

SILVER LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
URBAN DESIGN AND PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES (DRAFT)
Wednesday, January 9, 2019
6:30pm
Ivanhoe Elementary School
2828 Herkimer St
Los Angeles, CA 90039

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began at 6:35PM.

Attending Committee Members:

Scott Plante, Co-Chair
Joe Ferrell, Co-Chair
Carol Cetrone
Barbara Ringuette
Cliff Towne
Liza Temple
Christine Kantner
Bob Lisauskas
Mark Duncan
David Wheatley

Non-Attending Committee Members:

Ninotchka Regets
Jerome Courshon
Georgene Smith-Goodin
Doug Reed
Anne-Marie Johnson
Genelle LeVin
Craig Collins

2. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Cliff Towne:

He announced an activity at the Griffith Park Adult Community Center. On Thursdays Jay runs a folk singing night. It's a fun thing to do.

Terrence Jackson:

He announced that there will be a reservoir committee meeting on January 15 at 7pm.

Co-Chair Scott Plante explained what the Committee is and does.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

a. Review and adoption of minutes.

Cliff Towne has corrections. His name is misspelled at the top of page 3.

VOTE for amended minutes
Unanimous
PASSED

Yes Votes:

Scott Plante
Joe Ferrell
Carol Cetrone
Barbara Ringuette
Cliff Towne
Liza Temple
Christine Kantner
Bob Lisauskas
Mark Duncan
David Wheatley

No Votes:

None

Present, Not Voting:

None

b. Committee business.

David Wheatley asked how we are doing regarding parking? He asked how are we doing regarding the infrastructure of Los Angeles supporting new development? How are we doing with increased density in neighborhoods? How will we welcome the new people and how will we deal with them?

Liza Temple responded. We stalled on that. Georgene Smith-Goodin and I met with them. A Study was put out by developers. There was a recommendation on how to move forward. She will summarize it for the February agenda.

Wheatley said that traffic has gone crazy. Even Olympic Boulevard was so slow. What can we do about this?

Mark Duncan:

He asked can we all work together to clean up Silver Lake? On Sunset Boulevard, the street needs some care. We have a beautiful thoroughfare that passes through all of Los Angeles yet the City only sweeps it once a year, after the marathon.

A Man added that there is lots of walking traffic on Silver Lake Drive and Silver Lake Boulevard. This street needs to be cleaned. The leaves clog gutters when it rains and create gigantic lakes.

Bob Lisauskas said that that's a good idea. The Green Committee works with Council District 13 (CD13). CD13 Field Representative Mary Rodriguez will come to our next Committee meeting January 15. We urge people to get ideas to Scott or come to the meeting on January 15.

Christine Kantner recalled that we did a stretch of Riverside Drive a couple of years ago. It was a great way for the community to come together and meet. It will be an excellent outreach opportunity for the SLNC.

Mark Duncan said that he wants a "Celebrate Sunset" campaign with live arts that would be sponsored by businesses?

Barbara Ringuette spoke of the adopted streets program. She will discuss this with Mark Duncan.

Carole Cetrone noticed that letters about demolition permits now come to this committee? How did that happen? Scott Plante said I don't know. We wrote that letter about 6 months ago.

David Wheatley asked is anyone looking at what Los Angeles is supposed to look like? He commented that it's increasingly lots of tall buildings and densely populated.

4. PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION Christopher Hawthorne, the City's first Chief Design Officer, will speak and answer design in Silver Lake, and the City as a whole.

Plante welcomed Christopher Hawthorne to Silver Lake. He said that Hawthorne had been the Los Angeles Times architecture critic from 2004 to 2018. The SLNC is the first neighborhood council to host him.

Christopher Hawthorne:

He spoke of challenges and opportunities and the role that City Hall can plan to promote better public architecture. How do we make typical private development more ambitious? Public engagement is central to the work that I'm doing.

I was the architecture critic of the Los Angeles Times for 14 years. I had been teaching for many years at Occidental College. I'd started a Public Affairs series there. By hosting those events, I did a couple of conversations with Mayor Garcetti about his visions for the City. We talked about how other cities framed the question of the architectural future of the city.

There are very few jobs like mine around the world. He mentioned that Richard Weinstein, the architecture Dean at UCLA once worked for Mayor Lindsey in New York City. There are also similar positions for Helsinki and Mexico City. However, this is a new position of chief design officer for Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is in the midst of a fascinating and deeply fraught transition. It is trying to imagine a post suburban future for itself. There are big decisions to make in the next 5-10 years. That's unusual for a big American city. With the transit projects, the LA River, the Olympics, housing, mobility, etc. there is a sense that this is a moment of profound change.

