

Eastside Working Group Meeting Notes

July 26, 2016

On July 26, 2016, the City of West Hollywood and Raimi + Associates hosted the sixth Eastside Working Group (EWG) meeting for Phase 2 of the Eastside Community Plan. Nine members of the EWG were in attendance.

The purpose of this meeting was to cover a variety of topics not addressed in other meetings, including community events, art and sustainability. This was followed by a discussion of the “evaluation checklist,” the methodology to review the proposed recommendations. Finally, information about upcoming meetings and events was also discussed, including the community event scheduled for September 18, 2016 and the EWG walking tour, the focus of the August meeting.

Arts and Events

Raimi + Associates and City staff provided a brief overview of the events held on the Eastside and the variety of arts programs run by the City. EWG members then discussed their vision and ideas for arts and events on the Eastside. The majority of comments centered around developing an “identity” for the Eastside and holding a regular community event to bring the community together. Specific comments are below:

- Currently only one art gallery on the Eastside – which could be a starting point for additional galleries on the Eastside.
- Look at community events in other communities. San Francisco has a variety of neighborhood street fairs that bring people into the community beyond the Pride festival. El Segundo has an “Art Walk” that is very popular. There is a map of where the galleries are and people go from gallery to gallery. Local businesses allowed artists to create galleries in the stores.
- Create an “arts festival” to draw people to the Eastside.
- Create a “First Fridays” event where businesses stay open late, there are food trucks and artists to come into the stores/spaces that are vacant. A recommendation was made to close Santa Monica but City staff determined that closing Santa Monica was not a feasible idea. A question was raised about closing side streets.
- Like the Russian arts and culture festival since it represents the Eastside.
- Community events could start in the park and then spread out into the streets
- There was a chalk art festival about 20 years ago that could be replicated.
- Events could use parking lot at Spaulding and Santa Monica (the location of the September 18, 2016 Eastside Event).
- Create at least one art-related event per year for the Eastside.
- Brand the neighborhood with an identity – an art district or a “studio district” were suggested. The group decided that the brand should be the location, the Eastside, without any other named focus.
- Add a gateway sign/marker at Santa Monica/La Brea to announce arrival to the City. Could also be lights or a banner.
- Explore graffiti art to enhance identity; use façade renovations (and funding for façade renovations) as a way of promoting graffiti art; use the art program funds to enhance façade improvements with graffiti.
- Mural on the side of cantors would be a great model for the Eastside to use.
- Use the walking tour to identify opportunities for where murals can be located.
- Capitalize on the City’s history to enhance identity/branding. (The city was part of a rancho land grant).

- Create a number of historic plaques or old photographs to share the history of the area. There is an interesting juxtaposition of the real cowboys and the studio cowboys.
- Create a series of historical markers throughout the Eastside and have maps or a walking tour for visitors. The markers could focus on history, Jewish culture, Russian culture, and the studios.
- Explore using the courtyard outside of the Great Hall in Plummer Park for events.
- Look into drawing KCRW to the Eastside for an Event
- Get some local press about the changing nature of the Eastside.
- Create a program, such as an annual award program, that praises businesses that create interesting and active storefronts.

Sustainability

City staff provided a brief overview of the many programs related to sustainability, including alternative energy, green buildings and the hiring of a full-time sustainability manager. EWG members provided recommendations that focused on trees including the health of trees and the tree canopy. EWG members provided the following comments and suggestions:

- The incredible tree canopy is one of those features that makes it nicer for pedestrians and helps to cool the buildings.
- Explore the use of trees that use less water and have a good tree canopy
- Can we use gray water and reclaimed water to water the City's trees?
- Concern about spiking the trees.
- Take steps to protect the existing tree canopy. Property owners can pay to remove trees and the City will replace them with new, young trees.
- Does the City have a tree replacement ordinance that requires a 1 for 1 ratio for tree replacement?
- A recommendation was made to change the City's pruning techniques – sometimes pruning is too aggressive and impacts the quality of the pedestrian experience.
- Encourage homes to use drip irrigation and xeriscaping
- Solar panels should just be mandatory on all commercial and multifamily buildings.
- Solar panels should be required on all City buildings.
- Encourage the creative use of solar panels - Sierra Bonita building has solar on the side of the building (looks like art)
- Solar shade structures could retain the usability of the street

Evaluation Criteria

Following the discussion of sustainability and arts/events, Raimi + Associates presented a first draft of the "evaluation checklist." The checklist is a high-level tool that can help EWG members, City staff and the consultants assess the proposed recommendations to ensure that they contribute to the values and aspirations of the community. The checklist is a series of questions that can be asked to determine the extent to which each recommendation meets the community's desired outcomes. In general, the EWG liked the criteria and felt that it reflected the overall direction from the previous meetings. Several comments were made for additions and there was a discussion about the rating system for the criteria. Specific comments are below:

- A question was raised about why there was an option to rank a recommendation as a negative (-2 or -1). If a recommendation was provided by the EWG then it should always be positive. In response, an EWG member said that it allows us to identify the negative consequences before the EWG endorses the recommendations.
- Recommendations were made to switch the ranking criteria to “-,0,+” or “1-5” but the EWG ultimately decided that the proposed ranking system was appropriate. The purpose and how it works needs to be explained better.
- Should there be a new criterion for parks and open space?
- Can a criterion be added for wellness/happiness/peace/quality of life? Basically, how the recommendation makes people “feel”. Does it make people feel good?
- Safety should be added to the criteria.

Community Event

Raimi + Associates provided an overview of the upcoming Community Event (scheduled for September 18, 2016 from 11 am to 3 pm). Overall, the EWG liked the concepts. The following comments were made:

- A question was raised about what role the EWG members should have at the event. In response, EWG members were asked to promote the event to friends, family and networks. EWG members could also help at the event.
- The event is not just for Eastside residents.
- A question was raised about whether the event will be dog-friendly? It will be dog and family friendly.

Walking Tour

The walking tour will be held on August 23, 2016 instead of the regular EWG meeting. This will not impact the meeting schedule. A list of potential stops/topics was presented. The following comments were provided:

- A recommendation was made to have a walking tour a required component for every future commission or advisory committee.
- Look at an alley for how it could be modified. The alley between Greenacre and Poinsettia was recommended.
- Look at the Orange Grove mural (from Art on the Outside) as an example of a mural.
- A request was made to send the tour route out in advance so that the members have their talking points ready.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at the July EWG meeting.