



# Southeast Valley Community Plan Update Office Hours

## Brief Summary

### Background and Workshop Format

Los Angeles City Planning (LACP) is in the process of updating many of its community plans, three of which are in the Southeast Valley: Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks, North Hollywood-Valley Village, and Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass. Each Community Plan consists of a policy document and a land use map. The policy document lays out the community's goals, policies, and programs, while the land use map identifies where certain uses (such as residential, commercial, and industrial) are permitted. Together, the policy document and land use map inform local zoning decisions. Proposed changes to the City's zoning are usually initiated through Community Plan Updates.

The Southeast Valley Community Plan Updates (SEV) team has continued gathering feedback and synthesizing what was heard since sharing initial concepts and guiding principles for the Community Plan Updates in [summer 2019](#). While there was great attendance and input, the team is always seeking to engage more stakeholders in the Southeast Valley. For this reason, the SEV CPU Team conducted three Office Hours sessions in February 2020.

Office Hours were an opportunity for the public to be a part of guided conversations with LA City Planning staff regarding the proposed land use concepts and guiding principles for the Community Plan Updates. These concepts were based on (1) community input from the project's Listen Phase outreach conducted between Fall 2018 and Summer 2019, (2) staff's technical analysis of existing land use, zoning and development patterns and (3) policy direction from the state and the City of Los Angeles. Close to 150 people participated in Office Hours.

The guiding principles for the proposed Plan concepts include the following:

- Planning around existing and incoming transit
- Addressing future housing needs
- Creating conditions for complete, walkable neighborhoods
- Addressing environmental justice issues
- Increasing access to open space
- Preserving historic resources
- Supporting sustainability and addressing climate change



A majority of conversations during Office Hours focused on the goals listed above, and are captured in this high-level comprehensive summary. Feedback was mainly received in the form of verbal comments made during facilitated small group discussions and/or on written and online comment cards.

As always, we welcome feedback and questions. You can email us at [planning.southeastvalley@lacity.org](mailto:planning.southeastvalley@lacity.org). Your thoughts and comments are important to us. The team will consider this feedback as these concepts are refined. In the next year, the Southeast Valley Community Plan Updates team will initiate environmental analysis and release a draft land use map. We look forward to hearing from you soon!



## February 11, 2020 || Campo de Cahuenga

The first session for the [SEV CPU Office Hours](#) series was held at the historic Campo de Cahuenga facility in Studio City on February 11. Many of the attendees reside and/or work in the Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan Area. Other notable stakeholders who joined various conversations included environmental and mobility advocates, large-scale developers, and supporters of homelessness prevention and mental health wellness.

### **Plan around existing and incoming transit**

- Many stakeholders agreed that the Southeast Valley is past due for transit investments in the form of well-serviced bus lines and new rail infrastructure, and that neighborhoods with incoming transit are the areas where it makes sense to increase density and housing opportunities.
- Residents mentioned that they would like to see increased DASH bus routes serving Studio City and Sherman Oaks, and along Ventura Boulevard.
- Commercial and residential developers suggested reducing minimum parking requirements in proximity to transit. They also suggested creating a fast-track approval process for Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) and Density Bonus projects.

### **Address future housing needs**

- Attendees were interested to learn more about recent state legislation, including AB 494, adopted 2017 and AB68, adopted 2019, which allow accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units in all residential zones in the state of California.
- Some residents from Studio City expressed concerns over: particular new housing projects which they consider to conflict with neighborhood scale and character; potentially allowing for three- and four-plex developments, and increased density in single family neighborhoods; and a lack of parking.
- Stakeholders recommended appropriately scaled fourplex zones in targeted areas, and expressed a preference to see growth directed towards existing commercial corridors.
- Attendees commented on the need for more housing, services, and humane interactions with, and for those experiencing homelessness.
- Attendees expressed interest in adaptive reuse (the process of repurposing existing buildings for a different use) in the Southeast Valley, specifically for older commercial spaces to be converted into residential uses at a minimal cost.
- There was concern about the amount of older, lower scale multifamily housing stock being replaced with denser housing types.



- A lack of affordable housing and rent-stabilized units were named as major barriers for people hoping to stay in or move to the Southeast Valley.
- Commercial and residential developers who work on a range of projects types shared the following:
  - *Challenges*
    - Barriers to development, including numerous entitlements and wait times, cost of land and impact fees; cost of affordable units in new projects.
    - Desire for greater flexibility in building design requirements which are sometimes seen as too prescriptive; Requiring multiple entrances on commercial properties, or mandating minimum parking which can impact the ability of attracting tenants.
  - *Recommendations*
    - If the intent of overhauling the zoning code is to allow for more by-right development, perhaps this should come with an accompanying increase in site plan review thresholds, which triggers a discretionary process.
  - *Insights*
    - There are areas which have what appears to be sufficient floor area for a quality development that is profitable to developers, however these areas are paired with minimal density which hampers development potential.

