

Final Report of Issues and Opportunities

Beverly Hills General Plan Community Character Committee

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	i
II.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
III.	CITY COUNCIL CHARGE	5
IV.	EDUCATIONAL PROCESS	5
V.	WORKPLAN.....	5
VI.	IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	7
	Issue 1: Character-Defining Elements of Streetscapes	8
	Residential Objectives.....	8
	Citywide Objectives.....	9
	"Grand Boulevard" Vision for Wilshire Boulevard.....	10
	i. Sub-Area 1: Wilshire Boulevard: Western City Limit to Crescent Drive	11
	ii: Sub-Area 2: Wilshire Boulevard: Crescent Drive to Robertson Boulevard.....	12
	iii: Sub-Area 3: Wilshire Boulevard: Robertson Boulevard to Eastern City Limit	14
	Commercial Corridor Objectives	15
	i: Sub-Area 4: Olympic Boulevard.....	15
	ii: Sub-Area 5: La Cienega Boulevard.....	16
	iii: Sub-Area 6: Robertson Boulevard.....	17
	iv: Sub-Area 7: South Beverly Drive.....	19

Beverly Hills General Plan Topic Committees
Community Character Committee
Final Report of Issues and Opportunities
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v: Sub-Area 8:	Business Triangle.....	20
	Little Santa Monica Boulevard.....	21
vi: Sub-Area 9:	Civic Center/Industrial Area.....	22
vii: Sub-Area 10:	Peninsula Hotel Area.....	23
viii: Sub-Area 11:	Robinsons-May/Beverly Hilton Triangle	24
Issue 2:	Historic Preservation	25
Issue 3:	Gateways	27
VII.	COMMUNITY OUTREACH	29
VIII.	LIST OF APPENDICES.....	31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary highlights the main issues addressed by the Community Character Committee through the General Plan update process. The full report outlines the Committee's educational process, community outreach efforts, and the work plan that lead to its recommendations.

City Council's Charge

The Community Character Committee's charge included direction to consider the history of the City and the economic and social forces that have shaped it; the character of the community's demographic and built environment as it exists today; and alternate scenarios describing the City's future. At a minimum the Committee was required to include in this discussion:

- How the City is perceived by its residents, property owners and business owners, and by "others." What ways, if any, the character of the City should change in the future and what is necessary in order to best achieve that change.
- Urban Design (Wilshire corridor and Business Triangle)
- Aesthetics of the built environment
- Historic Preservation of structures and places of cultural significance
- Gateways to the City of Beverly Hills

Organization of Workplan

The group's approach to formulating recommendations for the City's future growth and standards of excellence over the long term focused on three main subject areas: Character Defining Elements of Streetscapes, Historic Preservation, and Gateways.

The Committee's overall goal was to identify issues and opportunities that reflect the fundamental objective of maintaining and enhancing the quality of the City's built environment. While the group expressed strong concerns and placed the highest priority on the aesthetic quality of residential neighborhoods, pursuant to its charge, the group focused its main commentary on commercial corridors.

Committee Vision: Issues and Opportunities

The Committee believes that the "garden quality" aspect of the vision developed by the City's original founders is as relevant today as it was at the time the City was incorporated. As a result, identification of opportunities for additional landscaping was a theme that touched almost every aspect of the Committee's recommendations. The following three overall goals were used to guide the Committee's analysis throughout its review process:

- Goal 1: Enhance the quality of life by creating and sustaining: attractive buildings and open spaces; walkable pedestrian districts; outstanding community facilities (including public safety) and cultural opportunities.
- Goal 2: Maintain and encourage commercial development that is supportive of, compatible with and complimentary to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Goal 3: Maintain the highest urban design principles with respect to scale, quality materials, and uses that are consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Working from that basis, the Committee's recommendations include:

Character-Defining Elements

- Grand Boulevard Vision for Wilshire Boulevard: The street should present an overriding sense of character that allows for different types and levels of physical development, yet ties the street together within the city's boundaries. Distinct segments such as an entertainment/arts district could be created by capitalizing on the location of existing theaters and galleries.
- Allow mixed-use development in certain areas (e.g. east of Robertson) to revitalize buildings and generate more vibrant uses.
- Encourage the creation of business associations on a street-by-street basis to help upgrade and maintain business districts.
- Coordinated lighting and design techniques for medians and streetscapes should be considered for all major commercial corridors and districts.
- Design guidelines should be considered for commercial and residential buildings.

The report discusses similar recommendations specific to each of the City's commercial corridors and districts.

Historic Preservation

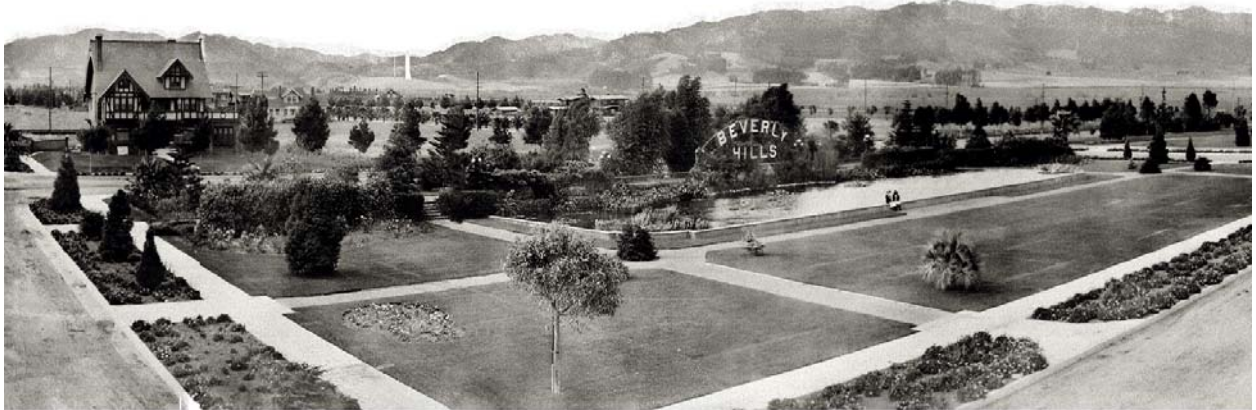
Preservation was a major issue for the Committee, and a series of recommendations are outlined in the full report. These include:

