

# PURPLE LINE TRANSIT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

WINTER 2019 OUTREACH: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

February and March, 2019



## Executive Summary

The Purple Line Transit Neighborhood Plan (TNP) project aims to develop land use, zoning, and design regulations for the neighborhoods surrounding three future Metro Purple Line stations in the Wilshire area at: Wilshire/La Brea, Wilshire/Fairfax, and Wilshire/La Cienega. The study area includes the area in the City of Los Angeles generally within half a mile radius of each station.

During February and March 2019, the Department of City Planning conducted additional workshops and office hours for the Purple Line TNP project. The Department identified an opportunity for additional outreach following the Scoping meeting conducted in July 2018 to solicit input on the scope of environmental analysis. At the Scoping meeting, and subsequent follow up meetings with stakeholders and Community groups, many people who weren't involved in earlier rounds of outreach expressed a desire for additional opportunities to participate and to provide specific input on the project mainly related to building design and scale, mobility improvements, and tools to conserve neighborhood character.

## **Prior Outreach**

During the initial phase of the public planning process, in the first half of 2016, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning hosted two community workshops and several other small focus groups for residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in order to identify opportunities to enhance neighborhoods surrounding the future transit stations. Staff collected and summarized the thoughts, ideas, and concerns for the future of their neighborhood as it develops around transit that were shared at these various meetings. Please see this [link](#) for the summary of comments received during this 2016 initial outreach phase.

Using the comments received through the first round of outreach, in combination with station area context, current City plans and policies, demographic analysis, and planning best practices, the Department developed initial land use and zoning concepts. The initial concepts included targeted increases in development rights and application of design regulations along commercial corridors; and context specific building design regulations in multi-family areas (identified in SurveyLA). These initial concepts were presented at a public open house on November 16, 2017 at the Pan Pacific Senior Activity Center. A summary of comments received from the 2017 Open House can be found at this [link](#).

Following the presentation of initial land use and zone change concepts, and based on comments received, the Department prepared revisions to these concepts. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was issued on July 12, 2018, and the public Scoping meeting was held on July 26, 2018. Comments to the NOP were accepted in person, both orally and written, as well as via email, mail, and web comment form until August 13, 2018. Comments from the public focused both on topics of environmental analysis, as well as feedback on the revised plan concepts. A summary of these comments can be found at this [link](#).

## **Winter 2019 Outreach**

Following the Scoping Meeting, staff identified primary topics on which to conduct additional community outreach, including visual preferences to help inform regulation development, mobility needs to inform design and future investment from partner agencies, tools to ensure compatibility of new developments with the existing context in areas identified as historically significant in SurveyLA, and prioritization of public benefits. The Department conducted two public workshops, each consisting of an open house and small group discussions, on February 23, 2019 at Pan Pacific Park, and February 27, 2019 at Temple Beth Am, as well as a drop-in office hours event on March 12, 2019 at the Little Ethiopia Cultural Resources Center. The Department promoted the outreach events through in-person announcements at each of the five Neighborhood Councils with land in the study area (Olympic Park on 2/4, South Robertson on 2/5, Mid-City West on 2/12, Greater Wilshire on 2/13, and PICO on 2/13);

coordination with Council District Offices 4, 5, and 10; a postcard flyer mailed to all property owners and occupants in the study area and within a 500-foot radius (approximately 38,000); an email to the Purple Line TNP interest list (of approximately 820 stakeholders); social media such as Facebook and Twitter; and the project's website [www.latnp.org](http://www.latnp.org).

