

## II. Community Outreach

The City of West Hollywood values community input in the development of the Housing Element. A community outreach program was implemented, utilizing a variety of avenues to solicit input from residents, the business community, and other community stakeholders.

### A. Consultation with the Community

#### 1. Housing Element Update: A Community Conversation

To encourage participation and to solicit input from all segments of the community, a community outreach event - "Housing Element Update: A Community Conversation" - was held on Saturday, April 6, 2013. The event included information on local demographics, households, and housing characteristics, the Housing Element requirements, housing goals and programs, and facilitated small group discussions.

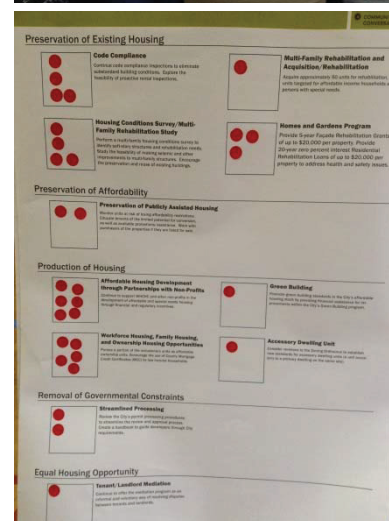
The following public outreach activities were utilized to notice the public about the community event:

##### General Advertisement

- City Calendar, City News briefs, webpage, social media (i.e. Facebook and Twitter), and WehoTV
- Press Release to 250 media outlets
- Advertisement in the Beverly Press (March 20<sup>th</sup> and March 27<sup>th</sup> editions)
- Flyers in English and Russian (City Hall, Plummer Park, and West Hollywood Library, West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation)
- 250 posters distributed to retail establishments

##### Direct Mail and/or Email

- Citywide mailing to all residential and commercial street addresses and residential property owners
- Neighborhood watch and block captains
- Boards and Commission Liaisons
- West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce



- Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles
- Real Estate Professionals
- West Hollywood Preservation Alliance
- Affordable Housing Provides and Housing Rights Organizations:
  - West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation
  - Affordable Living for the Aging
  - Coalition for Economic Survival
  - Westside Center for Independent Living
  - Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
  - Gay and Lesbian Elder Housing
- Social services providers:
  - LA Gay & Lesbian Center
  - AIDS Project LA
  - Jewish Family Services
  - Bet Tzedek Legal Services
  - PATH (People Assisting the Homeless)
  - PAWS/LA
  - Aid for AIDS
  - Aviva Family & Children’s Services
  - Being Alive
  - Center For Civic Mediation
  - Friends Research Institute
  - Jewish Vocational Services
  - McIntyre House
  - National Council Of Jewish Women
  - Pathways
  - Project Angel Food
  - The Saban Free Clinic
  - St. Thomas The Apostle Church
  - West Hollywood Recovery Center

## Key Themes Emerging from the Workshop

Throughout the workshop and during discussions, several themes, most of them interrelated, emerged:

- Housing Affordability and Diversity** to accommodate all segments of the community was the top theme in both discussions of housing concerns and issues as well as in the ranking of programs. The top-priority program among discussion groups was Affordable Housing Development Through Partnerships with Non-Profits. Participants also saw the need for a variety of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities as well as low- and moderate-income residents as a whole.
- Strengthening Rehabilitation Programs** was seen as a key way to preserve the affordability of existing housing in the City while still maintaining quality. The high ranking of programs such as the Homes and Gardens Program and Multi-Family Rehabilitation and Acquisition Rehabilitation were further evidence of this as a recommended priority.



- Proactive Code Compliance** emerged as an important program to ensure that the city is able to maintain an affordable housing stock that meets the needs of residents while not detracting from existing neighborhoods.
- Housing Policies and Quality of Life** was a common theme that cut across many areas of discussion – the concern is that issues such as sufficient open space, traffic, building mass need to be considered in decisions on housing programs and policies. While many want to have less restrictive zoning specifically for affordable housing options, there is concern that building size and mass, as a whole can impact quality of life in the City and in the neighborhood.

