

ORANGE LINE TRANSIT NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
JULY 2016



Executive Summary

During the initial phase of the public planning process for the Orange Line Transit Neighborhood Plans (TNP), the Los Angeles Department of City Planning hosted four community workshops for residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to enhance neighborhoods surrounding transit stations. This project aims to develop land use, zoning, and design regulations for the neighborhoods surrounding five Metro Orange Line stations in the south San Fernando Valley: North Hollywood, Van Nuys, Sepulveda, Reseda, and Sherman Way. The study area generally includes the corridors and some residential areas within a 15-minute walk or ½-mile radius of each station. Each community workshop focused on the neighborhoods surrounding a specific station or stations, though staff welcomed comments on neighborhoods surrounding all stations at all meetings.

- Van Nuys & Sepulveda Stations: Monday, July 11, 2016 from 6 – 8 p.m. at the Marvin Braude Constituent Service Center Community Room;
- Sherman Way Station: Wednesday, July 13, 2016 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Canoga Park Branch Library;
- North Hollywood Station: Wednesday, July 20, 2016 from 6 – 8 p.m. at the North Hollywood Senior Center;
- Reseda Station: Saturday, July 23, 2016 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Columbia College Hollywood.

The TNP team promoted the event through a mailing of more than 6,300 flyers; an email interest list; offices and organizations such as Neighborhood Councils, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment newsletter, Council District offices, and Business Improvement District groups; flyers posted at civic institutions, recreation centers, and libraries; social media such as the online platforms NextDoor, Facebook, and Twitter; and the project's website www.latnp.org. The TNP team gathered input from community residents, business owners, employees, Orange Line users, and other stakeholders about their thoughts, ideas, and concerns for the future of their neighborhood as it develops around transit. All comments inform the Department's analysis; however, the regulations developed through this planning process will generally address issues related to land use, development, and urban design. Comments from the public featured several recurring themes:

- There is a need for neighborhood-serving commercial, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and cafes.
- Outdoor space and green space are community amenities and should be encouraged in new development through parklets, plazas, green alleys, community gardens, and outdoor dining areas.
- Density is generally appropriate in close proximity to the station but should taper down farther from the station or corridors.
- It's important to have adequate parking for new development and at the transit stations.
- Homelessness and affordable housing are issues across the City and need to be addressed.
- The San Fernando Valley heat is a deterrent from walking and biking places; new development should provide trees and shade elements, such as awnings or arcades, to encourage street activity.
- Both real and perceived safety and security of pedestrians, transit users, and bicyclists is of utmost importance at the stations, along corridors, and on the Orange Line bicycle path.
- Maintenance and upkeep is an issue in many of the commercial areas, including litter and graffiti, and deters people from walking, bicycling, and riding the Metro Orange Line.

Van Nuys & Sepulveda Stations

Land Use

There is a general feeling that there are no neighborhood destinations within walking or bicycling distance; participants would like to see a mix of places “where you can stay the afternoon.” Comments mentioned the overconcentration of certain uses, such as bail bonds and auto repair shops, as detrimental to the community. Concern was also expressed about the effects of development on the neighborhood such as traffic congestion. Participants mentioned that they would like to see:

- Nightlife; existing uses serve Civic Center employees, with few places to go after 5pm such as restaurants or microbreweries
- Convenience and neighborhood-serving uses such as grocery stores, banks, and cafes
- Upscale retail that may attract visitors to come shop in Van Nuys; many go to the West Valley to shop
- Recreational uses where youth can go such as gyms, dance studios, and indoor skate parks
- Arts and cultural organizations and amenities, creating a creative district near MacLeod’s Brewery
- Fostering of existing studio uses in the industrial area, and development of a hub for recording and post-production work
- Active ground-floor uses that could increase accessibility and safety, and make people more inclined to walk
- Animal-serving uses such as veterinarians, dog stores, and groomers, but NOT kennels, which could be located close to one another perhaps along Oxnard Street
- Jobs-generating uses
- A more commercial orientation along Sepulveda Boulevard; much of the existing industrial land along Sepulveda Boulevard is already used for commercial and office
- Mom-and-pop shops, rather than regional big box stores
- Social service and nonprofit organizations such as Work Source centers or homelessness resources to help community members; incentivize private land to be used for these services, such as a “charitable zone”
- Public amenities such as green space, benches, public restrooms, and cooling stations



