

## **East Los Angeles 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Specific Plan Design Solutions Public Workshop Summary**

Approximately 38 community members attended the morning session workshop at Ruben Salazar Park in East Los Angeles and approximately 18 attended the afternoon session to listen to a presentation on recommendations for the East Los Angeles 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Specific Plan and to provide their feedback. Roughly 7 of the attendees were ELAPAC members.

The meeting opened with a brief introduction of the project and the consultant team by DRP. Next, Stefanos Polyzoides presented some of the findings to date and recommendations for the Specific Plan. The consultant team has evaluated the entire plan area. The plan area is organized into ¼ mile circles, representing roughly the area a person could walk in 15 minutes. It is bounded by Cesar Chavez, Whittier, and Atlantic Boulevard, which are the major corridors in the area. Mr. Polyzoides next shared the findings for each of the major corridors.

Density is concentrated around 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and in pockets around the community. For 3<sup>rd</sup> Street the focus is on developing the street, maintaining historic buildings, and providing parking at each station (could be in a garage). These garages could also serve retailers and therefore aid in economic development.

On West Cesar Chavez, the current zoning leads to a very suburban pattern of development. The consultants are suggesting reducing parking requirements and allowing buildings to build up to the sidewalk. On East Chavez infill development is recommended to restore the urban fabric and historic development pattern.

On South Atlantic the consultant team is recommending allowing parking on the street. They've also developed building types in the form based code which will allow for distinction in buildings on corridors and other types of streets.

Next, Mr. Polyzoides discussed specific issues that are being evaluated. These included Public Realm and Transportation, Economics, and Housing.

- **Public Realm and Transportation:** Some suggestions include traffic calming measures and creating a bike network. Parking is a crucial issue as it is needed for economic development. The consultant team has identified spaces in the community appropriate for parking to accommodate approximately 400 spaces. Major corridors can be improved. For example, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street has five different widths. Wider areas can be improved with landscaping. The consultants also propose creating an urban forest along the freeways and pocket parks in neighborhoods.
- **Economics:** Economic activity is focused where it can grow best- around stations, the civic center, and major corridors. While some changes are proposed in the types of

commercial areas, all housing will remain untouched (i.e., the consultants are not proposing expanding commercial uses into residential areas).

- Housing: 95% of the housing in the community is zoned for 1-2 units. The consultant team did a visual survey of all the lots in the community and identified how many units were on each lot. They discovered that 85% of the housing is legal, but that the remaining 15% has more units than what is allowed by zoning. They propose that those parcels with up to 3 units (10%) be legalized and that the remaining illegal units be brought down. They chose the 3 unit/parcel limit because beyond this you cannot accommodate both cars and open space on the lot. Those parcels with over 3 units have serious fire, sewer, and parking issues. They suggest building affordable housing in concert with the effort to remove illegal units to accommodate those displaced.

After the presentation, attendees broke out to view display boards of images depicting the analyses and recommendations discussed. Consultants were on hand to explain the information on the boards and answer any questions. Simultaneous discussions took place on parks and open space, streetscapes, building design, and residential density. (I was only able to follow one discussion and therefore cannot report on what other groups discussed)

In regards to parks, Mia Lehrer presented the analysis and recommendations. The consultant team started their work by dividing the community into ¼ mile circles. Most homes are not within this distance of a public park. Next, the consultants added schools to the analysis. There are many schools in the community and, taking these into account, most homes are within walking distance of open space. Based on this, the consultants are recommending pursuing joint use agreements with the schools. Other recommendations included creating connections among parks through streetscape improvements, creating dog parks, utilizing sustainable design, improving street crossings, and adding bike lanes. Attendees expressed some concerns about the ideas presented. With the addition of small pocket parks hidden in residential areas, they expressed concern about vandalism and ongoing maintenance. They noted that expanding landscaping or sidewalks along streets could take away valuable parking spaces that would impact businesses. They also shared a concern over safety of children in parks and that without safety, families would not allow their children to go to new parks.