- Update the 1985 Historic Resources Survey
- Develop a City Landmarks Ordinance to preserve its historic character
- Develop a local public repository for ownership history of buildings

Gateways

The report discusses a variety of ways to identify entrypoints to the City, such as:

- Signage, architectural statements, lighting, landscaping
- Consideration of gateway statements at major nodes that may not be entry points such as a water feature reminiscent of what once existed in Beverly Gardens Park



II. INTRODUCTION



A city's overall vision for community character includes many things: urban design; appearance of both new and old commercial and residential structures; entry points or "gateways;" historic and cultural activities and places; and education and activities that the community supports and values. The Community Character Committee (Committee) has created a set of goals and objectives to help the City maintain and enhance those elements of the community that contribute positively to its

character and that retain the City's identity and image as an attractive, safe, and desirable place to live, work, entertain and experience cultural opportunities.

While Beverly Hills is a place where residents feel a strong sense of community and comfort, it is also renowned worldwide for its international image and prestige associated with the entertainment industry, shopping and beautiful homes. The Committee felt very strongly about protecting and enhancing this beautiful enclave's overall character and livability. Residents enjoy walking along the lovely tree-lined residential streets in a safe environment and want to protect this community's unique locale that exists within the midst of a large metropolis.



Although the Committee's charge included an overall vision of the City (vs. the Residential Issues Committee, whose charge it was to specifically make residential recommendations), the group believes that maintaining quality residential structures and beautiful streetscapes is the key starting point for developing the City's overall character. The "garden quality" of the City dates back to the vision of its original founders and continues to be a factor in planning and land use decisions made today. In this same vein, public safety and education are among the highest common values for those who live here. The moderate climate, beautiful parks and reputation for upscale aesthetic qualities render the City its unique cachet and standing as one of the most desirable cities in the world in which to live, visit or establish a prestigious business address.

III. CITY COUNCIL CHARGE

The Community Character Committee received direction to examine the City's existing character and to identify issues and opportunities for its future.

The City Council's Charge required that the Committee consider the history of the City and economic and social forces that have shaped it, the character of the community's demographic and built environment as it exists today, and alternate scenarios describing the City's future. At a minimum the Committee was required to include in this discussion:

- How the City is perceived by its residents, property owners and business owners, and by "others." What ways, if any, the character of the City should change in the future and what is necessary in order to best achieve that change.
- Urban Design (Wilshire corridor and Business Triangle).
- Aesthetics of the built environment.
- Historic Preservation of structures and places of cultural significance.
- Gateways to the City of Beverly Hills.

To organize the recommendations for the City's future growth and standards of excellence over the long term, the group developed three main subject areas:

- a) Character Defining Elements of Streetscapes;
- b) Historic Preservation; and
- c) Gateways.

IV. EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The Community Character Committee participated in three all-Committee briefing sessions at the start of the General Plan Topic Committee project. Over the course of 20 regular Committee meetings, the group received primers consisting of a bus tour of the City's commercial and industrial areas; a presentation of the Planning Commission's Single Family Residential Design Proposals; a panel featuring local experts/academics in the historic preservation field; and educational briefings provided by staff.

V. WORKPLAN

Early in the process, the group was asked to bring in photographs of images in the City they felt represented community values and positive aspects of existing

character. A brainstorming session followed wherein the group developed a list of qualities that come to mind when one thinks of Beverly Hills as it exists today, focusing on both its strengths and weaknesses. This list related to all sectors of the City (i.e., single and multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational areas). Qualities like a strong educational system, personal safety and City services were also factored into the mix. Categories were developed to illustrate the type of image the City would like to promote in each of these areas in a way that would make both residents and visitors feel that they had entered a unique and desirable environment.

A series of baseline existing conditions, both good and bad, was established to describe the City's existing community character. Discussions ensued to determine how these physical conditions could be enhanced or modified to create a true physical environment that coincides with the image the City would like to project.

A series of goals, policies and objectives were drafted to guide City policymakers, residents and businesses toward a quality vision of community character for the future. The group felt that its charge could best be achieved by breaking down the process into a three-phase review process as follows:

A) Character Defining Elements

Discussions began by identifying the City's physical characteristics in terms of the following categories: uses, physical form, and streetscapes (including public and private landscape areas). The City was then broken down into eleven separate physical sub-areas, and each area was evaluated using these categories. These are discussed in detail in the "Issues and Opportunities" section of this report.

B) Historic Preservation

The Committee felt that the preservation of historic structures, important sites, and landscapes is a key factor in retaining the City's physical character and beauty. Preservation sustains and sets the tone for a high quality built environment and maintains a desirable level of aesthetic character. It can also contribute to the economic sustainability of the City and encourages understanding and respect for the history and culture of the City.

C) Gateways

Gateways to the City at entrypoints as well as within the City at key points of interest were considered. In concert with the City Council's direction, the

group felt that gateway features are essential to making people feel like they are in a unique, recognizable environment that is separate from neighboring jurisdictions.

VI. IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The issues and opportunities discussed in this report attempt to define ways for the stated goals to be accomplished with the recognition that the issue of “character” is interrelated with many other policy concerns including land use, zoning and planning, development of parks and open space, and environmental sustainability, to name a few. The issues and opportunities discussed below considered this overlap and are intended to incorporate rather than conflict with similar issues presented by the other committees.

