

HOLMBY WESTWOOD PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION
COMMITTEE ON THE VILLAGE
P.O.Box 49180
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(310) 470 - 1785 HWPOA@AOL.COM

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Westwood Village Improvement Association
Kevin Crummy, President
Andrew Thomas, Executive Director
10866 Wilshire Boulevard
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Los Angeles, California 90024

Dear Westwood Village Improvement Association,

We have prepared our letter of recommendation to LA City Planning in reference to the requested changes to the Westwood Village Specific Plan. (See attached) This letter is a supplement to that letter and contains other observations and recommendations we would like to add in an effort to support your efforts to revitalize Westwood Village. We hope these communications begin a new relationship between the Businesses of the Village and the Holmby Westwood Home Owners. We do want the Village to thrive and would like to add that when *We know more, we shop more.*

In the months we have worked, we have come to the following observations and recommendations:

- A. **Parking** is the major issue in Westwood Village and there are a number of factors that make this issue so important to the vitality of the Village.
1. This committee conducted a survey of the members of the HWPOA and collected their insights. This residential community would like more parking and less expensive parking. The Committee also thought a parking study of the Village would be worthwhile in order to address the multiple issues we were observing and learning from our members.
 2. Our interest in a study was supplanted and reinforced by studying The Westwood Village Parking Survey prepared for the Westwood Village Improvement Association (WVIA) by Civic Enterprise Associates, LLC in September 2013. The findings in this report paralleled ours. Our Committee agrees with the following September 2013 report recommendations:
 1. Make private parking lots easier to find with way-finding signage, such as a Village LOGO posted on the street.
 2. Establish 'good neighbor' parking policies among private operators, so costs for the first (1-2) hours of parking are consistent in the Village. Could this idea be implemented on a trial basis for 6 months to see if desirable results are achieved?
 3. Address the issue of handicap placard abuse, which takes up approximately 40% of the street parking meters. Prof. Donald Shoup, UCLA, has recommendations and models of solutions to offer. For example, deputize citizens to give out parking tickets to people who abuse placards

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use after being approached and questioned. His resources are listed in our bibliography. Placards could also be photographed and checked for compliance.

4. Increase the number of spaces available for short term consumer parking at the Broxton Garage. Reduce and possibly remove and relocate monthly parking spaces.
5. Provide parking for business workers in a location which does not compete with premium parking spots for shoppers.
6. This committee further recommends adding angled parking along the east - west streets of the Village where suitable. A study done in 2012 by Fehr and Peers, called "Westside Mobility Plan, Westwood Village Angled Parking Study" makes similar recommendations and this study is included in our bibliography.
7. A consultant from Center Park in New York, suggested making sure long term parking on the street be expensive enough to stimulate turn-over and for businesses to participate in a validation program so shoppers can find well-located parking.
8. Another suggestion is to provide GEM rides to elderly shoppers to make getting from parking to shops and restaurants easier. A GEM is a souped-up golf cart that is allowed on Village streets. If the Village had 3-4 of these, shoppers could navigate more easily the distance between parking and businesses.

The 2013 Civic Enterprise report concluded there are plenty of parking spaces (6,298 parking spaces) in the Village with a proportion of 2.2 parking spaces per 1,000 SF of commercial space. The report revealed that even at 12 noon on a typical weekday, the private parking lots are only 74% full. The problems about parking in the Village are linked to difficulty finding available parking, the lack of signage, the lack of coordination of the parking lot operators on cost and handicap placard abuse. Uniform parking fees at a reduced rate for the first (1-2) hours of parking and clear signage could add available parking spaces to the Village inventory. The findings of this report are also supported by the research by Prof. Donald Shoup at the UCLA Department of Urban Planning. His resources are in our bibliography.

It is easy to understand the WVIA interest in removing any and all parking requirements from the Westwood Village Specific Plan. It is one less issue the property owners would have to deal with as they try to rent and maintain their buildings. However, the 2013 study about parking in the Village shows the problems will not go away with the removal of restrictions. The number of convenient parking spaces in the Village needs to be increased. The parking issues in Westwood Village identified in the study and by our committee could be resolved by following through on the 2013 study recommendations and in fact, if resolved, will add to the inventory of available spaces. Removing the restrictions does nothing to provide more accessible parking spaces and by consequence, does not support a more vital Westwood Village which is a principle of the Westwood Specific Plan,

"E. To permit, encourage and facilitate the provision of basic services and amenities (in particular, short term daytime parking and pedestrian amenities) that will permit the Village to function as a shopping area."

