

Summary of Comments:

North Hollywood Station Joint Development Opportunity Stakeholder Feedback for the Development Guidelines

October 2015

Executive Summary

Metro hosted three focus groups the week of September 14 and one large community workshop on September 24 regarding joint development at the Metro sites surrounding the North Hollywood Station. Metro heard important feedback from community members, neighbors, transit customers, property owners, businesses and other stakeholders about their vision and concerns for future development. Metro asked five questions of our stakeholders at these meetings and also talked one-on-one to hear comments and concerns. In addition, some comments were provided on our webpage. The questions we asked were:

- What are the treasures of this area?
- What is missing?
- How do you use the neighborhood?
- What are some issues that the new development should address?
- What do you want this place to be like?

The feedback included several important reoccurring themes:

- North Hollywood is a unique place whose residents are deeply vested in its future.
- The artistic character of the neighborhood must be preserved and incorporated into the new development.
- Open spaces are needed to balance the density of new buildings.
- Local retailers are preferred to chains.
- Amenities for artists and families should be enhanced.
- Safety and security around the station are of critical important to community stakeholders.
- Adequate transit parking must be provided.
- The development must address and mitigate traffic impacts that may come with new, dense development.

As with any community, there were a variety of opinions. While the majority of feedback regarding the opportunity for denser development around the transit station was positive, there were some strong feelings that the area should not be dense or buildings too tall. There were also concerns about how the impacts of this development will be mitigated to protect the existing residents and businesses.

Metro would like to thank all the participants who came out to the meetings and submitted comments on our website during our first stage of outreach. The feedback we heard is summarized in more detail below.

Treasures / Character of the Neighborhood

Residents and visitors of North Hollywood treasure its artistic and historic character. Unique theaters, shops and restaurants bring a special vibe that sets North Hollywood apart from other parts of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. Metro heard that the neighborhood would like the new development to:

- Celebrate the local art of the NoHo Arts District.
- Elevate the performing arts as a key part of the neighborhood character.
- Include art wherever possible, integrated into the building, into the building program, in the street medians and streetscape.
- Keep the urban street life vibrant and eclectic.
- Support the community's diversity.
- Be urban but not too urban.
- Be special, unique, and different.
- Honor the historic landmarks and funky character of the district.
- Curate the retail, strive to keep local businesses and artists in NoHo and restrict national brand chain stores.
- Be as livable as possible.
- Allow for innovation, co-working, incubation of small new businesses and artists in the district.

“NoHo is the best community in LA. I appreciate that it contains a little bit of everything and provides residents and visitors with a well-rounded city. The Metro stop is definitely a local treasure.”

“The NoHo transit station is a true hub that should remain a busy, active cultural connection to the rest of LA.”

“We really need this station to be a true TOD site. This is the moment and opportunity to really set an example and set the course for a more forward-thinking LA.”

“The best part of NoHo is that it is transit oriented, walkable, and non-corporate. It is nice to be able to walk to mom-and-pop businesses and restaurants and avoid giant corporations.”

“NoHo is a thrilling place to live – we have exciting bars and restaurants, cool businesses, public transit/easy access to other neighborhoods. We have theaters, the library, the pool and the park. You can walk around. You can get a beer outside. You can get to know your neighbors.”

Types of Uses

Participants desired a mix of uses including residential and neighborhood-serving retail. Generally, people responding would like more places to shop, including a grocery store. Metro heard that the community would like to see:

- Mixed-income food choices and grocery stores, particularly Trader Joe's
- Neighborhood-serving retail
- Hotel near the station
- Gyms and fitness centers
- Dance studios
- More nightlife
- Outdoor performance spaces
- Outdoor dining
- Office spaces for the creative workforce
- Visual art galleries
- More “mom and pop” stores
- More options for family – dining, entertainment and recreation

“This city has a lot of freelancers and entrepreneurs who would love a co-working space.”

“I would prefer not to have chains in the development. Examples of locally-owned chains that I would like to see are Tender Greens, Cool Haus, and Dog Haus.”