All comments received inform the Department's analysis, and the comments have been summarized below. Comments from the public featured several recurring themes in relation to the concepts presented:

- Participants identified improving the overall mix of jobs and housing near the stations as a major goal, followed closely by improvements to walkability.
- Comments acknowledged that a housing crisis exists at multiple geographic levels (nationally, statewide, regionally, and locally) and across all income levels; and that failing to address it in a higher-income area with access to transit and services creates broader regional transportation (and thus GHG emission) impacts.
- There's general consensus that more housing and job opportunities, along with taller buildings, are appropriate in proximity to the future station portals; however, opinions differ on the intensities and typologies of housing as well as the areas and distances from station portals where more housing should be allowed.
- Mixed-use buildings with active ground-floor uses are desirable for commercial corridors on Wilshire Blvd., La Brea Ave. and Fairfax Ave., in order to create interest for pedestrians, enhance walkability, and create spaces for small businesses.
- In order to receive additional development rights beyond what a zone allows - after affordable housing requirements have been met - participants favored additional affordable housing, followed by publicly accessible open space (plazas or parklets).
- The intersection known as the "asterisk" (the intersection of Fairfax Ave., Olympic Blvd., and San Vicente Blvd.) should be targeted for improvements that enhance mobility and connectivity.
- In all multi-family areas, individual buildings should follow rules that ensure compatibility with the design of existing buildings.
- Buildings should be designed with central entrances with high levels of visibility from the street, and ground level with high percentage of transparency to improve the pedestrian experience.
- Less visible parking areas and driveways are preferred.
- Residential buildings should include street-visible courtyards and/or some form of upper-story change in massing (such as stepbacks or articulations in the plane of the front facade).
- High-rise buildings should include landscape buffers or multi-step transitions when adjacent to lower scale residential areas.
- High-rise buildings, especially on Wilshire Blvd., should be allowed, but should be narrower to allow for passage of light and air.
- Little Ethiopia represents a unique asset for the community and its legacy businesses should be preserved

#### In depth comments organized by topic:

##### **Design**

- 10+ story high buildings are already present on the Wilshire corridor and should continue to be encouraged.
  - Scale down on other commercial corridors.
- Buildings on commercial corridors should cover the majority of the lot, except for open space.
- Rules are important to discourage bad design, but shouldn't be so restrictive as to make everything look the same or discourage creativity.
- Encourage natural light and air – both within individual buildings and neighborhoods.
- Transitions to adjacent residential areas and rules for tower design/spacing should be incorporated; use of multiple upper-story stepbacks, followed by landscaped buffers were preferred.
- Incorporate communal open spaces, plazas, and/or parklets in new multi-family and commercial projects.
- Design should be thoughtful in regards to users of all ages and mobility needs; incorporate aging-in-place into building design and encourage play areas for children.

- “Big box” style designs were roundly disliked, especially in multi-family areas – encourage transparency at ground level and articulation of building massing, especially at upper stories.
- As rideshare becomes more prevalent, including pick-up/drop-off locations becomes more important.
- Parking structures should be underground, but when at or above ground, parking structures should include ground-floor commercial uses adjacent to the street and be screened from view; surface parking in front of buildings should not be allowed.
- Windows and transparency requirements should convey openness and visual permeability and limit appearance of blank walls, especially at ground level.
- Require main entrances on commercial streets and ensure that they are emphasized.
- Courtyards were seen as a typical development element and should be allowed/encouraged.
- Require articulation and building breaks to create a sense of multiple, smaller buildings.
- Roofs can be flat but should be ornamented and compatible with architectural style and neighborhood context.

### Neighborhood/Commercial Character and Preservation

- The stock of older multi-family and commercial buildings represents a cultural resources and the City should pursue preservation strategies, especially the large, pre-war brick apartment buildings near Wilshire/La Brea.
- New buildings should be responsive to and respectful of the existing context in historic areas.
- Materials matter - stucco, except in Spanish-style design should be discouraged.
- Little Ethiopia was highlighted as a unique community asset that should be preserved – consider decreasing allowable FARs and commercial-only use district; explore right of return for commercial tenants and commercial rent control
- Encourage adaptive reuse on corridors other than Wilshire.
- People and individual businesses matter to neighborhood character too, not just the buildings.
- Density of housing units within a building is not as important as overall massing, form, placement and design.