After the small group discussions, Mr. Polyzoides regrouped the attendees to address any questions or comments. In a response to a question about how the plan will be implemented, Mr. Polyzoides and Mr. Bergman (economic development consultant) noted that code enforcement would need to be a priority. Currently code enforcement occurs in response to complaints, but it would need to be more proactive to enforce the new Specific Plan. Mr. Bergman noted that this could be accomplished by hiring local people to do the work, thereby creating jobs. Funding could come from fines and forfeitures or parking tickets and these fines would have to increase. The political will would also need to be in place to support the plan and the ELAPAC members could

help with this. Regulations would also need to respond to the physical realities that exist in the community today. For example, the illegal housing provides de facto affordable housing in the community. The regulations provide a legal framework to accommodate some of this, while eliminating those units that are unsafe. Those parcels with three or less units could be brought into conformance through a conditional use permit. This method would not be spot zoning or upzoning, but would allow the units to continue with conditions. Those with 4-6 units per parcel would need to be fined.

To conclude, Mr. Polyzoides noted that the Specific Plan will change the rules and that future development will not necessarily look exactly like the images displayed at the workshop. Because it is the rules that will guide the future, the community needs to understand and be educated on the Specific Plan. The public process is meant to do this and also to create leaders and a knowledge base in the community.

The following is a summary of the comments made by community members who attended the public workshops on 10.17.09 at Ruben Salazar Park Senior Center.

### **Community Comments:**

#### **a. Historic and Community Resources**

1. Good examples of historic property types would be useful
2. People do not know of resources available to help them maintain/rehabilitate their houses.
3. There is no way to "designate" resources on a local level
4. The Historic Archives and Records Commission of the county would like to play a more active role
5. The resources of ELACC and the high schools should be used to train students in construction trades for rehabilitation
6. We are as proud of our bungalows as Pasadena is of theirs
7. Education is key; use the schools

#### **b. Public Realm**

8. Is there going to be a pool, as part of this plan, for Saybrook park?
9. What type of trees are in the plan?
10. There are pink trumpets on Cesar Chavez that have died. Are recommendations going to be put in place to avoid this?
11. Jacarandas are beautiful and desirable but the leaves fall. Is there going to be a maintenance program in place?
12. Access to cemetery? Why so many acres dedicated to just this...can we re-densify to get more open space for people?
13. Sidewalk along cemetery @ 3rd street is very narrow... can the fence along the cemetery be moved?

14. Walking/jogging path should have fountains/benches and restrooms
15. Recommendations to make sure street trees grow old and healthy
16. Maintain existing trees where possible but add to them
17. Need for pedestrian lighting
18. Be sure proposed trees do not lift the sidewalks
19. Add back trees that were removed when the streets were widened
20. Would like to see dog parks
21. Can there be in-ground plaques identifying trees? An educational aspect to the tree planting should be added
22. The homeless could possibly inhabit the pocket parks – enforcement is key but there should also be an area designated for the homeless
23. Reinstate the horticulture program at Griffith High School and involve the Youth

### **c. Traffic & Transportation**

24. What will be the impact of reducing 1st Street from 2 lanes to 1 lane
25. Can diagonal pedestrian crossings work?
26. Can in-pavement LED lighted crosswalks be installed at key locations? i.e. at midblock?
27. There is a traffic concern at Indiana & 1st Street with cars being stuck on the tracks at a red light as well as the bus causing traffic congestion when stopping at the corner
28. Will parking on 3rd Street be metered?
29. There is a concern with reducing traffic flow on 1st Street to one lane each way – will there be gridlock?

### **d. Code/Housing**

30. How do people bring houses up to code and still maintain the architectural character? (This was a discussion about how new systems can be put in old buildings to keep residents safe and healthy --wiring, plumbing, lead paint, etc)
31. Code enforcement needs to be a part of this plan. There needs to be the will to take this on with the help of policy decisions
32. There needs to be an understanding that code enforcement comes down to health and public safety that is compromised by overcrowded conditions, for example

### **e. General**

33. Will the plan go to Whittier Blvd?
34. Are there going to be similar projects to ones in Montebello where there is underground parking on commercial building sites?

35. Why is this project happening here in East LA?
36. Why was the train not built underground as in most places in the world. The train being built on grade has created an enormous problem for the residents of East Los Angeles
37. What are the maintenance issues that will arise from this plan?
38. In what other areas has the consultant team done these kinds of plans?
39. There is a need for more mainstream places like subway and Jamba Juice on 1st Street
40. Involve gangs so they have a sense of ownership/responsibility