The format for the “Issues and Opportunities” section is separated into Character Defining Elements of Streetscapes, Historic Preservation, and Gateways. Existing conditions are described for each topic, followed by a series of goals and objectives for the future.

The following three overall goals were used to guide the Committee’s analysis throughout its review process:

Goal 1: Enhance the quality of life by creating and sustaining: attractive buildings and open spaces; walkable pedestrian districts; outstanding community facilities (including public safety) and cultural opportunities.



Goal 2: Maintain and encourage commercial development that is supportive of, compatible with and complimentary to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.



Goal 3: Maintain the highest urban design principles with respect to scale, quality materials, and uses that are consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.



Issue 1: Character Defining Elements

Residential Objectives

The Committee shares a sense of the importance of the character of the single-family residential neighborhoods of the City. The look of the residential streetscapes is a key definer of the overall character of the City. While there are many different styles that make up the current character, in the best cases those various styles work together as a community of buildings that support each other with respect to high quality materials and construction, lush landscaping and compatible scale and massing. The Committee also shares a concern that new residential buildings do not always support these characteristics. However, there is not a consensus on the best approach to address this concern.

While single-family residential design review is supported by an overwhelming majority of members, there was significant debate about the challenge of creating a fair system. Although development of proposed solutions to address this issue is outside the Committee's charge, the members commit to be active participants in

the community debate over the best way to sustain and enhance the character of the City's residential areas.

Citywide Objectives

The Committee believes that when you arrive in Beverly Hills, you should know that you are in a special place. The City needs an overall sense of recognizable design elements that let residents and visitors know they are within the boundaries of Beverly Hills. Upon entering this unique place, it becomes apparent that the City is made up of a series of distinct districts which may differ in their use, form and character; yet unified visual cues, such as high quality design in every aspect of the built environment, indicate that you are still within the City. Toward this end, the Committee recommends:

- Reinforce the City's existing character by building upon the existing strengths of commercial districts (architectural review to ensure quality buildings and materials, landscaping, etc.).
- Consider developing written design guidelines and incentives for property owners to clearly define the look of the streetscape and the architectural characteristics of individual buildings. These guidelines should not emphasize any specific architectural style; they should focus on qualities like plant materials and sizes, rooflines, modulated volumes, sufficient window areas, articulated facades, quality materials, and should consider the relationship of the building's size, neighboring properties, and location on each block.
- Develop both a community sports and recreation center, and a cultural center to enhance the importance of community activities.
- Encourage the creation of business owners' associations in commercial districts to create motivation to keep storefronts attractive and well-maintained. Suggest that plans for amenities such as hanging flower baskets (similar to those at Two Rodeo) be implemented by property owners.
- Enhance the public streetscapes with trees, landscaping and street furniture as appropriate throughout commercial districts, using both public and private initiatives to develop the character of pedestrian places.
- Streetscape designs should be of a consistent theme throughout the City. Similar elements should be used (lighting, plants, decorative features), but the scale and intensity should vary in a manner that is appropriate for each location.
- Add street lighting in commercial areas in a manner that provides safety and yet is still decorative.
- Variety should be encouraged from street to street, however, unifying elements should be used to tie the look of the City together.

Resources Required to Implement:

Each of these general objectives, as well as the objectives that follow for Wilshire Boulevard and the various sub-areas would require staff (including consultant) and decision-maker time for:

- Development and ongoing implementation of design guidelines
- Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance
- Funding for physical improvements

Potential Implications:

- While beautification of the City is a good long-term investment, funding is limited, and the City will need to find funding sources to support this type of project.
- Due to funding limitations, not all residents agree that this priority is the most important use of City money.
- A long-term plan that prioritizes the various areas in need of physical upgrades would need to be established.
- Special Assessment Districts (such as the one in the business triangle that supported the Urban Design Program) may need to be established.

“Grand Boulevard” Vision for Wilshire Boulevard

The idea of creating a “grand boulevard” is shared far beyond the Community Character Committee, and resonated in comments received throughout the public outreach process. Wilshire Boulevard is a prominent continuous commercial street through the west side of Los Angeles. Its span extends from downtown Los Angeles to the Pacific Ocean. While there are distinguished Beverly Hills landmarks along Wilshire (the department stores, Two Rodeo, the Beverly-Wilshire Hotel), there is no contiguous theme that holds the City’s image together.

Even though the Committee is aware that even in the best of times the economy will not support the pinnacle of commercial businesses along the entire stretch of the boulevard, it felt that there should still be an overriding sense of character that ties the street together within the City’s boundaries. Business types and uses will vary depending on the size of buildings, parking availability, surrounding neighborhoods, etc. Due to the length of the street and varied surrounding characteristics, Wilshire Boulevard was divided into sub-areas to recognize the unique development of each area.



Objectives - Wilshire's "Grand Boulevard" Vision

Uses:

In general, the existing uses are an appropriate mix of offices and destination retail interspersed with neighborhood-serving uses. In order to enhance the existing mix:

- Encourage car dealerships to enclose showrooms where feasible. Alternatively, ensure that lots are well-maintained with discreet methods of advertising (no banners, flags, balloons, etc.).
- Encourage outdoor cafes where appropriate along Wilshire Boulevard.
- Encourage stores, restaurants and galleries to stay open later in the evening, including involvement with the Chamber of Commerce.

Physical Form:

- Consider the use of color by painting street lights, adding banners to light posts, or soliciting ideas from artist groups to provide distinctive character to the various street segments.