- **Landlord/Tenant Support** was another theme that was cross-cutting – the view was that quality, affordable housing stock could be maintained and expanded by supporting landlords in understanding rehabilitation and tax issues and stability for tenants could be increased thorough increased emphasis on the Tenant/Landlord Mediation program.

## 2. Consultation with Community Stakeholders

In addition to the community workshop on April 6, 2013, the City also outreached five focus groups between May 1 and May 22, 2013. Topics are as follows:

- Non-profit developers and service providers
- Chamber of Commerce and business community
- Tenants
- Owners, landlords, and property managers
- Mixed groups to review summary results and conclusions

### Key Themes Emerging from the Focus Groups

The following are the major themes discussed during the focus groups:

- **Many good things are happening.** While there were many issues identified by participants, nearly everyone expressed that West Hollywood is a great place to live and do businesses and that the City is doing a lot to support is residents.
- **There is confusion about the definition of affordable housing.** During the discussions, participants mentioned that there is confusion among residents on the difference between Affordable housing (subsidized, Section 8, etc.) and inexpensive housing that occurs because of rent control. The City should continue to educate the community about different housing programs and should develop new policies and programs to promote both affordable housing and inexpensive housing from rent control.
- **Demographics are changing.** Many participants expressed that the demographics of the City has changed over time. The City is still diverse but some long-time residents are moving out, with higher income residents moving in.
- **The City's policies and regulations may result in unintended consequences.** Over the years, the City has developed a large number of policies and programs to address housing. These include the inclusionary housing program, the density bonus for affordable housing, the requirement that new projects build up to 90 percent of the maximum density and the requirement for a maximum unit size. Each regulation and policy addresses an individual topic of concern but taken together they result in large buildings (which some said are out of scale with the City), inhibit creativity in

design, and limit the types of housing units that can be built in the City. Suggestions were made to examine the collective result of all these policies and develop solutions to address the issues.

- **Much of the housing stock is in poor physical condition.** While the City is a popular place to live and housing is expensive, there was general consensus that the quality of the housing stock is poor. There was also agreement that issues with housing could be divided into two categories: structural issues for items such as seismic, plumbing and electrical and cosmetic issues for items such as paint, carpeting and appliances. Another finding is that for some buildings, doing major structural repair is cost prohibitive due to the design of the building. In these instances it may be more cost effective to replace rather than repair the building. Multiple ideas were presented for how to pay for improvements, both structural and cosmetic. Owners stated that the current housing laws are a disincentive to make improvements since the costs of repair cannot be recouped through increases in rent.
- **There is disagreement over renovation versus replacement housing.** There was discussion and disagreement in the group about whether some of the housing stock should be replaced or whether it should be renovated. Based on the discussions in the focus groups, clearer guidance is needed from the City on the rules and regulations for replacing housing and the resulting impact on the displacement of tenants.
- **Education is crucial.** All focus groups discussed that additional tenant, owner and property manager education is critical.
- **Proactive code enforcement was a popular topic of discussion.** Every focus group had a discussion about proactive versus reactive code enforcement and there were mixed opinions about whether the City of West Hollywood should create a program similar to the City of Los Angeles. Before resorting to a proactive code enforcement program, the City should identify the issue that it is trying to solve and then determine whether proactive enforcement is the best solution.
- **Harassment occurs in the City.** Multiple focus groups said that there are many instances of harassment and retaliation against tenants who ask for repairs or who contact about code violations. In addition, some tenants said that the fear of harassment and retaliation alone keeps many tenants from reporting violations to the City. Recommendations were made that the City get a better understanding of the prevalence and type of harassment before making a decision on how to address the issue.
- **New housing in the City.** Every focus group discussed the question of whether new housing should be built in the City. In addition, the scale of new development, and impacts on traffic and parking were raised as issues.