**Create conditions for complete, walkable neighborhoods**

- A few Sherman Oaks residents shared that current density and height limitations along major commercial corridors like Ventura Boulevard are too low.
- A bike advocate stated that landscaping barriers such as potted plants contribute to mobility safety and can be helpful for both cyclists and pedestrians.
- People expressed a need for more east-west bus connections and contiguous sidewalks, especially along Whitsett Avenue and Moorpark Street.
- Lankershim and Sepulveda boulevards were referenced as major opportunity areas for mixed-use developments and flexible office spaces. Sherman Oaks stakeholders remarked that they would like to see portions of Sepulveda, Van Nuys, and Victory boulevards transformed into future regional employment and retail hubs, which may require bolder planning decisions related to heights, density, uses, and design.
- While some residents prefer low-slung commercial development, others favor adding density on commercial corners to create housing and job opportunities.



### ***Address environmental justice and climate change***

- LACP staff spoke with environmental, environmental justice, and sustainability-centered organizations who shared their expansive knowledge on issues ranging from climate resiliency and shade equity, to watershed preservation and land use planning, including:
  - *Challenges*
    - It is difficult to prioritize larger canopy trees when a grant might require a specific amount of tree plantings (i.e. planting more 15-gallon trees than 24-gallon trees because it is less costly and results in more trees).
    - There needs to be a more complete management and monitoring cycle for trees in public and private spaces.
  - *Opportunities*
    - Encourage zoning strategies and building regulations that mitigate flood risk and support existing watersheds while minimizing urban heat islands.
    - Advance low-impact development (LID) requirements. Implement methods for on-site rainwater harvesting and stormwater management.
    - Protect and preserve mature trees, and focus tree plantings in historically disadvantaged communities where there is a minimal urban tree canopy.
    - Increase access to open space, greenways, and waterways. Be mindful of development near waterways since laying down more concrete may pose public health and safety concerns due to potential flooding.

### ***Increase access to open space***

- People would like to see well-designed plazas, paseos, and office parks along employment corridors and regional-serving retail spaces.
- Avid cyclists encouraged having more pocket parks, picnic areas, and wayfinding signage in the Southeast Valley.



## February 18, 2020 || Braude Building

*The second session was held at the Marvin Braude Building in Van Nuys on February 18, where staff heard from many Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks, and Studio City residents, college students and young professionals, as well as transit equity, community development, and environmental planning advocates, and mental health service providers.*

### ***Plan around existing and incoming transit***

- Van Nuys stakeholders discussed the need for wider sidewalks, traffic mitigation, added density, and greater housing opportunities near the forthcoming East San Fernando Valley Light Rail Corridor Project that will travel down Van Nuys Boulevard.
- Mixed-use development with local serving retail uses and office spaces were encouraged where existing strip malls are located and commercial centers close to transit corridors.

### ***Address future housing needs***

- Some Sherman Oaks residents would like to see greater walkability in the following areas: between Riverside Drive and Fulton Avenue, between Hazeltine Avenue and the 101 Freeway overpass, by the former Corky's restaurant site on Van Nuys Boulevard, around Westfield Fashion Square, and along Sepulveda Boulevard, and Moorpark Street.
- Housing advocates addressed the need for the preservation of existing rent-stabilized units, stronger tenant protections, production of senior housing and affordable housing for families, and affordable accessory and junior accessory dwelling units (ADUs and JADUs, respectively) for low- and moderate-income households.
- Some stakeholders viewed fourplexes near commercial areas as an opportunity to add to the housing stock and create missing middle housing for purchase. Other stakeholders were skeptical of introducing duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes in certain existing single-family neighborhoods.

### ***Create conditions for complete, walkable neighborhoods***

- Stakeholders envision an enhanced public realm along Van Nuys Boulevard characterized by:
  - Mixed-use commercial and housing development, with community services and family-centered uses.
  - Retail uses such as restaurants with outdoor seating options, theaters and entertainment space, and local fresh food markets.



- Wider and level sidewalks with outdoor lighting.
- Limitations on uses such as pawn shops and bail bond stores.
- Building frontages with street-facing entrances and alleys adorned with art.
- College students and young professionals mentioned the need for nighttime activities, attractions and better connected transit options.
- Many Sherman Oaks residents view Sepulveda Boulevard as a “grand boulevard” that can embody interesting architecture, greater density, and diverse land uses, particularly on the strip of the boulevard that abuts the 405 freeway.
- Stakeholders mentioned a desire for well-designed and landscaped shared parking structures close to shopping centers, offices, and transit.
- Architectural style along the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor should be fine-grained and scaled to support walkability and reflect the existing historic corridors.