Streetscape:

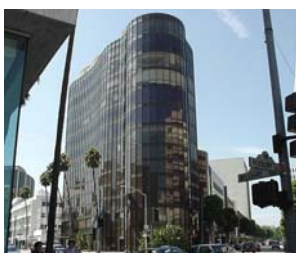
- Trees should be well lit at both the trunks and canopies.
- Elements such as greenery, islands, and lighting are desirable and serve to attract people outdoors and encourage pedestrian activity.
- Install landscaped medians where feasible.
- Although constraints exist (cost, maintenance, physical restrictions such as short blocks and the need for left turn lanes, etc), medians are a key way of beautifying streets.
- The design and planting of medians should have a consistent theme along the length of Wilshire Boulevard so that people are aware they are within the City limits.
- Medians are also strong gateway statements

Security:

- Continue to provide a high level of personal security (lighting, police, etc.) that is consistent with the community's values.

Sub-Area 1:

Wilshire Boulevard: Western City Limit to Crescent Drive



Existing Conditions: Wilshire Boulevard has a higher density, corridor-type development characterized by major department stores and single to 12-story office development interspersed with smaller-scale development. Although this area is among

Sub-Area 1:

Wilshire Boulevard: Western City Limit to Crescent Drive (continued)

the most prestigious business locations anywhere, the area lacks restaurants, pedestrians, and street activity. Recently many buildings have been upgraded and remodeled. A number of buildings were developed at a higher density than allowed under today's Code, so it is not likely that they would be torn down and replaced. The storefronts and sidewalk areas lack sufficient landscaping.

Rationale for Future Vision:

Pedestrians need to feel more comfortable walking this area. Tree canopies that provide shade for walkers, and landscaping in front of stores would draw people to these businesses and beautify the streetscape.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Maintain the current mix of department store, retail and office uses.

Physical Form:

- Retain a mix of taller and lower building heights.
- Require vacant storefronts to be maintained, decorated or used to advertise other City businesses.



Streetscape:

- Revitalize streets and sidewalks by adding shade trees to provide shade for pedestrians, particularly on the north side of the street where it tends to become hot.
- Encourage a better relationship between retail stores and the sidewalk through landscaping (including planter boxes) and tree lighting.

Sub-Area 2:

Wilshire Boulevard: Crescent Drive to Robertson Boulevard

Existing Conditions: The physical character of this area is a mix of relatively indistinct low-, mid- and high-rise buildings. Uses include car dealerships, medical offices and commercial buildings, and movie theaters/screening rooms. The perception is that there is no reason to walk to this area and that no parking is available. The area lacks

Sub-Area 2:

Wilshire Boulevard: Crescent Drive to Robertson Boulevard (continued)

a uniform sense of identity and does not have the vibrancy of the segment of Wilshire immediately west of this area.

Rationale for Future Vision: The seeds for an entertainment district exist along this stretch. There are several movie screens in this sub-area and many high-profile events are held each year that generate positive news stories and activity in the area. The City could sponsor a film festival or similar entertainment-related event to draw people and businesses in to capitalize on this unique opportunity for revitalization, as the following five theaters are located in this vicinity:

- Writers Guild Theatre at 135 S. Doheny Drive
- Cecchi Gori Fine Arts Theatre at 8556 Wilshire Boulevard
- Music Hall Theatre at 9036 Wilshire Boulevard
- Wilshire Theatre at 8840 Wilshire Boulevard
- Samuel Goldwyn Theater at 8949 Wilshire Boulevard



Uses:

- Encourage activities such as a film festival that relate to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the theatres along this stretch of Wilshire.

Physical Form:

- Retain interesting buildings such as 9101 Wilshire (Kate Mantilini Restaurant) which includes a mix of three building types (one, two, and ten-stories high) as a

Sub-Area 2:

Wilshire Boulevard: Crescent Drive to Robertson Boulevard (continued)

building of this type could not be constructed under today's development allowances.

Streetscape:

- Enhance the public streetscapes with trees, landscaping and street furniture as appropriate to develop the character of pedestrian places.

Sub-Area 3:

Wilshire Boulevard: Robertson Boulevard to Eastern City Limit

Existing Conditions: Moving eastward on Wilshire Boulevard, there is a major shift in business activity types. Vacancy levels increase and many buildings look worn and need to be upgraded. Commercial tenants in this area are more transient and the area is hard to distinguish as separate from Los Angeles. No particular theme exists (no landmarks, significant building or use patterns, etc.) that ties this area into the overall City. Improved maintenance would enhance the visual quality and, in turn, the vibrancy of the street.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Encourage variation in building heights to relieve the monotony that would be created if all new construction met today's standards (45 feet with 3 stories).
- Encourage mixed-use development (buildings that integrate residential and commercial uses) with smaller restaurants to rejuvenate the area. Encourage a mix of small office and residential uses. Office suites should be restricted to small sizes, and allowable uses should be limited to a level of intensity that does not disrupt the neighborhood.
- Allow limited entertainment uses to support existing local businesses (e.g., supper clubs, jazz clubs, cabaret uses of an intensity that does not significantly impact the surrounding residential neighborhoods).
- Encourage pedestrian-oriented uses through incentives.
- Expedite the City approval process for areas such as this, where development is needed.
- Support enlivened street activity.
- Consider installing short-term street parking to encourage new, small businesses to locate here.

Sub-Area 3:

Wilshire Boulevard: Robertson Boulevard to Eastern City Limit (continued)

Physical Form:

- Allow variation in building heights to relieve the monotony that would be created if all new construction met today's standards (45 feet with 3 stories).
- Consider allowing incentives for more height if developers agree to provide less expensive lease space at the ground level for small businesses.

Streetscape:

- Consider adding urban design elements such as streetlights, trees that are not as tall as the existing palms and flowers as you cross City borders to signify that you've left Los Angeles or West Hollywood and entered Beverly Hills.
- Increase landscape elements that are incorporated into building facades.