- **New models for housing and clarity on City’s vision for new housing are needed.** Ideas for new housing types mentioned by the groups included: cottage clusters; zero lot line; co-op; micro-housing; live-work spaces; senior housing; assisted living; the ability to refashion existing housing for new types of tenants (bungalows to senior housing for example); and allowing groups of investors who buy a property and subdivide it.
- **Aging in place as a common theme:** There are multiple issues that the senior population faces in the City. One is that seniors are unable to move units to better serve their needs as they age since they will lose rent controlled units. Another is that more assistance is needed for seniors to help find age-appropriate housing in the City. Finally, recommendations were made to design and renovate units to support universal design.
- **Prioritization of new housing for existing residents.** Housing in West Hollywood is difficult to find and there are long wait lists for the new affordable housing in the City. New housing being constructed in the City should be reserved for existing City residents before being made available to those living outside of the City.
- **Housing is related to other topics:** In addition to affordability and quality issues, housing impacts and is impacted by other related topics, such as: built environment; sustainability/green buildings; economic development; transportation and transit; and streetscape.

## B. 2013 Community Study

In February 2013, the City of West Hollywood’s Social Services Division embarked on an extensive Community Study process. The Community Study report will help update the City’s demographics, and also aid in the determination of funding priorities for social services. The report includes information from a statistically valid, randomly-mailed survey, pop-up workshops, focus groups, interviews and a community meeting. Approximately one in every four households in the City (6,498 households) was mailed a survey questionnaire and 727 surveys were completed. This same survey was made available to residents on paper and online in English, Spanish, and Russian in February and March of 2013. During this same time, thirteen small group discussions were held, which offered community members representing key demographic groups in the City an opportunity to discuss social and community services. A total of 109 people participated in these focus groups.

Community members also participated in a number of pop-up workshops (short meetings conducted at highly-trafficked locations throughout the City). During these workshops, residents participated in a budget exercise and indicated their priorities for social services. These events engaged a total of 404 community members. In addition to the outreach activities discussed above, individual interviews with 31 community members were conducted. Those interviewed include City Council members, the City Manager, the Sherriff’s Captain, and Human Services Commissioners. The Community Study process culminated in a community workshop held on March 14, 2013 in Room 5 & 6 at Plummer

Park (located at 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard). This community meeting engaged 81 residents in a variety of small group table-top exercises.

During the 2013 Community Study process, residents identified social services provision as an important part of the City's legacy. Community members valued support for children and youth, as well as services that would allow residents to age in place. Residents also noted the need for homeless services and the desire to feel safe in the City's public places. West Hollywood's programs were praised by residents, but noted that not all members of the community were aware of available programs. Overall, residents identified affordable housing, homeless services, and services for seniors and persons with disabilities as some of the most important services in the community.

### **C. Public Meetings**

The City conducted three public meetings during the development of the Housing Element:

- Planning Commission – April 18, 2013
- Planning Commission – June 20, 2013
- Planning Commission and City Council Study Session – June 24, 2013

### **D. Public Hearings**

Public hearings will be conducted prior to adoption of the Housing Element.

### **E. Housing-Related Comments and Responses**

During the April 6, 2013 Housing Element workshop and focus group meetings in May 2013, the City gathered many comments from residents and community groups regarding housing issues and concerns. These comments are summarized by theme and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Housing-Related Comments Received	
Comment Themes	City Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Affordability and Diversity:</b> Preserve and expand affordability and diversity of housing – for first-time homeowners, persons with disabilities, returning veterans, seniors (including options for aging in place) and moderate income people, including those who work in the city</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Housing Element includes a range of programs to foster a diverse housing stock to meet the needs of the community, including mixed-use development, live/work housing, and other flexible housing types.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Rehabilitation:</b> Increase the level of attention paid to rehabilitation and provide landlord incentives to keep properties in the affordable rental market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Housing Element includes programs to explore incentives to encourage rehabilitation of housing by landlords, including historic properties, and soft-story buildings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Green Building:</b> Emphasize green building for both new and rehabilitated properties – rehabilitation in itself is “green building.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Housing Element includes programs to encourage green building practices for new construction and rehabilitation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Stable and Knowledgeable Landlord Base:</b> Provide information and training in rehabilitation and tax issues and offer mediation services for landlords and tenants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Housing Element includes programs to address tenant/landlord issues, outreach, and education. Specifically, the Community Engagement program includes an educational series to discuss various housing-related topics.</li> </ul>