

General Public Comments

- Eastside is under perpetual construction. The EWG should explore the benefit to residents.
- Architecture of buildings could be improved. The City should expect more.
- Eastside needs many improvements and changes but the top priority is safety.
- New development is not providing enough benefits to the community.
- Community garden should stay.
- More neighborhood-serving businesses are needed; new development has taken away some of the local, neighborhood-serving uses.
- Look at the City as a whole, not just the Eastside. The City is small and what happens on the Eastside impacts the whole City.
- Need an ADA accessible dog park
- Keep alleys to buffer commercial uses from adjacent residential uses

Public Comments on the Community Event

- Including local business is critical; samples from restaurants
- Utilize the “pickup” line to bring people to the event
- Call it the “Eastside Block Party”

The next meeting will be held on March 22, 2016 and will focus on economic development, and will include a discussion regarding specific activities for the project at the community event.