Potential Implications:

- If the City modified restrictions as an incentive to allow desired uses in this area, any new use would have to be carefully considered to determine its impacts (including noise, safety, traffic, etc.) to nearby residential neighborhoods. Conditions would have to be placed on new projects to limit any potential negative impacts. Members felt that if some new uses were allowed and the area becomes more successful, residential neighbors would realize the benefits to the neighborhood (improved vibrancy, improved access to local neighborhood uses, and improved safety that goes hand-in-hand with active streets), and see it as a positive change.
- A parking strategy would be needed so that neighborhoods are not affected by traffic.
- When considering allowing new uses, the City Council should consider the overall impacts to the entire City and not just the impacts to adjacent residents.

Commercial Corridor Objectives

Sub-Area 4: Olympic Boulevard

This area is a more "suburban style" commercial corridor. It is auto-oriented with mini-malls and very few pedestrians. Many older multi-family residential structures still exist along Olympic Boulevard. It contains a mix of uses including neighborhood services, boutique offices, car dealerships and mini-malls.

Sub-Area 4: Olympic Boulevard (continued)

Rationale for Future Vision: Improvements should be considered for this commercial corridor such as developing gateways and improving the overall design of the streetscape.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Consider mixed-use to introduce more pedestrian activity.
- Consider allowing open-air dining if adequate measures can be designed to separate the use from the street traffic.

Physical Form:

- Explore the street's "City Gateway" architectural opportunities.
- Use the design review process to emphasize quality signage in both private and public spaces.
- To the extent possible, maintain the character of the low-scale buildings and historic fabric of existing older buildings. However, allow more height in the limited area where Olympic abuts R-4 zoning, such as those areas directly east and west of Beverly Drive.

Streetscape:

- Provide consistent street tree types.
- Implement a lighting plan that breaks up the residential and commercial areas so that it no longer has a "long corridor" feel.

Sub-Area 5: La Cienega Boulevard

Existing Conditions: This area is functionally different from other parts of the City and is mostly distinguished by Restaurant Row. It is a complex street because it is heavily trafficked, yet is lined with parks and small businesses. In addition, commercial businesses, including restaurants, directly abut a single-family residential zone (without an alley serving as a buffer) on the east side of the street. It also has some very interesting qualities such as La Cienega Park and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library.

Rationale for Future Vision: Primary concerns along this area include public safety and the future of "Restaurant Row." The park is very active and attractive, as is the Academy with its open space. Opportunities also exist for mixed-use housing along this street.

Sub-Area 5: La Cienega Boulevard (continued)

Objectives:

Uses:

- As the restaurant district in this area is not as active as it once was, it is probably appropriate to consider new uses and character-definers other than restaurant row while encouraging the stability of landmark restaurants including Lawry's and others.
- Encourage development that is more destination-oriented so that this street no longer serves as a "pass-through" to the City of Los Angeles.
- Encourage mixed-use in this area.
- Encourage small-scale uses in the mid-block areas.

Physical Form:

- Increased height should be allowed for new mixed-use structures near Olympic and La Cienega. This should be limited to the block north of the park on both sides of the street since existing building heights vary along that block and infill buildings with more density and height could be accommodated.
- Ensure that residential neighborhoods are protected from La Cienega buildings by transitioning building heights.

Streetscape:

- Provide aesthetic improvements through landscaping and lighting. As the street is not pedestrian-oriented, designs should consider the intensity of the street and the variety in uses.
- Study whether the parkway median can be extended.

Sub-Area 6: Robertson Boulevard



Existing Conditions: The northernmost portion of Robertson Boulevard between Beverly Boulevard and Burton Way is often mistaken for Beverly Hills. This area actually lies within the City of Los Angeles. The portion in Beverly Hills is south of Burton Way on the west side of the street, and begins at Clifton Way on the east side of the street. The City's portion of the street

Sub-Area 6: Robertson Boulevard (continued)

is not very clearly defined through streetscape elements. The City should encourage property owners in this area to strive for consistency with the design-oriented, upscale feel of neighboring properties in West Hollywood.

South of Wilshire Boulevard, the Beverly Hills portion of Robertson extends southward to Whitworth Drive on the west side of the street, and to Gregory Way on the east side. Signage along the street is varied, and the parking is difficult. The street contains a “grab bag” of uses that include a large number of nail shops and small storefronts. Drawbacks include a less than desirable mix of uses and a lack of parking. The character is affected by the narrow width of the street and the fact that it serves as a cross between an arterial street and a pedestrian walking area, which creates an inherent conflict.

Rationale for Future Vision: Overall, Robertson Boulevard is a difficult area to explore because there are so many conflicts with traffic and pedestrian activities. Ideally, this area could become more pedestrian-oriented and follow the trend of upscale shops and restaurants along the northern portion of the street in Los Angeles.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Encourage local destination uses where nearby residents can bring their families.
- Create a “destination” type of environment that builds on the upscale shops and restaurants farther north on the street. Work cooperatively with adjacent jurisdictions so that the uses complement each other and work well together as an area that is noted for restaurants and shopping.
- Discourage uses within the block that do not support and promote pedestrian activity.
- Develop a public parking facility, either through City funds or a developer-based incentive.
- Robertson Boulevard has wide sidewalks that support and complement pedestrian activity. Allowable uses and design requirements should capitalize on this asset and take advantage of this existing pedestrian-friendly wide sidewalk.

Physical Form:

- Ensure that parking is well-designed. Articulate parking façades with landscaping along the frontages so that they look like attractive buildings rather than parking structures.
- Prohibit parking on private property in front of new buildings (mini-malls).

Sub-Area 6: Robertson Boulevard (continued)

- Consider mid-block street crossings to encourage pedestrian activity. (Note: The group recognized that this would impede traffic flow; however, it is still needed to make people feel comfortable and safe as they walk this area.)
- Encourage design that includes the following criteria: small scale, charm, courtyards, village feel, storefronts with attractive window displays.
- Provide additional lighting along sidewalks for pedestrian safety and feeling of well-being.