“That car dealership is not a good use of land. It's pretty lame. The streets around it are scary at night.”

Urban Design

The shape that the development takes will make a big impact on the experience of the area. Most stakeholders understood that the area is zoned for taller buildings and more density, but this density should be balanced with active street life and open space. Stakeholders want to make sure that the development follows these principles:

- Include density but provide a comfortable environment that is human-scaled.
- Balance building height and pedestrian experience with second level setbacks (i.e. terracing).
- Be sensitive to the way tall buildings impact views to the sky, shadows and open space.
- Break up the large parcel with internal streets and passages to allow for pedestrian access and visual connections to inner courtyards and plazas.
- Provide connections at the corners and setback building entrances from the street.
- Use land efficiently and consider integrating transit into buildings.

- Be architecturally significant with a world-class design
- Use rooftops for open space.
- Include active ground floor uses in the parking structure.
- Design the development to be as sustainable as possible and set the model for energy and resource efficiency.
- Find ways to bring pedestrian traffic and activity further north on Lankershim.

“We should model our city like any European city, with a public “square,” community events, and pet and child-friendly spaces.”

“I hope that the city, Metro, and all public and private partners take a Human-Centered Design (Design Thinking) approach to all projects, to better serve citizens.”

“A holistic view of the neighborhood would be much appreciated.”

Open Space

Open space is a priority for residents to continue to use the station area as a gathering space and public plaza. Specifically, Metro heard that the development should:

- Include a central open space near the Station entrances for the Red and Orange Lines.
- Include a flexible and public gathering place.
- Make internal plazas open to the public, not restricted for private use.
- Include an element of play to attract families to the central open space.
- Consider a recycled water feature.
- Allow for performances, movies and public gatherings in the open space.
- Provide shade for pedestrians and places to sit.
- Designate parts of the public space for rest and relaxation.
- Include mature trees and cooling landscaping.
- Provide pet amenities
- Provide public bathrooms and drinking fountains.
- Where possible, include native landscaping that is drought tolerant and cooling.

“Need for dynamic public spaces that are shaded, with seating, water features, and something whimsical for children.”

Streetscape

The streetscape will be a key place where the development edge meets the community. The street should accommodate bikes, pedestrians, and cars, as well as create a strong connection to the Metro station. To enhance the streetscape, the development should:

- Include wider sidewalks to allow for outdoor seating and walking.
- Have street-facing edges to encourage activity, gathering and street life.
- Include unique lighting elements.
- Design buildings with entrances on multiple sides.
- Ensure full ADA access for people of varying abilities throughout the new development.
- Include better signage and wayfinding on the streets.

Safety and Security

Safety and security are important issues to residents. Stakeholders raised concerns about bicycle theft, loitering, homelessness and pedestrian safety around cars.

In general, stakeholders raised the following concerns:

- Crime in the park and Metro station area make the neighborhood feel unsafe.
- Homelessness is a growing issue; there should be more services to address this.
- There generally needs to be more security and law enforcement.

To address security, the development should:

- Include lighting, pedestrian signals, protected crossings, protected bike lanes and design strategies that enhance pedestrian safety.
- Use environmental design for crime prevention whenever possible, including security cameras at the development and Metro station area.
- Prioritize safety for a family friendly environment.
- Ensure safety and security in parking facilities.

Parking

Parking is a key issue for residents, businesses, and transit riders. Community stakeholders raised concerns about transit parking availability, spillover of transit parking onto commercial meters and residential streets and parking management during construction. Opinions about parking included the following:

- Alternative parking options must be available during project construction, as well as increased shuttle and transit connector services.
- Some doubt the traffic infrastructure can handle 2,000 parking spaces (too many cars spilling onto the streets).
- Overflow parking should not spill over into the neighborhood.
- Parking needs both pedestrian and vehicular access and security control.
- Existing parking lot has issues with RVs parking overnight.
- Parking should not be too expensive so as to have a negative impact on businesses or transit ridership.
- Many prefer below-grade parking.
- Development uses (e.g. a theater) and parking design should be careful not to create traffic during peak hours.
- Metro should coordinate with the City of Los Angeles on the need for street parking policies, including the residential preferential parking program.
- Existing lot does not have enough transit parking after 8:00 am.
- Parking spaces for alternative vehicles, including bicycles, motorcycles and scooters, should be prioritized over those for cars.