*Figure 1 Existing office space located in an industrial area
Source Google Street View*

Other comments included:

- Downtown Culver City, NoHo Arts District, and Downtown Burbank are examples of walkable “Main Streets” that Van Nuys could be modeled after, with a mix of cultural anchors, entertainment uses, and restaurants that give them a “sense of place”
- Hotels currently on Sepulveda Boulevard are appropriate, as long as they are maintained
- Swap meets, paint stores, adult uses, marijuana shops, and additional big- and medium-box stores are not preferable uses
- Existing industrial is not aesthetically pleasing; light industrial uses do not necessarily conflict with adjacent residential, but heavy industrial uses are inappropriate next to residential
- Abandoned buildings discourage walking in the neighborhood – it is unfair that they are allowed to remain empty, and these should be considered nuisance properties
- Any new use should be compatible with adjacent residential and shouldn’t “spill over” into the community (e.g., noise, people, employee parking)
- New projects should consider infrastructure, public services, and amenities when development is proposed.

Housing

Participants generally agreed that there is a need for housing, but expressed concern over neighborhood impacts from additional residential density or the concentration of affordable housing. Specific comments include:

- Housing affordability is a concern
- Preserve rent stabilized units
- Need diverse housing options, including places for seniors to live, and college kids to move out into – these groups can't afford apartments that are on the market now
- Should encourage more housing – need higher population density to support desirable commercial uses
- “Tiny homes” and smaller dwellings are good, address growing trend to live smaller but closer to amenities
- Multiple-family housing should be located on the ends of the corridors, so that people can walk past shops and commercial on their way to and from the station
- Housing should be located closer to the station
- Uncertainty of whether residents living near the station would take transit

Urban Design

Many comments addressed the need for the design of new buildings to respect their relation to single-family neighborhoods, in considering appropriate height, massing, and the shielding of new lighting.

- The height of buildings should be more restrictive south of the Van Nuys station; there are already several taller buildings (10+ stories) north of the station, which makes additional height more appropriate
- Concern about shade/shadow impacts of taller buildings
- There should be continuity and a unifying character along the corridor, with similar colors
- Building designs should vary and contrast, but also be complementary
- Glass façades and exterior lighting are important for commercial businesses
- The existing buildings along Califa Street – brick structures with landscaping – were cited as a model for design of industrial properties
- Parking should be at the rear of the building; a plaza adjacent to the sidewalk would be preferable to strip mall parking lots
- Secondary dwelling units (“granny flats”) shouldn't be larger than the main home
- Oxnard Street particularly is in need of trees and landscaping
- It would be advantageous if there was a Design Review Committee established to review projects
- The wall along the Orange Line from Kester Avenue to Sepulveda Boulevard would be a good site for a mural, with children's art along the bike path to beautify the area and give a neo-industrial feel
- Utilities should be located underground
- Good infrastructure and streetscape design will attract businesses to locate here
- The County buildings at Saticoy and Van Nuys Boulevards were mentioned as an example of good civic building design



*Figure 2 Brick buildings and landscaping was cited as appropriate industrial design
Source Google Street View*

Mobility & Parking

Many comments related to improving conditions and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Traffic congestion was another issue of concern, as well as the availability of parking near the Civic Center. Stakeholders commented that new development should follow these guidelines:

- Long city blocks should be broken up by paseos or walkways for better pedestrian and bicycle access
- Businesses need to accommodate employee parking; employees of some businesses in the area park on residential streets, which affects livability
- Businesses should face the Orange Line busway and bike path, and provide amenities for users, to make long stretches of the path feel less isolated and more safe
- Buildings should have direct pedestrian access from the sidewalk, not through a parking lot
- Businesses should look inviting and interesting to pedestrians; there has to be pedestrian amenities and attractive design to encourage people to walk



