A Big Step Forward for the Hollywood Community Plan
by Mary Richardson - City Planning Associate

The Department of City Planning has released the Draft Hollywood Community Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) — the first of seven new Community Plans to be released by the Department for public review within the next year. Responding to requests from the community, the comment period was extended through June 1, 2011. During the extended comment period staff in the Policy Planning Division are making the rounds of Hollywood’s ten neighborhood councils, reviewing highlights of the Draft Plan and introducing the DEIR.

The Draft Hollywood Community Plan promotes compact, transit-oriented development focused around the Red Line MetroRail stations and major bus lines. Opening in 1993, the Red Line represents one of the largest public infrastructure investments in Hollywood since 1988, the adoption date of the current Hollywood Community Plan. The Draft Plan supports this investment with proposals to raise Floor Area Ratios in the Regional Commercial Center and along commercial corridors along the Red Line outside of the Regional Commercial Center. Removing Development Limitations to restore the citywide standard Floor Area Ratio for commercial areas outside of the Regional Commercial Center is another initiative.

The protection of neighborhoods, historic resources, and alleys is also emphasized by the Draft Plan. Projects located in Floor Area Incentive Areas which involve buildings identified as appearing to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Resources, (continued on pg. 3)
City On-Line System Creates Powerful Search Tool For Homeowners, Businesses And Developers
by Ken Bernstein - Principal City Planner

In the Summer of 2010, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning unveiled an entirely new version of ZIMAS – the City’s Zone Information and Map Access System – to give homeowners, businesses, potential homebuyers, and property owners a powerful way to find detailed information about their own property, or any property in the City.

ZIMAS gives every Los Angeles resident or business the opportunity to find detailed information about governmental activity that may affect their neighborhood or their own property. In addition, all potential homebuyers or purchasers of commercial or industrial property should become aware of how much they can learn through a quick on-line ZIMAS search, which should be part of anyone’s “due diligence” activities before making an offer for real estate.

Just a few of the valuable features ZIMAS now offers includes the following:

- Before making an offer to purchase a property, search for whether the property is in a flood zone, fire hazard zone, coastal zone, high wind velocity area, methane zone, or liquefaction zone.
- Find your City Council representative, local Certified Neighborhood Council, Community Plan, LAPD bureau, and other governmental information.
- Click on the link to the Department of Building and Safety’s “Property Activity Report” to access a summary of all recent building permits issued or requested, as well as all code enforcement actions, for any property citywide.
- Click on the links to all prior Planning cases to track the history of planning approvals for any site and (for cases decided since 2001) to pull up the scanned documents associated with these past planning approvals.
- Find out whether a property includes a designated historic structure, or is located within one of the City’s 27 Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs).
- Find out about census tract information, County Assessor’s data, and economic development programs such as State Enterprise Zones, or Business Improvement Districts.
- Measure distances between parcels using the ZIMAS maps’ “measure tool” or use the maps’ “radius tool” to see what properties or sensitive land uses are within a 500’ radius, 1,000’ radius, or any selected distance from a given parcel.

In addition, the new version of ZIMAS significantly reduces wait time for rendering maps, allows users three different options to customize their reports on a parcel, and provides links to Google Maps and Microsoft Bing maps. You may access ZIMAS on the website by typing the following address in your web browser: http://zimas.lacity.org/.
Los Angeles Welcomes a Bicycle Plan
by Jordann Turner - City Planning Associate

The 2010 Bicycle Plan, prepared by the Department of City Planning, was approved by City Council on March 1, 2011 and is a comprehensive update of the City’s existing Bicycle Plan, originally approved by the City Council in 1996 and last re-adopted in 2007. The Plan serves as the City’s blueprint for meeting the needs of all bicyclists and improving bicycling conditions in the City. The Plan establishes three main goals:

• Increase the number and type of bicyclists who bicycle in the City
• Make every street a safe place to ride a bicycle
• Make the City of Los Angeles a bicycle-friendly community

Highlights of the 2010 Bicycle Plan include the:

• Designation of over 1,600 miles of bicycle facilities (bicycle paths, bicycle lanes, and bicycle routes/bicycle friendly streets) connecting all parts of the City (an increase of approximately 900 miles from the 1996 Bicycle Plan);
• Creation of three new bikeway Networks (Backbone, Neighborhood, Green) that will focus future bikeway improvements and other associated education, enforcement, encouragement, and equity programs;
• Introduction of “bicycle-friendly streets” as the backbone to the Neighborhood Network geared toward bicyclists who are more comfortable on streets with less traffic volumes;
• Introduction of an on-going Five-Year Implementation Strategy to design and construct 200 miles of bikeways every five years;
• Adoption of a comprehensive Technical Design Handbook to guide the design of bicycle facilities; and
• Updated goals, objectives, policies, and programs to support the implementation of the Plan.

The Bicycle Plan was heralded at a March 2nd press conference hosted by Mayor Villaraigosa and will be awarded the 2011 "Hard Won Victory Award" by the American Planning Association’s Los Angeles Chapter at a ceremony in June.