***Address environmental justice and climate change***

- Industrial uses should be properly located, and if adjacent to sensitive uses, designed with sufficient buffers. Stakeholders also cited the significance of safeguarding long-standing manufacturing, production, and auto-related jobs in industrial areas.

***Increase access to open space***

- Concerns about the public realm include narrow streets, sidewalks in poor condition, vacant storefronts, and lack of street lighting in residential areas.
- Lemona, Calhoun, and Columbus Avenues in Van Nuys and Sherman Oaks were identified as streets where the sidewalks are in good condition with copious tree canopy.
- Regarding Southeast Valley waterways, local artists recommended more artwork, similar to the Great Wall of Los Angeles mural beside the Tujunga Wash. People support a contiguous bike & walking path, pocket parks, and coffee shops along the waterways. A member of an environmental organization asked staff to retrace origin points for the LA River and tributaries which could inform decisions around tree placement and permeable pavement design. Other suggestions include:
  - A plant palette, comprising a curated list of trees and shrubs to support local and regional ecology.
  - Overlay the proposed general plan land use map upon a parks needs assessment map and the waterways map to showcase opportunity sites which could achieve the greatest impact on water flow management.



## February 24, 2020 || Amelia Earhart Regional Library

*The third session was held at the Amelia Earhart Regional Library in North Hollywood on February 24, and included residents and workers from the Southeast Valley, market-rate and non-profit affordable housing developers, environmental advocates, urban farmers, service organizations, and faith-based groups.*

### **Plan around existing and incoming transit**

- LA Metro has proposed multiple transit lines that would run along Laurel Canyon or Lankershim Boulevards, respectively. While those transit plans are not final, the Southeast Valley CPU team has proposed land use concepts along these corridors to incentivize denser mixed-use development in conjunction with that incoming transit. Separately, the [Orange Line Transit Neighborhood Plan](#) will make targeted land use changes for roughly the ½ mile radius around the North Hollywood, Van Nuys and Sepulveda stations. Stakeholders who live and/or work in North Hollywood shared the following feedback in response to changes proposed through the Southeast Valley CPU:
  - Laurel Canyon Boulevard: Expand transit options with increased job and housing density; encourage mixed-use development with required ground floor retail in the Valley Plaza shopping district that can support local and regional shoppers.
  - Lankershim Boulevard: Desire for development north of Burbank to match the atmosphere that exists on “Restaurant Row” on Magnolia Boulevard; Support more dining and entertainment options at Oxnard Street and along Lankershim Boulevard; Consider allowing for by-right fourplex within the first ¾ mile radius around high-quality transit stops.
- North Hollywood stakeholders expressed desire for a stronger jobs-housing match, and advocated for strategies that would attract employers to the NOHO Arts District, and the NOHO Transit station in particular.
- Small to mid-scale developers shared that although the City has programs that allow for less parking in new developments near transit, many developers still provide parking in the Valley. This is related to expectations of tenants and lenders.

### **Address future housing needs**

- Southeast Valley stakeholders shared:
  - Concerns about housing affordability, displacement pressures on renters and commercial tenants, and growing market speculation.
  - Desire to to expand affordable housing in the region by allowing for fourplexes in existing single-family zones, adding greater density near major transit and



commercial corridors, and requiring less parking by major bus and rail hubs as potential solutions.

- Desire to expand housing opportunities for Section 8 users, homeless populations, low-income seniors, and people suffering from mental health ailments.
- Specific to Toluca Lake, there was agreement among stakeholders to:
  - Add density near the Universal City Red Line Station, portions of Riverside Drive, Lankershim Boulevard and Cahuenga Boulevard.
  - Work with LACP to address issues related to out-of-scale development, encroachment effects if density is to increase in portions of the neighborhoods.
- In North Hollywood, there was great desire for new housing types, including:
  - intergenerational living; adding more housing options in the form of ADUs and Junior ADUs; and more senior housing in northern North Hollywood.
  - NOHO West neighbors shared that they would like to see mixed-use developments and housing near retail-heavy areas like Valley Plaza, and on Lankershim Boulevard. They also shared that Sherman Way should be considered for housing, particularly the KMart site.
  - Stakeholders promoted fourplex zones as a positive way to transition from multifamily areas to heavily single-family areas.
  - A North Hollywood service organization advocated for mental health response and homeless services access centers to be permitted by-right in future zoning, particularly in mixed-use areas.
  - There is a desire to understand how safe parking policies can be used to address growing homelessness in the region and the process to develop permanent supportive housing on church properties.
- In order to streamline the creation of affordable units, affordable housing providers recommended removing overlays, specific plans, and Qualifying “Q” Conditions (regulations that inform development and often address density, height limitations, and lot coverage), which can restrict development potential.
- Small to mid-scale residential developers in the San Fernando Valley shared the following:
  - Future zoning should offer density and floor area ratio (FAR) incentives, and potentially increase the required set-aside affordable units and incentives when codifying the TOC program.