*Figure 3 Paseo through a commercial shopping area
Source Gruen*

Other comments and suggestions generally regarding neighborhood circulation and mobility included:

- Connectivity is important for all modes
- Trolleys or shuttles running north-south could help connect neighborhoods to the Orange Line
- Streets should be more “habitable”; traffic calming would make it more desirable to walk and linger
- Angled parking can cause safety issues and should only be used on streets with very slow traffic
- The landscaped median on Chandler Boulevard works well, encourages multi-modal transit; Sepulveda Boulevard could benefit from a similar one
- We should incentivize walking through design or ease of use
 - Reseda is a good example of a pedestrian-friendly street, with a narrow road, traffic calming , and north-south running transit
- Students of nearby educational institutions pass through the area daily, and should feel safe crossing Van Nuys Boulevard
- Safety improvements for pedestrians could include wider sidewalks, red light cameras, pedestrian-level street lights, and signal priority for Orange Line rather than vehicles
- Human trafficking issues on Sepulveda and Van Nuys Boulevards, generally farther north than the transit station area, need to be addressed to make it feel safe to walk on the streets
- Intersections on Sepulveda Boulevard at Victory Avenue and Erwin Avenue are key crossings for pedestrians, and need improvements to enhance pedestrian safety
- Residential streets create “greenways” that are easier and quieter for walking/ biking (Sylvan, Tyrone Ave.)
- The district should retain parking meter revenue to beautify and improve the area, like Old Town Pasadena
- When there aren’t seats available on the Orange Line it makes it more difficult to use
- Improvements suggested for Orange Line stations include: drop off and waiting areas, flexible use of parking lots such as weekend Farmers Markets, moving the Sepulveda station closer to the street for safety and ease of transfers, and bike facilities that are intuitive to use
- Orange Line bicycle path could be “Jewel of the Valley” – needs to be maintained and feel safe
- The connection from the Orange Line to the Red Line is challenging and feels dangerous with the amount of traffic on Lankershim Boulevard – the new pedestrian tunnel should help
- Transit stations feel unsafe when isolated – should have amenities such as a bike hub and coffee shop, lighting, trash bins, bike repair station, police presence
- Need protected bike lanes like those on Reseda Boulevard – bicyclists use the sidewalk because it’s safer

Sherman Way Station

Land Use

Comments identified a lack of “destinations” near the station, and commercial amenities for the dense residential population. Participants would like to see uses that support the community’s cultural strengths, such as the popular 3rd Thursday Art Walks and the Madrid Theater; complementary uses could include restaurants and entertainment uses that enhance the overall nightlife. Another recommendation was to strengthen the connections to the Los Angeles River, as one of the area’s most valuable amenities.

- It should be easier for restaurants to have live entertainment and music
- Active uses (yoga studios, gyms, etc.) are desirable
- Stores such as Home Depot and Costco are convenient to have located nearby
- There needs to be a connection between the east and west sides of Sherman Way, divided at Canoga Avenue, which currently have two separate Community Design Overlays; the commercial should also form a cohesive corridor, as opposed to being separated by industrial land as it is right now
- Combining living and shopping in mixed-use development may help with congestion
 - Rocketdyne site in Warner Center is a good example of a mixed-use project to use as a model
- Additional housing options are needed, since many people need to move farther away in order to afford to buy a single-family home; the creation of more housing will allow people to live where they work
- The area needs jobs and/or better connections to jobs, since it has lost so many jobs centers
- There’s a need for additional green space and open space
 - A green belt has been planned along the Los Angeles River; it should be expanded west along Bell Creek, which is a natural open space
 - Future transit could be underground with green space at the street level

Urban Design

Most commenters felt that commercial development on Sherman Way west of Canoga Avenue should retain a smaller scale Main Street aesthetic, while the commercial development along the street east of Canoga Avenue should feature more pedestrian friendly design.