He explained that his job comes from the Planning Department but is actually in the Mayor's Office. The job is an experiment to coordinate investments we're making in public infrastructure and architecture to make they are all complementary.

My work falls into 3 categories: There are projects and sites in various stages of development. I've worked with Metro on the new 96th street Gateway Station at LAX, between the people mover and public transit.

I'm working on the G2 Taylor Yard plan. That's a 41-acre parcel with environmental challenges. He said we must also rethink what access to the river means. For that he works with the River Works team in the Mayor's Office. We are in the process of planning for the replacement of Parker Center, a 700,000 square foot building for many City employees.

His role in that project is to seek how can we promote design excellence into the language of the R2 and the RFP for the building. There is the potential for a public plaza at the foot of City Hall for the first time. There is no plaza to welcome such a crowd, referring to the immigration marchers of several years ago. This would be on the East side.

His second category of initiatives: Collaboration with the Chief Procurement Officer for new design excellence guidelines. We are looking at government programs for public and civic architecture. New York City also has a design excellence program. Public architecture will be my focus for first half of this year.

I'm working on a design competition to re-imagine the future of gas stations. (charger stations). These need to be flexible buildings as charger times decline. So many gas stations are on corner sites. What will be the future after gas? I'm also working on another design competition about housing.

Another initiative is design review. The different agencies don't often communicate. There is an experimentalist architecture and design culture here. There is a danger in trying to avoid the worst offenders. This also prevents innovation.

His goal this year is design review across the city. I'm very interested in the question of shade as an equity issue. Our public realm hasn't historically focused on this. That's a tree canopy issue. We are also questioning the City about our street furniture

There is also the question about developers and the right of way. We are talking to people who are experts to see how we can think about shade in a more equitable way.

We have produced a comprehensive database of preservation but it only goes to 1980. Preservation often looks at buildings over 50 years old, but buildings become vulnerable when aged 20 and 45 years and most vulnerable to demolition. We need to get out in front of preservation for this. Can Survey LA cover buildings from the 1980s and 1990s? We're thinking about public events to protect the most important historically buildings from that time.

The third category is public engagement like this. This weekend Sci-Arc (Southern California Institute of Architecture) is doing a design event around homelessness. On Monday those projects will be unveiled. There is little architecture education in schools.

A series of public events is coming up. We will look at architecture of the 1980s, shade. There is a question of place making and sense of place that are key discussion topics in architecture. We want design that represents Los Angeles' communities authentically.

We have such a history of flux and change and displacement. What does place mean in the public and private realm? Union Station and Dodger Stadium a great example of great architecture that is the result of displacement. Both are contending with the ghosts of the communities that were there before. The question of place is difficult to define. Place keeping versus place making.

There is no longer a sense that a city could provide a public park and have the community be passive. We're in a post High Line era. The New York City High Line elevated park was a rousing success but it had all kinds of unintended consequences, including displacement, construction, and high end condo towers. We have to think about all consequences and things in the public realm at the beginning of the project process. We are looking at projects that can balance all of those questions.

There is a great example of this in the District of Columbia is the 11th Street Bridge Park Project. It's very ambitious and thinks about community effects. People involved in that project partner with the community. We are thinking about community development, affordable housing, etc. We as designers and public officers need to think in a broader more holistic way.

He started this job in April 2018. It feels like the right moment to consider these challenges. The basic framework for planning and zoning is being rethought. There is new zoning opportunity with ReCode. The Downtown community plan will roll out shortly.

There was applause.

Questions & Answers:

Bob Lisauskas said that it's exciting that LA is moving in this type of direction. Looking back in history, strong mayors had grand visions for cities. Chicago, Boston, etc. were working with the mayor. Is there a grand vision for LA? Or is this more small scale?

Hawthorne responded that LA will continue to be a place that thinks big. We're engaged a number of those at the moment. We are looking at the potential for a train tunnel under the 405 freeway. The LA River is much longer than the High Line at more than 30 miles, most of that is within the City of LA. It has to be a balance between community and the region.

Large linear networks are taking over the City. Chicago's Millennium Park is very expensive but soon it will look like a bargain. New York City also has cautionary tales from the era of Mayor Bloomberg.