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The effective question is how will the WVIA implement the recommendations made to solve the parking issues in the Village? We understand how hard it can be to get various property owners to agree to a single Village-wide plan and would like to offer our help.

B. Revision of Definitions of food related establishments, the restrictions on the types and number of such establishments.

1. The recommendations of the HWPOA are in the letter to LA City Planning and do not need to be repeated here.
2. Our membership survey revealed strong community interest in more up-scale dining as well as more family friendly dining. Everyone is very happy to have Fellow and Violet Bistro in Westwood.
3. We will include here our membership's interest in more up-scale shops and shops for children related retail: clothes, toys and activities. This was also revealed in our survey. Everyone is happy to have The Angeles Academy of Music and Sender One Climbing join the shops; Sur La Table, Rebecca Taylor, Paper Source, Sara Leonard Jewelers and others. We hope for more to join the Village community.

C. Signage Approval. In discussions with the members of WVIA, the process for approving signage has been brought up. We would like to offer the following suggestions to make this approval process efficient but do not, in anyway, want to open discussion on any other aspect of the Westwood Village Specific Plan.

1. To achieve signage approval, may we recommend that:
 - a. Only one presentation to the Westwood Design Review Board (WDRB) be required. (Applicants must be aware of and prepare their designs with respect for the guidelines in the Specific Plan, given to them by their property owner).
 - b. Any corrections from the WDRB, once made to the documents, be approved by the Chair of the WDRB and forwarded to the City for the Certificate of Approval. Approval by the Chair could happen as soon as the applicant has made the corrections to their documents and meets with the DRB Chair. This could happen days after the WDRB meeting.
 - c. The applicant show the sign design to the WDRB as these professionals have design training, experience and can best judge the suitability of the sign with the building.
2. The committee does **not** recommend signage approval be done over the counter by persons without professional design training. However, we would consider over the counter approval if a Member of the Westwood Design Review Board were included in the process.
3. The committee does recommend the development of a **signage program for buildings with more than one tenant** and have it approved by the WDRB. Then any new tenant, as they comply with the building signage program, will not have to appear before the WDRB.

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4. Note: Nearly every commercial district that has successfully managed its revitalization has relied upon the expertise of a Design Review Board, locally and nationally. The Committee has information on guidelines and procedures, see attached.

We think it is important to remember that most of the **32 Los Angeles Redevelopment Project Areas** established by the former Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Authority had/have design review procedures. These include areas Hollywood, City Center (Downtown LA), and San Pedro. Other cities with successful Historic Commercial Area Design Review Boards and programs in the region include Culver City, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and West Hollywood. Signage announces the character of the business to the street and as such, is part of the aesthetic of its larger context. Signage “branding” is important and a valuable aspect to consider for its impact on the entire Village.

D. Historic Preservation of the Westwood Village significant historic buildings.

We appreciate that the WVIA community wants to maintain and respect the historic structures of the Village. Westwood Village’s distinctive character and its historic buildings are capital assets and the WVIA can work with the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources and the Los Angeles Conservancy to help owners use the important incentives available to rehabilitate older and historic buildings. The Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, the Mills Act, Historic Property Contract and the CA Historical Building Code have been used in combination by property owners across the City to adapt and reuse historic theatres, office buildings and retail structures to achieve economic revitalization.

<https://www.laconservancy.org/study-preservation-positive-los-angeles>

We recommend the following to support a respectful approach to historic preservation:

1. Develop a Westwood Village specific brochure with input from LA CITY and the Los Angeles Conservancy to achieve the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
2. Provide guidelines and examples to illustrate how rehabilitation can be achieved in order to positively transform Village buildings and each street.
3. Use preservation tax incentives and funding available to stimulate investment in Westwood Village buildings.
4. Distribute this information to every property owner.
5. Other cities with successful Historic Commercial Area Design Review Boards and programs in the region include Culver City, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, Pasadena and West Hollywood.

E. Consideration of pedestrian plazas and bus routes

1. With the inclusion of a pedestrian plaza at Broxton and Kinross, it has inspired two other locations to consider: A second one at Kinross and Glendon and a third at Broxton between Le Conte and Weyburn.