Streetscape:

- The streetscape design should unify the area as a district.
- More lighting is needed to make the area feel safer.
- As ficus trees are eventually removed, they should be replaced with canopy trees.

Sub-Area 7: South Beverly Drive

Existing Conditions: This area has a low-rise, neighborhood feel. Businesses appear more relaxed, neighborhood and pedestrian-oriented than in the Triangle with a good parking supply. Local retailers co-exist with a lesser number of nationwide chains. The aesthetic is somewhat of a mosaic, with both good and bad examples of design. Both sides of this commercial street abut residences. The street includes diagonal parking, and locals can walk to restaurants and active commercial businesses. This area has a different look than other parts of the City -- brick buildings with smaller windows and less glass and steel. The grocery store at Olympic Boulevard breaks the rhythm of the neighborhood.

Rationale for Future Vision: The Committee felt the scale and character of this area should be maintained, with minor improvements to design and landscaping.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Maintain current allowances for neighborhood-serving uses.

Physical Form:

- Maintain the existing scale and character of the street.
- Maintain the current levels of development.



Sub-Area 7: South Beverly Drive (continued)

Note: Although higher density (3 stories and 2:1 FAR) than what exists along some of the blocks would be permitted under today's Code, it is unlikely that this level of development would occur because of the parking requirements.

- Encourage differentiated façades while retaining the existing overall theme of the building grain as the scale of individual shops is important to the overall look of the street.
- Provide Citywide written design guidelines and incentives for property owners to clearly define how the street should look. These guidelines should not emphasize any specific architectural style; they should focus on plantings, sufficient window area, articulated facades, quality materials, and should consider the relationship of the building's size, neighboring properties, and location on each block.

Streetscape:

- Upgrade street amenities to include trees that provide a canopy for pedestrians and planters of a consistent type.

Sub-Area 8: Business Triangle

Existing Conditions: This is the City's prime commercial area. It has a strong identity with a mix of upscale shopping, commercial businesses, medical offices and pedestrian activity. Rodeo Drive serves as its most prestigious international retail street. To the east, Beverly Drive supports more national retailers, while Canon Drive is home to smaller scale shops with more of a neighborhood clientele, and Crescent Drive is developed with senior housing, convenience retail (including a supermarket), commercial, medical and parking uses at a relatively low scale. To the west of Rodeo Drive, medical uses and commercial offices hold the majority of tenants although retail uses and restaurants also thrive in this area. An urban design program is underway involving long-term physical improvements to five streets (Brighton, Dayton, Rodeo, Beverly and Canon). The program includes sidewalk widening, mid-block pedestrian crosswalks, landscaping, lighting and trees.

Rationale for Future Vision: Given the urban design program and its benefits, the main issue for the Business Triangle lies with drawing more night-time activity. This will likely be spurred by the pedestrian-oriented lighting in the design improvements, but additional efforts are needed.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Support existing uses, and also encourage sophisticated entertainment uses like supper/jazz clubs and restaurants.

Sub-Area 8: Business Triangle (continued)

Physical Form:

- Maintain existing variation in building heights along each blockface.
- Consider locating future parking structures in the business triangle rather than along Wilshire Boulevard, as development is more concentrated and accessible in the triangle, whereas Wilshire Boulevard is long and linear.
- Encourage architecture that is inviting from the street, as well as designs that create a welcoming, open feeling for pedestrians.

Streetscape:

- Capitalize on the Urban Design Program by maintaining the individual character of streets through urban design review and features such as landscaping and awnings.
- Encourage low-scale landscape designs such as planter beds, flowers and canopy trees.

Little Santa Monica Boulevard

Existing Conditions: The north side of the street presents a challenge for the edge of the Triangle. Historically restaurants perform well; however, other types of uses continue to struggle. As rents are lower in this area, it seems to have potential for neighborhood-serving uses. Fortunately, these uses have parking support from the double-level parking structures north of the buildings on the south side of Santa Monica Boulevard.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Encourage retention of the existing mix of uses and individually-owned local shops.
- Encourage neighborhood-serving uses.

Physical Form:

- Maintain the existing low-scale building heights and small storefronts.

Streetscape:

- Provide shade protection/tree canopies in future streetscape upgrades.

Safety:

- Evaluate traffic-slowing measures such as signalized mid-block crossings in future roadway improvements to provide a safer pedestrian environment and further

Little Santa Monica Boulevard (continued)

encourage pedestrian activity. The Committee recognizes that regional transportation concerns will be included in this consideration by necessity.

Sub-Area 9: Civic Center/Industrial Area



Existing Conditions: This area was thought to have a somewhat sterile, government-like feel. Although this location is referred to as the City's "industrial area," it is actually more of a corporate headquarters center. Buildings in this area are big, yet not too big, with a concentration of both single-story and low-rise buildings. This may be partially due to the fact that the lots in this area are much larger than typical commercial lot sizes. Although it is a business area, it still retains the sensibility of Beverly Hills because of the front setbacks, trees and shade. A sub-area exists along Civic Center Drive because of the stretch of older low-rise buildings fronting the sidewalk along several blocks which are just across the street from the vacant railroad right-of-way area.

Rationale for Future Vision: Santa Monica Boulevard buffers this area from residential neighborhoods to the north. Much of the area is also secluded from residential uses on the south, east and west sides, which gives this location a unique opportunity for uses such as light entertainment, art galleries, a sports and recreation center, and retail uses.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Consider allowing portions of this area to be zoned for a specific type of district (e.g., galleries, entertainment uses like supper clubs, shops, bookstores).
- Allow neighborhood retail/restaurant uses.



Sub-Area 9: Civic Center/Industrial Area (continued)

Physical Form:

- Development standards (height/density/setbacks) should be consistent with a small neighborhood/village-type feel.