Wheatley commented that the word "fraught" stood out from your talk. We have applications for variances. They are fraught. People are often surprised that there are loop holes that allow big buildings to be placed in their beautiful neighborhoods. I'm surprised and impressed that you look at so many layers of issues with so much depth.

Hawthorne replied that it's a question of neighborhood in an historical context. This is also the proving ground for multifamily experiments. We also have that legacy, which began in the late 19th Century with bungalow courts. This was experimental worker housing, proto modernist urban architecture. Architects like Schindler, Neutra, etc., their work is important.

Regarding Chavez Ravine, the LA power structure was skeptical about public housing. Norman Chandler didn't agree with the Mayor about that. Embedded in the history of this City is skepticism about public housing.

There is a national conversation now about the history and future of single family units. Minneapolis and Seattle are dealing with this. He mentioned the history of restrictive covenants regarding race. He also mentioned climate change. There is a design competition for housing.

When I talk to people about what they'd like to see in their neighborhoods, they want to support local retail, having a walkable neighborhood, and with eyes on safety, but housing is too expensive to buy. We have to make a distinction with large scale housing. This is the most fraught conversation we have.

Liza Temple asked about small lot subdivisions. They look the same. That frustrates us. There is dysfunction at the Department of Public Works and other departments that don't communicate with each other. This is costly. By the time you get permits, there is no time for interesting design. Between parking requirements and other regulations, we end up with same blocks. Is the Mayor's Office even looking at how those departments work together?

Regarding small lot subdivision, we have improved the ADE process. There are ways to incentivize this, said Hawthorne. He mentioned the Echo Park project. Lots of neighborhoods are concerned about that project. There is also a covered parking issue. That kind of flexibility is important.

We have a very rigid housing stock. We need to promote young people getting mortgages.

Joe Ferrell also asked a small lot question. It seems like an algorithm. Why is this the accepted standard? Has this come from someone? Hawthorne said that one of my goals to bring together architects, planners, etc. to do better.

Cities around the country are making the same complaint. That comes from constraints from fire codes for Los Angeles. 75 feet is the height limit for construction without concrete or steel. That is the height of the fire department ladders. So, the Fire Department won't allow you to build in wood above that height. Wood framed developments are efficient and easy to approve but that produces a mediocrity. You can't do as much formally from the building.

There are parts of city where we shouldn't allow that type of construction, like downtown. They welcome more height downtown. We don't want to leave units on the table during a housing crisis.

We've under produced new housing. We need 1 million in new units in LA County. How do we promote as much housing as we can while promoting architecture and design?

Ferrell said we're idealizing architects. People like Frank Geary are our saviors. It seems there's no middle ground for architects. We want to diversify architecture.

Hawthorne wants to grow and diversify the ranks of architects that we are hiring for public work. There is a danger to big names that have sucked up so much of the oxygen. The shadow that they cast makes it hard for new firms to take root. He suggests design competitions.

Big firms know how the system works. Middle sized firms really struggle. There are lots of opportunities to rethink that.

Plante asked about the design excellent program. Can there be incubators or labs? Hawthorne replied yes. I'm inundated.

Barbara Ringuette asked about retaining the character of community. We'd like some features retained. She sees large single family lots that are turned into duplexes or other multifamily home sites as a problem. How can we encourage those builders to come to talk to us to create something better? What more can we do to influence what is being developed in our communities?

Hawthorne agreed that many projects happening around the city are not as thoughtful as they need to be. However, historically in Los Angeles, eclecticism rather than consistency has been the rule. That led to the creation of such much important residential architecture here. So, we have to think about a range of goals.

Some pockets are more consistent with architecture but openness characterizes more of the city. It's important to balance that. Immigration began to remake Los Angeles beginning in the 1960s. So there was new architecture that allowed newcomers to gain a foothold into the housing market.

Mark Duncan said that he is huge fan of design and public space. He expressed concern about the City's terrible records for maintaining what it already has. Yet we talk about big new projects? What about maintenance?

Hawthorne said that maintenance and cultural history has become a scholarly work. Architects and politicians are concerned with the new. He's putting together a committee on memory. People prefer the Tabula Rasa solution to complicated properties and maintenance and wiping the slate clean instead of tackling what is there.

As an example, he said that Pershing Square is arguable the most important public space in Los Angeles. The 1994 plan was very important. It represented the first time we looked at a Latin American architect. It was important to the community at the time. There are maintenance issues and budgets for that. It's difficult to attract funding and media for maintenance of an existing flawed project. We need to do a better job of that.