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2. Our discussions have also included the idea of having small vehicles in the Village, to help shoppers, maybe our elderly shoppers, get around the Village and help get them go from parking to shops. We understand such a vehicle, described to us a golf-cart-on-steroids called a GEM, would be suitable and allowed in the Village. We suggest the WVIA consider adding 3-4 to the Village. METRO might support this as part of its 'First Mile;Last Mile' program.
3. We recommend a one way bus route around the Village, from Wilshire Blvd, north on Tiverton (or Hilgard), west on Le Conte, south on Gayley (or Veteran), west on Weyburn and south on Veteran to Wilshire with strategically placed stops. The removal of all the buses on Westwood Blvd. would be a terrific contribution to the pedestrian character of the Village. The bike path in the Village could then be on Westwood Blvd. We understand Gayley is the emergency route for emergency vehicles to the hospital, which opens up new possibilities for Tiverton Drive. We understand a discussion with LA Department of Transportation is necessary to consider this recommendation.

We have prepared our findings as a series of maps and would like to share our work with you. Let us, when time permits, plan a meeting to go over the work we have done and discuss ways to move forward as one community interested in the improvement of Westwood Village.

Bibliography

Besides our own observations, experiences of living here, our member survey and data gathering about the Village, we have relied on the following studies for our understanding of Westwood Village:

1. Westwood Village Survey, prepared by The Planning Group, for Gruen Associates, dated November 4, 1985.
2. Cultural Resource Documentation Report, Westwood Village, prepared by Johnson Heumann Research Associates for Gruen Associates as part of Westwood Village Specific Plan Study for the City of Los Angeles, dated November 30, 1985.
3. Appendix B to the Cultural Resource Documentation Report by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co., dated January 15, 1986.
4. Background Analysis, Alternatives and Evaluation, Westwood Village Specific Plan submitted to City of Los Angeles, prepared by Gruen Associates in association with Peat Marwick, Johnson Heumann Research Associates, and The Planning Group, dated April 1986.
5. City Center to Regional Mall, Architecture, the Automobile and Retail in Los Angeles, 1920-1950 by Richard Longstreth, Ph.D., Faculty member of George Washington University, Urban Historian, MIT Press, 1997. Development of Westwood Village is included in this book.
6. Westwood Village Specific Plan, effective Jan. 30, 1989, Sept. 2, 1991, Oct. 6, 2004.
7. Westwood Village, Angled Parking Study, by Fehr and Peers, for the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, dated February 2012.

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8. Westwood Village Parking Study, presented to the Westwood Village Improvement Association by Civic Enterprise Associates, LLC, dated September 30, 2013.
9. Westwood Village Retail Strategy, presented to the Westwood Village Improvement Association, by the York Consulting Group, LLC. dated November 20, 2014
10. (Understanding of the handicap placard abuse was enlightened by the students of Prof. Donald Shoup's class on Monday, March 2, 2020, UP 251, Transportation and Land Use, Parking. Disabled parking placard abuse in Westwood Village).
See attached: Here are links to two typical TV investigations of disabled placard abuse:
<http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2013/01/31/cbs2-investigation-reveals-rampant-fraud-in-use-of-disabled-parking-placards/>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1kTkybBX2c>
Here is the link to a *Los Angeles Times* article about disabled placard abuse:
<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/feb/15/local/la-me-0215-lopez-placardsting-20120213>
11. Preservation Positive Los Angeles, Los Angeles Conservancy, February 2020
<https://www.laconservancy.org/study-preservation-positive-los-angeles>
12. Planning Report:
<https://www.planningreport.com/2020/03/17/economic-argument-historic-preservation-older-housing-affordable-housing>
13. Design Review Boards, Nationally and in Los Angeles, Comparable for Westwood Village. *Research memo, Kathryn Welch Howe, May 2020.*

This committee understands the difficulty in implementing action in response to the recommendations made not just by this committee but also by the various agencies which have completed the studies made over the years. We do think a real problem in The Village is the difficulty of forming a common vision for the Village among the many property owners. We would like to help by being a third-party, neutral participants, who might be able to communicate with property owners to learn and cooperatively resolve their issues and help address Village interests.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Holmby Westwood Property Owners Association
and the members of the Committee on the Village,

Jim DeMeules, Jackie Freedman, Phil Gabriel, Kathryn Welch Howe, Susan Reuben,
Caron Schwartz, Karen Spiegel, Ellen Turner and Janet Dardashty

By,
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