Streetscape:

- Maintain the existing landscaping, setbacks and open space around the perimeter of the sub-area.

Sub-Area 10: Peninsula Hotel Area

Existing Conditions: This area is very linear and somewhat isolated; not an area pedestrians would casually walk. Parking is scarce. The scale is low and several charming building designs provide good pedestrian character. While the Peninsula Hotel defines the area, virtually none of the development in the area relates to the hotel. Most lots on the north side of Little Santa Monica Boulevard are shallow (40' in depth). The former railroad right-of-way is currently zoned for transportation purposes only. If the properties were developed, vehicular access would be difficult as it would not be possible from the north roadway of Santa Monica Boulevard.

Rationale for Future Vision: This area has potential as a gallery or art district. Uses should be considered to capture business from the hotel and enliven this area. New buildings should follow the area's small-town charm as well as the architectural sophistication of the I.M. Pei-designed Creative Artists building. At the same time, concerns were expressed about how this area will be affected by the Santa Monica Boulevard roadway improvements underway in Los Angeles since the area could become more traffic intensive and no longer appropriate for pedestrian activity.

Objectives:

Uses:

- Encourage pedestrian-oriented uses.
- Consider developing an art district on both sides of Little Santa Monica Boulevard and promote the use of public art.
- Retain the small-scale, walkable character by encouraging small cafes, bookstores and small-scale uses.

Physical Form:

- Consider ways to protect pedestrians from the traffic on Little Santa Monica Boulevard, especially as the roadway improvements may create more intense traffic patterns.

Sub-Area 10: Peninsula Hotel Area (continued)

- Consider allowing a pedestrian bridge leading from the existing Robinsons-May site to the area for pedestrian safety and better access.
- Encourage the theme of pedestrian-oriented charm and quality architecture.
- Lasky Drive: Retain and enhance the character created by uses such as Maison 140 (boutique hotel).

Streetscape:

- Maintain consistency with other streetscape plans by adding appropriate trees, landscaping and lighting.

Sub-Area 11: Robinsons-May/Beverly Hilton Triangle



Existing Conditions: This area is characterized as a destination location developed with the Robinsons-May Department Store and the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

Rationale for Future Vision: This is considered to be a signature site with a great deal of potential for redevelopment. It is 17-acres in size and serves as a City entry/gateway. Its proximity to Little Santa Monica Boulevard provides opportunities to consider shared parking and connectivity of uses.

Objectives:

General Vision:

- This area is a prime candidate for a “master plan” to include garden-quality aspects throughout, buffers between uses, and variation in heights (with lowered building heights as the proximity to the street increases).
- A broad vision is recommended that would take into account the fountain at the Wilshire/Santa Monica Blvd. intersection and the Budget Rental Car property.
- A landscaped “green edge” along the entire Santa Monica Boulevard is strongly encouraged.

Uses:

- Full-service luxury residential/hotel mixed-use with support functions for residential or specialty retail.

Sub-Area 11: Robinsons-May/Beverly Hilton Triangle (continued)

Physical Form:

- It is unlikely that the hotel would be completely demolished. However, a remodeled hotel could provide a signature architectural statement for this area and could incorporate new, smaller scale ancillary buildings.
- Impacts to nearby El Rodeo School should be considered along with the nearby single family residences.
- Encourage higher scale residential development for the western end and lower scale development surrounding the existing high-rise portion. A tiered approach was suggested that would keep the edges surrounded by greenery (reflecting the park across the street to the north), and an inner area adjacent to the green border with one or two stories.
- Consider building a “landmark” pedestrian bridge over Santa Monica Boulevard connecting to the former railroad property and potentially providing an opportunity for shared parking resources.

Streetscape:

- Along the Santa Monica frontage, multiple storefronts are not appropriate because of the high traffic volume.
- The gas station is at the actual gateway to the City. The southwest corner of the parcel should be park-like and address the layout of the gas station in defining the gateway.

Issue 2: Historic Preservation



A significant period of time was devoted to education and background on historic preservation. The 1985 Historic Resources Survey and preservation policies were presented and discussed. It was noted that five buildings are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In June 2003, a preservation panel consisting of local architectural historians and academicians provided members with an overview of local, state and federal case studies, policies and regulations.

The Committee agreed that the City should develop an overall strategy for historic preservation. However, a minority held a slightly different view in that there was support for preservation of commercial and civic structures, but not for residential properties. The Committee

recognized that many approaches are available to the City, ranging from mandatory designations to property owner-initiated programs. Based on the experience and case studies presented by experts in the field, members felt that preservation should begin with the City's encouragement of voluntary participation in the preservation process. Toward this goal, the Committee believes that the City should encourage, support and recognize voluntary preservation efforts to generate a strong and positive momentum for preservation in the community.

Objectives:

- Update the existing 1985 Historic Resources Survey of single-family residential and commercial buildings to identify important existing resources.
- Develop a City Landmarks Ordinance to preserve the historic character of significant buildings and places.
- Review the Landmarks Advisory Board portion of the Architectural Commission's charge in order to activate this role.
- Develop historic preservation education programs (schools, architectural bus tours/trolley, etc.).
- Develop a local repository for the ownership history of all commercial and residential Beverly Hills buildings. Historical photographs should accompany the listings to provide a stronger link to the people involved in making Beverly Hills what it is.
- Consider nominating City-owned properties for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Create opportunities/incentives for preservation (adaptive reuse, tax incentives, modifications of Code standards)
- Develop an Historic Preservation Element as part of General Plan – set goals and policies.
- Create an awards program for historically significant properties.



Resources Required to Implement:

- Staff and decision-maker time to develop and implement a new ordinance and potentially a Historic Preservation Element.
- Staff to develop programs for awards, incentives, etc.