Hollywood Plan
(continued from pg. 1)

must be approved by the Office of Historic Resources. To provide transition in scale between the commercial district in downtown Hollywood and the lower scale residential neighborhoods surrounding it, planning staff has endorsed guidelines and standards for the Regional Commercial Center. Since most of the Draft Plan’s proposed increases in density and intensity are located in the Regional Center, it is important that development in this area be well-designed.

Keeping existing alleys open, well-maintained and accessible for public use is a goal of the Draft Plan. Alleys improve circulation by providing thoroughfares for pedestrians and bicyclists. Open space is an added bonus. Maintaining Hollywood’s alleys also helps deter the creation of pedestrian-unfriendly “superblocks”. The Draft Plan proposes an Alley Improvement Plan which ties alley improvements to new development.

Adjustments to Street Standards are recommended. Modified Street Standards will align existing Street Standards with the true function of Hollywood’s streets. Adjusting Street Standards improves the walkability of streets by preserving existing parkways and wide sidewalks which exceed standard dimensions. The Draft Plan identifies street segments where new parkways and wider sidewalks are appropriate and feasible.

A public hearing on the Draft Hollywood Community Plan will be held in the summer 2011.

SurveyLA Technology Award to Fae Tsukamoto

Fae Tsukamoto, GIS Database Maintenance Supervisor for the Department of City Planning’s Systems and GIS Division, received an Outstanding IT Manager Award from the Los Angeles Technology Forum and Government Technology Magazine. The award was presented in recognition of her central role in supervising the pioneering information management program for SurveyLA, the Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey.

Congratulations, Fae!
A History of Planning in Los Angeles (1849-1996)
by Alan Bell, AICP - Deputy Director of Planning

On September 4, 1781, the Spanish governor Felipe de Neve founded el Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles (the City of Our Lady Queen of the Angels) along the Porciuncula (later Los Angeles River). A plan was laid out like a subdivision map identifying sites for a public plaza, church, homes, and farms as well as an irrigation system and a road connecting the pueblo to the Mission at San Gabriel. Eleven families constituted the first settlers.

1849 — United States Army Engineer Lieutenant E.O.C. Ord completed the city’s first official survey and mapping under American rule, Los Angeles was a western frontier town of less than 2,000 inhabitants.

1892 — William Doheny discovered oil at what is now the intersection of Second Street and Glendale Boulevard.

1900 — Los Angeles was the oil center of the west with a population of over 100,000.

1908 — The city adopted an ordinance which established the nation’s first land use designations.

1910 — The City Council established a 15-member Planning Committee to develop a “comprehensive plan whereby Los Angeles may develop her material improvement along artistic as well as practical lines.”

1913 — William Mulholland, the City Engineer and Superintendent of the Water Department, designed an ambitious system for transporting water from the Owens Valley located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. A 250 mile long aqueduct was completed in 1913.

1915 — The San Fernando Valley was annexed, nearly doubling the size of the city.

1917 — The first power plant, the San Francisquito Power Plant No. 1, became operational. E.F. Scattergood, the city’s first Chief Electrical Engineer, developed a hydroelectric system to harness the energy generated by the rapidly flowing waters of the Owens River aqueduct.

1920 — The Planning Committee was replaced by a 52-member City Planning Commission comprised of representatives of the largest civic groups in Los Angeles. Gordon Whitnall was appointed the Commission’s first secretary and also served as its first professional planner. Under Whitnall’s guidance the Commission completed the city’s first comprehensive Street Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Close to 600,000 people lived in a city of 364 square miles.

1925 — A major revision to the City Charter reduced the size of the Planning Commission to five members and created a professional planning department. Whitnall was appointed to head the new department.

1930 — Before Whitnall resigned, he revised the zoning ordinance. Height, area, density and parking regulations were prepared and standard zone categories were developed. The 1930 ordinance did not undergo any major changes until 1946 when, with Whitnall as a consultant, the entire city was remapped.

1946 — The 1946 ordinance has been the most influential in shaping the city’s present configuration of land uses and density patterns.

1974 — City Council adopted the Centers Concept, which envisioned the city as a network of urban centers connected by a rail transit system. Centers would be self-contained communities where many types of services, jobs, and housing would be available and accessible. To avoid encroachment of unwanted commercial developments or higher densities, the Centers Concept called for concentrating growth in these urban centers while preserving the city’s predominant single-family pattern of residential development.

1996 — The City Council adopted a new guiding document for long-range planning in Los Angeles called the General Plan Framework. Much more detailed than the Centers Concept, the Framework includes a comprehensive strategy for directing the City’s future growth in population, jobs and housing into neighborhood districts, community centers, regional centers, the downtown center, and industrial districts. A key feature of the Framework is its emphasis on mixed use boulevards as the best way to promote compact, transit oriented development where residents can live, work and play. The Framework guides the department’s preparation of the General Plan, which consists of 35 community plans and a variety of citywide elements.

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