

ORANGE LINE TRANSIT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

JANUARY 2020



Executive Summary

The Orange Line Transit Neighborhood Plan (TNP) project aims to develop new land use, zoning, and design regulations for the neighborhoods surrounding three Metro Orange Line stations in the southeast San Fernando Valley: North Hollywood, Van Nuys, and Sepulveda. The proposed change areas for each station generally include a mix of commercial, residential, and industrial areas within a 15-minute walk or ½-mile radius of each station. (The areas surrounding Reseda and Sherman Way stations were formerly part of the Orange Line TNP project, but land-use and zoning for these areas will now be revised as part of the Southwest Valley Community Plan Update process).

During the first phase of the public planning process, in 2016 and 2017, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning hosted a variety of community workshops, presentations, and open houses to identify opportunities to enhance neighborhoods surrounding transit stations, as well as several other small focus groups with specific stakeholder groups. Staff gathered input from the general public, including community residents, business owners, employees, transit users, and other participants about their thoughts, ideas, and concerns for the future of their neighborhood as it develops around transit. In November 2017, staff presented initial land-use and zoning concepts to the public at two community workshops. A summary of comments from the [2016](#) and [2017](#) outreach events can be found on the Orange Line TNP website.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, Orange Line TNP staff refined the Initial Concepts presented to the public in 2017, making changes to zone boundaries, refining zoning metrics such as FAR, height, and density, and testing the feasibility of a Base/Bonus zoning system for public benefits, particularly affordable housing. A Scoping Meeting for the project's Environmental Impact Review was also held in July 2018.

Two Community Open Houses were held in January 2020 to present the updated Zoning Concepts to the public, solicit feedback on proposed aspects of the new zoning and land-use regulations, and introduce attendees to the new zoning code that is being developed. These Community Open Houses were advertised through email blasts to an interest list of almost 700 people; presentations to the North Hollywood and Van Nuys Neighborhood Councils; meetings with staff from Council Districts 2, 4, and 6; flyers posted at civic institutions, recreation centers, and libraries; social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; and the project's website www.latnp.org

Comments on all three station areas frequently echoed feedback from previous years. Recurring feedback included the following:

- More overall housing capacity is needed across all three OLTNP station areas. Attendees stressed that owing to the upcoming citywide General Plan Housing Element and updated Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocations, the City should zone for a sharp increase in housing production.
- More opportunities should exist for first-time homebuyers to enter the market, including smaller homes and townhouses. These opportunities should be paired with efforts to preserve the existing stock of affordable and rent-stabilized housing.
- While the planned transit expansions throughout the Southeast Valley are exciting, the region suffers from poor first-mile/last-mile connections, and walking and biking are widely considered unsafe. Pedestrian enhancements are needed to encourage people to walk and use transit rather than drive or own cars; pleasant waiting areas and more amenities at the stations that address everyday needs (markets, shopping, and snack kiosks) would encourage transit use.
- Opinions varied on the proper amount of parking that should be required. Some attendees stated that parking requirements should be eliminated near transit stations, while others suggested that given the car-dependent nature of much of the Valley, it would be essential to provide plentiful parking at transit stations and in new higher-density housing developments.

- The Orange Line TNP area generally lacks ample public space, and the quality of the public spaces that do exist is often poor. Attendees proposed the creation of incentives for green landscaping, small parks, and other forms of publicly accessible open space as part of the new zoning regulations, as well as upgrades to existing spaces such as North Hollywood, Valley Village, and Delano Parks. In addition, attendees noted that the current quality of tree cover and shade throughout the OLTNP area is also very poor. Because of the Valley’s extreme heat, shade trees and other forms of landscaping will be necessary to ensure that neighborhoods, especially outdoor spaces and transit waiting areas, are walkable and comfortable.

North Hollywood Station

Land Use

Attendees at both Open House meetings pointed to North Hollywood’s current mix of residences, commercial establishments, and offices as a model they would like to emulate and expand. The North Hollywood station is already surrounded by multifamily housing and a variety of amenities are within walking distance. Specific comments included:

- Preserve the existing “Restaurant Row” along Magnolia Boulevard, and consider restricting tenant sizes along the corridor in order to promote small, independently-owned businesses.
- The proposed “Residential Amenity” zones, given properly restricted tenant sizes and a well-chosen list of permitted uses, would be an ideal opportunity to enhance neighborhood convenience and walkability.
- Fourplexes and bungalow courts should be permitted by-right throughout the area.
- Defunct or obsolete industrial properties along major corridors should be rezoned to allow for mixed-use developments, as long as the previous industrial use was not toxic or dangerous.
- Single-family areas north of Burbank Blvd. should be upzoned to allow for small-scale multifamily development.
- Within a quarter-mile of transit, the permitted height should be a minimum of 75 feet.