Potential Implications:

- The Architectural Commission's role would be expanded, or another Advisory Commission specifically dealing with Historic Preservation may be required.
- The importance of historic resources may not be clearly understood by the community. The value of historic preservation should be communicated through educational programs, workshops, etc.
- The Committee recommends that the preservation program be started on a **voluntary** basis to gain support, rather than imposing severe restrictions that would likely not be endorsed by the community at large.
- Staff will be needed on a long-term basis to develop and implement an historic preservation program for the City.

Issue 3: Gateways

There are numerous ways to identify the gateways (significant entrypoints) to the City. These can range from architectural statements (significant buildings or sculpture) to lighting features, signage, or a unified City landscape plan. Although our unique street signs are key to the City's unique identity, this identity should also be reinforced through gateway features at significant locations. Heavily trafficked intersections might have more significant identifiers than smaller, less used intersections, yet both types of areas are important in establishing the continuity and feeling that you are in a unique place that can be identified by its gateway features. The following potential gateway areas were identified:

Major:

- Center of Beverly Gardens Park
- La Cienega Boulevard and San Vicente Boulevard
- Wilshire Boulevard at eastern City border
- Olympic Boulevard and Beverly Drive
- Olympic Boulevard and Robertson Boulevard
- Olympic Boulevard at western City border
- Sunset Boulevard at western City border
- Sunset Boulevard at eastern City border
- Santa Monica Boulevard at eastern City border
(Note: This gateway should be prioritized because of its key location at the border adjacent to the City of West Hollywood and the marked difference in appearance as you move from one city to the other.)
- Santa Monica Boulevard at western City border
- Santa Monica/Wilshire Boulevard Intersection



Beverly Gardens Park

Minor:

- Burton Way and Oakhurst Drive
- Burton Way and Robertson Boulevard
- La Cienega Boulevard at southernmost City border
- Robertson Boulevard at southernmost City border
- Whitworth Drive and Smithwood Drive at southern City border
- Benedict Canyon Drive at northern City border
- Coldwater Canyon at northern City border

Gateway Objectives:

- Priority should be given to the high profile gateway at Santa Monica Boulevard and Doheny Drive.
- Maintain the appearance and consistency of City street signs. The distinctive Beverly Hills street signs create community character by letting you know that you are in a distinctive place.
- Accelerate the refurbishment plan that is underway for the classic City shield signs.
- Consider additional Beverly Hills signage at the more prominent City entry points.
- Develop a consistent landscape plan that would accompany the signs to enhance the visibility of the entry markers.
- For smaller-scale entries and nodes: consider less intense, simpler designs with the same overall theme as the major entries.
- Consider a significant fountain/water-feature centrally positioned in Beverly Gardens Park as a major internal node marker and to recall the historic water feature in this area.

Resources Required to Implement:

- Staff and decision-maker time to develop a gateways program.
- Funding for construction/procurement of gateways and ongoing maintenance.

Potential Implications:

- In recognition of the substantial costs associated with these types of physical improvements, the City should seek creative financing solutions for this project.

VII. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Committee participated in the following three efforts to gauge the community's areas of interest and reaction to progress the Committee was making with respect to its charge.

April 2003: All-Committee Session at which each topic committee shared preliminary recommendations. This session helped committees to identify issues of overlap and conflict between the various groups as well as gauge reaction to preliminary recommendations.

May 2003: Farmers' Market Outreach with the Commercial Standards and Commercial-Residential Interface Committees. Along with a questionnaire, residents were provided with photographs to assist them in selecting the types of aesthetic qualities they felt were appropriate for their community. Exhibit materials prepared for this event were also used at the Beverly Hills Historical Society booth at the May Affaire in the Gardens. Questionnaires and responses are included with the appendices.

Sample images of desirable community qualities for Beverly Hills as identified by the survey respondents are shown below.



October 2003: Outreach Survey

A short survey was mailed in early October to each of the over 15,000 households in the City. The survey requested feedback regarding City gateways and historic preservation. Approximately 900 responses were received, which represents about 6% of total households. Survey results are attached as an appendix.

Using a scale ranging from 1 to 10 (less important to more important, respectively), residents were asked how important they felt it was for the City to devote resources to developing the City's identity at key areas within its borders through landscaping, signage, lighting, etc. Responses were mixed, with approximately 60% responding

with a “6” or higher level of importance; and 40% with a “5” or lower level of importance.

A total of 60% of respondents “strongly agreed,” and an additional 22% “somewhat agreed” that historically significant structures and places should be protected. Respondents also favored the preservation of commercial buildings as well as single and multi-family residences.

Areas of Potential Conflict Between General Plan Topic Subcommittees:

The Traffic and Circulation Topic Committee had different views as to how Little Santa Monica Boulevard should be treated. While Community Character felt it should be more pedestrian-oriented, others felt it should be used more for transit purposes by reducing the number of traffic signals and removing the street parking.

Respectfully submitted,

The Community Character Issues Committee

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VIII. LIST OF APPENDICES

Agendas and Meeting Notes

Community Outreach

- April 2003
- May 2003
- October 2003

Educational Materials

- Commercial Zoning Maps
- New Development Standards for Single Family Areas (1989)
- R-1 Development Standards: Framework for a Three-Track Development Review Process (2004)
- City of Beverly Hills Industrial Area Plan (1994)
- City of Los Angeles – Design Guidelines for Historic Downtown (2002)
- Guidelines for Rehabilitating Buildings – Presidio, San Francisco (1995)
- Historic Resources Group Presentation on Preservation (June 2003)
- (Draft) Master Program for Gateways – Goals and Objectives
- Robinsons-May Site Map and Information
- Newspaper Articles on Preservation and Robertson Boulevard
- Map of City Parking Structures
- Map of Sub-Areas and Potential Gateways