- Sherman Way and De Soto Avenues have potential for development, but west of Canoga Avenue should retain the small mom-and-pop stores
- Main Street Canoga Park could develop into something similar to Old Town Pasadena
- Buildings should be adjacent to the sidewalk, with parking in the rear
- Ventura Boulevard and Sherman Way are very different in terms of what development density is appropriate
- Palm trees aren’t desirable – they provide little shade and are difficult to maintain



Figure 4 Old Town Pasadena commercial area
Source 33rd NRDC

Mobility & Parking

Connectivity to jobs and nearby amenities was discussed as a priority for mobility investments, as well as improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists. Specific comments included:

- There should be easier access to stores, libraries, and housing from transit
- Small, older buildings weren’t built with a lot of parking, which makes them difficult for new businesses to reuse under modern City parking requirements

- A DASH route or shuttle could link Canoga Park to Warner Center and Fallbrook Center mall
- There should be direct connections to the Westside (e.g., Sepulveda Pass) for employment, to such places as Westwood, Santa Monica, and the Silicon Beach area
- Owensmouth Avenue could have better connectivity to the Los Angeles River
- There are several alleys in downtown Canoga Park that could be green alleys or shared alleys
- Sherman Way is unsafe to walk or bicycle along; it needs improvements to make it safer for all users
 - The median could be eliminated and instead used for a bike lane or to widen the street
- The population density lends itself to having a car share or bike share, which would be a nice amenity
- Should incentivize or regulate existence of solar panels or chargers to promote more use of electric bikes (e-bikes) and electric cars (e-cars)
- Bicycling
 - The bicycling event CicLAvia has been a big success in the San Fernando Valley
 - The Orange Line bike path and the river bike path should be connected
 - It feels safer to ride on bicycle paths that are separated from vehicular traffic
- Diagonal parking could be good on Owensmouth Avenue to slow traffic and accommodate more parked cars; a good example is Larchmont Boulevard
- There are several public parking surface lots that could be developed into parking garages

North Hollywood Station

Land Use

Participants expressed a desire to foster the retention and attraction of arts-oriented businesses, as well as commercial and entertainment uses that contribute to the nightlife in NoHo. Comments also mentioned enhancing the connectivity to Universal City and providing hotels and amenities for visitors.

- Active uses with later hours near the station would encourage use of Metro and increase safety
- There should be kiosks near the station and bike hub to promote street activity and provide convenient food and retail options for transit riders
- “Restaurant Row” on Magnolia Boulevard should be extended east
- Need for a grocery store, such as Sprouts or Trader Joe’s
- Open space and community performance space, parklets, green alleys, additional “People Street” alleys would be good; increases in open space need to be proportional to increases in density
- Need to have job-generating uses such as office space, high tech, light manufacturing, and post-production or recording spaces
- Extension schools and educational institutions could be anchors
- Existing light industrial uses are appropriate for the community, since they don’t conflict with residential like older noxious industrial uses
- Auto uses aren’t appropriate near the transit station
- Public restrooms should be available near the station
- Height and density is appropriate closer to the station and within the urban core, but should be reduced farther from the station
 - Concern about height and density in close proximity to single-family neighborhoods



Figure 5 North Hollywood “People Street” Source LADOT

- North Hollywood Park is an amenity, but there are concerns of security; should have a decorative gateway arch or entrance landmark to the park along Chandler Boulevard

Housing

Several participants noted a need for more housing, concentrated in the core of the NoHo Arts District and along corridors but separated from lower-density residential neighborhoods. Other suggestions included:

- Low-intensity industrial areas that are vacant could be used for live/work space for artists or affordable housing
- NoHo could be a hub for young professional housing who work in Downtown Los Angeles
- Microunits could be appropriate near the transit station to accommodate students, young professionals, or for affordable housing
 - Concerns about overcrowding and desire for residents who want to “move in and put down roots in the community”
- There are several colleges along the Orange Line, and North Hollywood is a uniquely placed station and great location to centralize student housing, where young people would like to live
- There should be more mixed use development

Urban Design

Comments stressed a need for smaller, more dispersed open spaces that can also be used for performances or events, citing the greenspace in front of Pitfire Pizza as a model. Generally, participants also agreed that taller, more dense buildings were appropriate for the urban core of NoHo around the station, while it is more appropriate for buildings along Magnolia Boulevard to have a stepback in height after 1-2 stories.