Townhouses in North Hollywood

Housing

Participants generally supported fostering additional opportunities for new housing in the area’s transit core, and noted that this area already has dense multifamily residential neighborhoods. Other comments included:

- Affordable-housing quotas needed to “unlock” the Transit Neighborhood Plan’s (TNP) Bonus development rights should vary, with a higher percentage affordable required in North Hollywood because of the area’s existing high land values.
- Protection of existing housing covered by the Rent Stabilization Ordinance should be a priority.
- New affordable housing should require at least a 50-year covenant, and be at least 20% affordable.

Urban Design & Community Space

Comments on these topics centered around several key points: 1) The lack of high-quality landscaping and streetscapes throughout the San Fernando Valley, 2) New buildings that are seen as boxy and unattractive, and 3) A general lack of open space throughout the area, and in particular the view that North Hollywood Park is not living up to its promise. Specific comments included:

- Required setbacks at the ground-floor level should be wide enough to accommodate green landscaping and prevent street users from feeling “intimidated” by out-of-scale buildings.
- Required setbacks should be decreased or eliminated for developments within a quarter-mile of transit.
- New multifamily developments should be required to have articulated front walls and/or articulated balconies, as well as visually attractive color schemes to avoid monotony.
- The alley network throughout North Hollywood, especially between Lankershim and Tujunga, should be activated and turned into community space usable for events, small businesses, and pop-ups.

- Valley Village and North Hollywood Parks are currently unkempt and surrounded by dangerous streets. Both parks should be well-maintained, easy to access, and safe for visitors.

Mobility

Meeting attendees were broadly supportive of efforts to increase transportation options throughout North Hollywood, and make the area less car-dependent. In addition to the existing Red and Orange Lines, Metro’s planned North Hollywood-Pasadena and North Valley Bus Rapid Transit lines will serve the station area. In order to take maximum advantage of this access to high-quality transit, local stakeholders expressed a desire for safer, more walkable streets, an expanded network of bike lanes, and shade to protect neighborhood residents from the Valley heat. Attendees also expressed a concern about limited parking in the area, and worried that higher-density development would worsen an existing shortage. Specific comments included:

- Parking facilities in developments closest to North Hollywood station should be underground. No podium parking should be allowed in the TNP area at all.
- Inexpensive parking at the North Hollywood Metro lot is a disincentive for transit riders, and the price should be raised.
- The bike path along Chandler Boulevard should be extended west, to create a single continuous bike route from Burbank to the West Valley.
- Vineland Avenue is a “depressing” street that needs pedestrian improvements and after-hours activities. In its current state, drivers use the road dangerously and endanger pedestrians.
- Many local trips would be ideal for bikes or scooters; therefore a network of safe, protected lanes is necessary.
- Consider the parking model used in Pasadena and Santa Monica. Drivers can park in a few centralized municipal parking structures instead of requiring each development to supply its own parking.
- All spaces in the existing Metro parking lot should be replaced as part of the incoming Joint Development project. The replacement parking facility should be centralized and easy to find, not scattered among various buildings.



A pedestrian “scramble” crosswalk with bicycle and pedestrian safety features, Santa Monica

Van Nuys & Sepulveda Stations

Land Use

Participants generally supported efforts to enhance the vibrancy of the Van Nuys Central Business District, which currently has a limited range of commercial establishments and shuts down after normal business hours. Many attendees wanted to build on the original streetcar-suburb character of Van Nuys and take advantage of the short, walkable blocks to create a new type of “urban village” that could serve as a focal point for the East Valley. The large swath of industrial land between Van Nuys and Sepulveda Stations was the subject of interest, and meeting participants expressed a desire for more specific zoning policies that would lay out the permitted uses in various proposed Industrial zones. In the areas surrounding Sepulveda Station, attendees called for new zoning standards that would allow for a variety of residential and commercial establishments oriented towards a potential future transit hub (depending on the final alignment of the proposed Sepulveda Pass Subway). Specific comments included:

- Taller buildings along main corridors such as Van Nuys and Sepulveda are fine, but setbacks should be required in order to avoid a looming effect on nearby single-family neighborhoods.
- Van Nuys Boulevard should be densified with new mixed-use development, but ground-floor space should be reserved for the kinds of neighborhood-serving businesses that don’t currently exist.
- Any future large developments in the Sepulveda Station area, especially at the Metro-owned parking lot, should be designed to avoid traffic spillover effects and other negative impacts on the Victory Park neighborhood.