- Transitional height requirements can cut into the development potential, especially on smaller sites that do not require lot assembly. Being sensitive to adjacent single-family neighborhoods may reduce the overall number of units possible in the area.
- Measure JJJ has disincentivized zone change cases, and has limited development of both rental and for-sale products.
- TOC has been an appealing alternative, but it is more desirable to build in a Tier 3-4 TOC area than in a Tier 1-2 TOC area. Support for market-based affordability requirements i.e. deeper affordability requirements in high-market areas.

**Create conditions for complete, walkable neighborhoods**

- In the Southeast Valley
  - Small to mid-scale residential and commercial developers suggested:
    - Existing parking zones be zoned to allow for mixed use, and accompanied by design treatments for sites abutting single-family neighborhoods.
    - On mixed-use corridors, set-backs and amenity space should be site specific, and left to the designer to decide.
    - In order for commercial corridors to survive, they should be surrounded by a rich variety of housing types, not only single-family neighborhoods.
  - Community members shared they would like to see expanded height restrictions and transitional heights in residential areas and along commercial corridors.
- In North Hollywood
  - Stakeholders supported expanding the Neighborhood Residential land use concept to more areas. This would allow for limited commercial uses in the ground floor of otherwise residential buildings, creating more walkable neighborhoods and bringing local services to the area.
  - NOHO West neighbors shared that there are few markets, restaurants and grocery stores within walking distance of their neighborhoods. It is rare to walk to shopping or services in this neighborhood.
- Studio City stakeholders generally prefer townhomes, row houses, and small multifamily typologies with green space, in place of condominiums. They would like to protect local businesses on Moorpark Street and Tujunga Avenue from potential displacement.
- Van Nuys stakeholders mentioned wanting to see more family-oriented businesses that remain open past 6 pm as well as better seating and shading options at local bus stops.



- Toluca Lake stakeholders would like LACP to consider codifying design standards from the Toluca Lake Community Design Overlay in future zoning.

### ***Address environmental justice and climate change***

- In speaking with small farmers, urban agriculturalists, and tree advocates, LACP staff learned the following:
  - The combination of Los Angeles climate and the nutrient-rich soil in the San Fernando Valley presents a unique opportunity for growing food in urban spaces.
  - A contingency of Angelenos are interested in urban agriculture and see it as a way to address issues around food insecurity and health disparities, however existing zoning presents obstacles to urban farming and food distribution on one's property.
    - Participants mentioned the racialized history of the term “truck gardening” as a catchall for urban agriculture uses, and suggested redefining urban gardening and agriculture in the future zoning code.
    - While community gardens are permitted by-right in residential zones, larger scale urban farming is not. Even with the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone, it is costly and onerous to comply with existing zoning as an urban farmer. Could there be a less costly way to come into conformance as an urban farmer than getting a General Plan Amendment?
  - Future zoning could include incentives for growing food on a project site, i.e. requiring that a portion of the lot be dedicated to urban agriculture in exchange for allowing taller development, granting a height incentive in exchange for a rooftop garden, or co-locating urban agriculture and supportive housing.
- Stakeholders from NOHO West shared that while planning concepts that control for issues of industrial land adjacent to residential land are appreciated, they may be overcorrecting. The main impacts on residential neighbors of industrial properties in North Hollywood are hours of operation and noise, rather than particularly toxic uses. Residential areas near industrial ones may not have environmental justice concerns, and the co-location of these uses may maintain affordability of housing in the area.



### ***Increase access to open space***

- Several people were in support of increasing access to green space, waterways, and to create walkable areas, attendees proposed utilizing the lot coverage tool to codify open spaces requirements and using funds such as Quimby fees to create more pocket parks.
- Stakeholders also recommended that LACP should require developers to protect mature trees and replace trees at a higher ratio than what exists today; advocate that parking lots have cool pavements to reduce heat islands; protect wildlife ecosystems and local biodiversity; and consider reconnecting waterways and open space further than the ¼ mile boundary currently proposed as an expansion of the Los Angeles River Improvement Overlay District (RIO).
- Desire for more public spaces that have urban agriculture.
- Desire for the Tujunga Wash to be a continuous greenway.
- Promote open spaces and preserve single-family homes and height limits.