- Smaller-scale facades (1-2 stories) with additional floors stepped back would retain the “nostalgia” of the older single-story commercial, and pedestrians wouldn’t be able to see the taller stories from the sidewalk
- There should be a rhythm to façades and setbacks
- Lighting and transparency of façades is important to increase safety for pedestrians at night
- There are some dead zones on Lankershim Boulevard north of Burbank Boulevard, and along Burbank Boulevard, where it isn’t walkable and development seems to be more difficult to attract
 - The designation of Lankershim Boulevard as a “Great Street” under the Mayor’s new program, and accompanying investments and activation of the area, seems to be helping
- Development should feature sustainability components such as solar use, green roofs and walls, use of rooftops for urban farming, and use of greywater for landscaping
- The front façades, as well as the alleys and rears of buildings, should be made attractive and walkable
- Green alleys should be encouraged; the alley behind Pitfire Pizza and the alleys near Weddington Street could be greened
- The corner green space in front of Pitfire Pizza at Magnolia and Lankershim Boulevards should continue down the street and in other areas; it is a “softer” public space than plazas and patios constructed with concrete and other impermeable materials
- Landscaped buffers are appropriate on side streets, but buildings on main streets should be built to the sidewalk with any additional space in front of the building used for outdoor seating and dining
 - Sidewalks should be widened to accommodate this type of activity
- There should be more industrial-style public art
- There’s generally too much concrete in the area, which is unattractive and makes it hotter

- Design should consider modular buildings, which can reduce on-site construction time and create the ability to modify or add onto the structure in the future

Mobility & Parking

Many participants called for bike lanes and amenities, as well as wider sidewalks that feel more comfortable to walk along and offer space for outdoor dining and landscaping. Parking for transit users was a concern, with several participants noting a spillover of transit parking into neighborhoods. Additional comments include:

- Mobility hubs, with bicycle shares and car shares, should be located in new development
- Multimodal connections should link North Hollywood to Universal City along Lankershim Boulevard
- There should be pick-up and drop-off areas for ride-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft, so that the cars don't stop in a travel lane and block traffic
- Different land uses should be able to share parking
- The old industrial blocks are too long to walk
- The width of many streets and the narrowness of sidewalks is a concern, along streets such as Chandler Boulevard, Lankershim Boulevard, Burbank Boulevard, and Vineland Avenue, and make it feel intimidating to cross or walk along as a pedestrian
- Magnolia Boulevard is walkable, since the street is narrower and lined with shops and restaurants
- There should be additional bike lockers and bicycle parking corrals installed at the transit station and in front of businesses to ensure that bicycles are secure
- It's difficult to navigate many of the main streets in the district by bicycle – Lankershim Boulevard, Vineland Avenue, and Camarillo Street
 - People ride bikes on the sidewalk in many areas, since they feel riding in the street is dangerous
- The Orange Line bike path needs to have more connections with other bicycle routes – it doesn't always accommodate where people need to go
- Need "low stress" bicycle routes that are safe and easy to use by bicyclists of all ages and skill levels
- There's potential for a protected bicycle lane on Vineland Avenue from Chandler Boulevard to Ventura Boulevard
- Metro should "advertise" parking lots at other stations that aren't well utilized, such as the Sepulveda Station lot

Reseda Station

Land Use

Participants voiced a desire for neighborhood-serving uses such as cafes, restaurants or microbreweries, convenience stores, and grocery stores. Oxnard Street was identified as the area with the most opportunity for new investment and development, though opinions differed on the best use of the industrial land along the street, some of which is currently vacant.