- Consider setting maximum tenant sizes and using tools to stabilize rents for new commercial establishments in the Van Nuys Station area, so that neighborhood-serving businesses can take precedence over large national chains. Larger-sized businesses should be directed towards the Sepulveda Station area.
- Mixed-use, including live/work spaces, should be allowed in Industrial zones if the previous use was not too toxic or dangerous.
- Auto-oriented uses, be they auto-body shops in the Industrial areas or large dealerships along Auto Row, should be discouraged. New auto-oriented uses should be prohibited outright.
- Support for the Fourplex concept in areas south of Oxnard Street currently zoned R1, but the new zone should allow for a maximum of four units, not four units plus two Accessory Dwelling Units.
- The large lot at Sepulveda Station is under-utilized, and should be fast-tracked for a Joint Development project.

Housing

Meeting participants almost uniformly felt that housing construction in Van Nuys has not kept up with demand for several decades, and as a result, the neighborhood feels overcrowded. Local residents and other stakeholders expressed two primary concerns: 1) The neighborhood does not have enough housing to meet current demand, let alone future demand once transit service is improved and new residents move in; and 2) New development in the area cannot displace current residents, many of whom are low-income and already ride transit. Specific comments on housing included:

- Support for the attempt to reintroduce new “missing middle” housing into the area, via fourplexes and townhomes.
- New market-rate development should not come at the expense of preserving existing rent-stabilized housing. Relocation and “Right to Return” protections should be required anytime rent-stabilized housing is demolished.
- Q conditions in the Van Nuys area make it difficult for new housing developments to pencil out; density restrictions should be loosened to allow for a greater variety of apartments.
- Van Nuys currently holds many multigenerational families living under one roof, and new apartment units should be built with these families in mind, not just single adults.

Urban Design & Community Space

Participants expressed a general desire for more open space and better use of the public realm throughout the station areas. Many commenters also pointed out that buildings in the TNP area are frequently oriented away from the street and designed to be accessed by car, which is inappropriate for a transit-oriented neighborhood. Specific comments included:

- Streetscapes in the Van Nuys central business district should be attractive and pedestrian-oriented, with shade trees that supplement or replace existing palms.
- Commercial buildings should be required to have multiple points of entry, including at least one onto the main street.
- Grocery stores and other large commercial establishments should be required to place parking lots in the back. Setbacks on these buildings should either feature landscaping and green space, or should not exist.
- New developments in the industrial zone adjacent to the Orange Line bike path should have an entrance that allows direct access from the path.
- Building typologies such as small-lot subdivisions or bungalow courts are desirable because they create open space and avoid the eyesore of large, blank building walls.
- Aside from Delano Park, there is no open space in the Van Nuys/Sepulveda station area. The City should consider acquiring more land for a neighborhood park, or working with a local developer to incorporate publicly accessible open space into new developments.
- The lack of shade and sitting space throughout the Plan Area makes mobility very difficult for the elderly. Streets and sidewalks should include benches, water fountains, shade, and lighting in the evening.
- Connections to the Los Angeles River should be strengthened by re-designing and upgrading north/south streets with bike lanes, pedestrian safety features, and shade trees.



Industrial building on Califa St., Van Nuys

Mobility

The Van Nuys and Sepulveda Station Areas are slated to receive billions of dollars in transit investment, including the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor light rail, Orange Line Improvements, and eventual Sepulveda Pass Subway. Meeting participants expressed great excitement about all these developments, as they will turn Van Nuys into one of Southern California's biggest transit hubs, but pointed out that transit improvements must be accompanied by safer conditions for all street users. In particular, conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the neighborhood are generally very poor, and several attendees drew attention to the planned redesign of Van Nuys Blvd. as a special point of concern. Specific comments included:

- Dangerous driving, wide streets, and cracked sidewalks throughout the area make walking and biking unpleasant at best, and difficult at worst. A network of connected, well-maintained neighborhood streets is needed to ensure transit riders can walk and bike to stations.
- Curb cuts should be disallowed in the Van Nuys central business district to ensure a seamless pedestrian experience.
- Signage in the Van Nuys station area is inadequate, and should be upgraded so pedestrians can get around and drivers can find parking easily.
- The neighborhood does not have a parking shortage, but lots are poorly marked and maintained.
- Potential plans to narrow sidewalks on Van Nuys Blvd. in order to make room for the incoming light rail and two lanes of vehicle traffic are unacceptable. Pedestrians and cyclists should be prioritized on Van Nuys, and cars should be the last priority.
- Any area with middle-to-high-density housing should have a minimum sidewalk width of 10 feet.
- Any First Mile/Last Mile concepts should account for the needs of the elderly, those with mobility impairments, and working people running errands who need to make multiple stops in a compact area.



Washington Irving Pocket Park, Mid-City