### Housing

- Existing diversity of housing types has led to a diversity of residents, which is seen as a community strength.
- The broader housing crisis has both localized and regional impacts and it is entirely appropriate to create more supply at all income levels in an area with such high infrastructure investment as the Purple Line subway extension, one of the only subways under construction in the country.
- A critical mass of residents is needed to support local businesses and sustain transit.
- Stakeholders were split on allowing additional development in single-family areas (especially those already designated as Historic Preservation Overlay Zones [HPOZs]) – second units/ADUs were largely seen as appropriate.
- Many stakeholders would like to live in the area, but feel like they can’t afford the rent or have to fight for limited opportunities.
- Stakeholders who rent in the area worry about being priced out and having to commute back for work.
- In addition to building out subsidized units, ways to encourage or preserve middle income or mixed-income buildings should be analyzed.
- Displacement of existing renters and loss of rent-stabilized housing is a major concern.
- Smaller units should be allowed because they are naturally more affordable.
  - However, units which allow families are still needed.

### Mix of Uses

- Highest levels of development intensity should be allowed closest to station portals and commercial corridors and should be gradually stepped down further away.
- Neighborhoods should be “self-sufficient” with a good mix of uses in a compact, walkable area.
  - Some neighborhood uses like hardware stores and grocery stores have been lost or are missing.
- Encourage additional arts, theater, and entertainment uses; many areas die down after office workers leave (Wilshire corridor especially can support 24/7 vibrancy).

- New development should be encouraged on existing parking lots, strip malls, and in low-density homeownership areas to minimize risk of displacement.
- Ground floor retail vacancies are an issue; consider strategies to lower commercial rents and encourage small, mom-and-pop businesses.
- La Brea works well as an urban main street with a walkable mix of uses, but has a number of vacant buildings (such as the former OSH location) that could be revitalized to provide more neighborhood-serving commercial uses.
- There should be a vacancy tax – on vacant lots, housing units, and commercial spaces.

### **Mobility and Connectivity**

- Walking/biking in the area can be unpleasant and unsafe today, but needed to allow for first/last mile connections to transit.
- The “Asterisk” intersection of Fairfax, San Vicente, and Olympic was highlighted as one of the major mobility challenges in the area; some stakeholders would like to see the City explore improvements and the feasibility of a roundabout at this intersection.
- Better linkages to/from cultural uses are needed.
- Carthay Circle pedestrian linkages should be preserved and improved.
- Larchmont was frequently mentioned as a good model for walkability.
- Traffic lights should be better coordinated and intersections improved to emphasize pedestrians and cyclists.
- Scramble crosswalks should be considered at major intersections.
- Limit curb cuts to encourage walking.
- Potholes and broken sidewalks discourage active modes of travel.
- More circulator transit is needed, such as DASH routes and/or free shuttles similar to those in West Hollywood.

### **Public Realm and Landscaping**

- Buildings should be designed to encourage strong interactivity with the public realm and emphasize pedestrian-friendly features to encourage walking – strategies could include high levels of transparency at ground level.
- Encourage developers to plant more street trees, especially native, drought-tolerant species and those that create a large tree canopy.
- Cool and permeable pavements should be encouraged, especially in alleyways, to address heat island effects and for stormwater recapture.
- Improve street furniture (e.g. real time bus arrival data) and provide trash receptacles.
- Open spaces of all kinds with flexible seating and shade.

### **Public Benefits**

- Affordable housing is seen as the highest priority public benefit, followed by publicly accessible open spaces.
- Explore ways to use HHH funds to subsidize units in private development.
- Consider models where City acquires property and builds subsidized housing.

### **Public Services**

- Utility lines should be underground and meters screened from view.
- Only one large park (Pan Pacific Park) exists and more neighborhood parks/parklets are needed, especially further south as identified in outreach for the Pico Great Streets initiative.