- Most Orange Line passengers see this station as a transfer point, but not a destination; need more uses to "go to" or meet friends
- There should be more commercial and residential uses near the station since they have longer hours of operation than office uses, and would make the area feel safer – a good example is Westfield Village, which has 18-hour use and is walkable with ample seating and open space
- There should be brick-and-mortar restaurants; currently there are just a few food trucks

- Need to protect and incentivize small businesses and “mom-and-pop stores”
- The clothing shops in the “Alley in the Valley” are a good use and should be encouraged
- Civic uses could include a library
- The industrial land is “outdated” and there is no heavy industrial operating there anymore since the freight line is gone; the area could house creative and light industrial uses like recording and studio space
- The vacant industrial areas feel unsafe at night, and should be activated with shops or housing
- Should ensure that some of the existing light industrial jobs-producing uses aren’t displaced
- There’s potential for hybrid industrial with live/work lofts and flexible zoning
- There are already artist-in-residence spaces at the San Fernando Valley Arts & Cultural Center – this could be fostered by additional arts uses and live/work spaces similar to uses in the Arts District downtown or the NoHo Arts District
- An increased mix of uses will allow better access to amenities, so you don’t have to drive to everything you need
- Flexible-use spaces, such as parking lots, should be encouraged to support community activities
 - Parking lots could be used for community movie screenings
 - A Farmers Market would be a good use of the Metro parking lot on the weekend; there have been a few attempts at a regular Farmers Market in this area, but the City should provide additional guidance on creating a successful and sustainable Farmers Market
- The vacant UNILAB property is an opportunity site, and could be redeveloped as mixed use with office, commercial, and residential
- The area is primarily residential, with few job centers
- The number of auto uses should be limited; the community doesn’t want regional-serving uses such as car dealerships, but a local auto repair shop is convenient
- New development could provide amenities such as: pocket parks, public restrooms, drinking fountains, public art, childcare, tot lots (playgrounds), community gardens, affordable housing, and green walls
- Sunset Triangle is a good example of a mix of shopping, walking, and biking that could be used as a model
- The area should have more immediate interventions to revitalize, in addition to long-term plans

Urban Design

Participants identified a need for a cohesive design style to unify and define the area. Comments also highlighted a desire for pedestrian orientation and walkability.

- The industrial buildings don’t seem to have much intentional design
- New buildings need articulation; should have interesting design “but not too interesting”
- The buildings should be visible and accessible from the street and sidewalk
- The ground floors should have windows, and not just be blank walls
- Adaptive reuse of older buildings should be encouraged, similar to San Diego’s Gaslamp Quarter
- Hanging district banners on utility poles could create a sense of identity
- There should be wayfinding signage to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to nearby attractions, such as “LA River and Reseda Park - 5 minute walk”
- Trees should be low maintenance and not block signage, and tree roots should not damage the sidewalk
- The LADWP facility at Oxnard Street and Wilbur Avenue should be a demonstration site for xeriscaping



Figure 6 Pedestrian experience of transparent and non-transparent facade Source Journal of Urban Design

Mobility & Parking

Many speakers mentioned the need for improvements that will address pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Concerns were also raised over a lack of parking in the dense residential area south of the station. Comments included:

- The City should encourage shared parking between different uses at non-peak times; there is underutilized parking in the industrial area when employees aren't there which could be used for parking in the evening by restaurants, residential, etc.
- The area is not pedestrian friendly and it is difficult to cross Reseda Boulevard – the area needs more crosswalks and midblock crossings, and for development to generally be more pedestrian-friendly; there should be a pedestrian scramble crosswalk at the intersection of Reseda Boulevard and Oxnard Street
- The City should use rubber sidewalks; the material is good for pedestrians and allows growth of tree roots without buckling the pavement
- The Orange Line bike path is nice to use for walking and biking
- There should be a bicycle repair station with locked bicycle boxes and showers near the station
- The area needs protected bicycle lanes and amenities; it feels unsafe biking on Reseda Boulevard and Wilbur Avenue due to high traffic speeds and lack of protection from cars
- Bicycle corrals would be good; they're a more efficient use of space since you can fit 10 bicycles where one car would fit, and leave more room on the sidewalk for pedestrians
- The traffic lights don't seem to be synchronized; this will become a bigger issue if there is growth



Figure 7 "Pedestrian scramble" crosswalk near transit station Source City of Santa Monica