“We probably need a paid parking structure, parking is too unpredictable.”

Housing / Affordable Housing

Affordability is a concern for folks who do not want new development to displace longtime residents. Community members particularly expressed:

- Need for workforce, senior, artist and family housing
- Concern that 60% AMI level is too high to accommodate the lower income residents in the area
- Concern that the affordable housing be integrated into the new development and with the market rate housing
- Need for more extremely-low income housing for seniors who earn 20k/year
- Frustration about the high cost of housing in general
- Understanding that homelessness is an issue, but is difficult to solve

Some community members expressed support for more home-ownership in the area: “Home-ownership is important for our community to thrive. We would like to see condominiums built.”

“Create affordable workforce housing for employees who work in NoHo or take transit to work in neighboring areas along the Red/Orange Lines.”

“Provide more affordable housing – be a significant solution to our housing shortage in LA.”

“If the last 30 years have proven that this type of development is much needed in this location, taking everything and everyone into account, then by all means. What is unacceptable is the removal of existing affordable housing and the displacement of residents.”

Active Transportation / Circulation

North Hollywood is already a hub for biking and walking but has great potential to expand bicycle and pedestrian networks and amenities. Participants at the meetings advocated increasing capacity for bicycle parking. They also supported improving safe access to and through the North Hollywood station and surrounding development for cyclists, pedestrians and all users of non-motorized travel.

Community members commented that the development should:

- Bring exciting changes to the area, making it a more walkable/bikeable destination.
- Continue to build on the current bike infrastructure and make it an example for others to learn from; use the development as an opportunity to leverage funding to expand bike lanes and implement the City’s bike plan.
- Work with the City to ensure surrounding infrastructure, including streets and sidewalks, are adequate.
- Include walkways so pedestrians are not restricted to the perimeter sidewalks.
- Include more secure bike parking, both for transit riders and to support the new development.

Other general comments about circulation and active transportation in the area included the following:

- Vineland Avenue bike lanes need to be converted into a cycle track.
- The Chandler Cycle Track project will increase traffic congestion as a result of fewer travel lanes.
- More education is needed on using non-vehicular transportation modes to access Metro/the new development, as well as education on proper locking techniques/equipment.
- A map of bus routes should be posted in the area.
- The community would benefit from DASH or a similar shuttle service to take people throughout the neighborhood and bring them to Metro/the development.
- More enforcement is needed to address bad car behavior, such as turning right on red when pedestrians are crossing.

“I am disappointed that the Orange Line is not better integrated with the train/bike path/running path.”

“We are building this stuff for kids we have not met yet – kids aren’t jumping to get their drivers licenses anymore. Keep the kids in mind and how they plug in to the schools – we want to have safe routes for them.”

Concerns

While the majority of comments demonstrated general support of the higher density development anticipated by the zoning at the North Hollywood station, it is important to note that some stakeholders have strong concerns about dense development. The main concerns are:

- Taller and denser buildings will change the character of North Hollywood.
- The impacts of the development will not be properly mitigated.
- The new development will not be affordable to the existing community.
- More traffic!

Conclusion

The North Hollywood Guide for Development will convey this feedback to the Metro Board of Directors and the short-listed developers. The subsequent RFP will include the comments and concerns and will, wherever possible, seek concrete responses. In some instances, the response to a particular concern will be addressed after a developer is selected and during the more detailed design process; for example, determining appropriate mitigations to the impacts of development is identified through the CEQA process, which takes place once a developer is selected and the project progresses through more detailed design. Metro will require a community outreach plan as part of its developer selection, so the conversation with stakeholders will continue throughout the process.