For the G2 parcel, to what extent are we thinking about maintenance? We need to have a budget for maintenance. That should be part of the project's design.

Cliff Towne asked are you a lone warrior? Hawthorne said that he is building a staff now. The Mayor is engaged by these architectural issues.

During the 2013 Mayoral campaign the AIA sat down with each candidate. It was clear that Garcetti was truly engaged by these questions.

Towne mentioned that new duplexes are now maximizing square footage because of market forces. Hawthorne said it's very tricky. He cited Venice as such an example, where 2-3 lots are consolidating into one huge walled compound. So, market forces make this tricky.

Towne asked about RSOs (Rent Stabilization Ordinance units). Hawthorne said we face constraints. Proposition 13 had supply effects as well. He cited Costa Hawkins legislation as a constraint. We're getting better data about how to make those things work.

Christine Kantner said that your post is the most importance post in the City, a capitalistic city with people arriving from all over the world. How do we mitigate this and incentivize architectural excellence? Developers destroy neighborhoods for profit. They bulldoze beautiful buildings using the Ellis Act. It's great to have this committees starting. Los Angeles has less urban planning than most cities.

Hawthorne cited Costa Hawkins and profit making. There are mechanisms for strengthening protections. Historically Angeles is a fantastic place for a profitable housing market and pursuing individual visions.

Hawthorne cited that about \$200 billion that will be spent through existing legislation over the next generation to develop the area, including transit development funds, housing bonds and open space bonds. That's unprecedented in American urban history.

Metro is now the largest patron of architecture in the region but they don't think of themselves that way. We will be remaking the public space of the city over the next few years. We have a good track record.

Carol Cetrone said that she's interested in the bridge project and Sequa (the California Environmental Quality Act). Some people in Sacramento that want to weaken it, while some in Los Angeles want to strengthen it. What are your thoughts about CEQA?

Hawthorne said the big the big third rail discussion in LA politics now is the single family home, Proposition 13 and SEQA. All those things need to be on the table. They dramatically affect the environment here. Hawthorne said that he is a 3rd generation Californian. SEQA needs to be rethought, with some parts weakened and some strengthened. We have to share resources more. There needs to be a conversation.

A Man named Frank asked about the D2 project. Silver Lake represents the nexus of so many issues that you discussed. Where do you see your potential impact on that process over the next 4 years? Hawthorne replied that this is a great opportunity to rethink public and open spaces. Across the city we're investing in public projects in a way that we haven't done for generations.

Frank said that LA is 74th out of 100 cities for parks. It's terrible for parks. What are we going to do to bring that number up? Hawthorne concurred that we are a park poor city. We have great resources of open spaces but they are peripheral (i.e. beaches, Griffith park, mountains). The LA River project is important for me as well as underserved communities like South Los Angeles. There is open space at the reservoir.

The Home ownership dream is out of reach for most newcomers now. Mobility and transportation issues are really important to people. We have a big deficit to make up. Voters have sent a clear message that these things are important for them.

As an example of how complicated this all is: In Venice two connected parking lots are perfect for new housing under Measure HHH. However, they are close to beach, which is under California Coastal Commission jurisdiction. That requires democratic access for parking spaces near the beach. Now we have competing interests. We often don't talk about tradeoffs. The idea that tradeoffs don't work here as they do in other cities is embedded.

A Man said that urbanism is the key thing to solve all of these problems. What should our city look like? We are re-urbanizing. It seems like there should be a systematic way to raise questions about how do we rebuild our cities in a protective way that becomes a solution to our environmental crisis.

Hawthorne said that environmental issues do change the conversation entirely. We need to move with a greater sense of urgency. All of these things need to be on the table.

We've made very good progress on California's environmental goals. However, transportation has been an exception. We see declines in ridership on the Metro with the improved economy and the rise of ride share companies like Uber and Lyft.

A Man said that the irony of CEQA is that it creates a larger carbon footprint through a prejudice towards suburbanization. Another Man asked can new development fight climate change? Hawthorne replied yes. His colleagues are working on that. "Building Forward" is in draft form and will be released later this year that will address strategies including new housing, solar power, energy efficiency, climate change.

Joe Ferrell asked what's your opinion of San Francisco? It exploded overnight and is one of the most expensive cities in the country. In LA we're building in already built areas. In San Francisco they incentivized

areas like the Tenderloin. It revitalized the whole city. Can that be applied to LA for less built up areas?

Hawthorne warned against a neighborhood by neighborhood approach. He's a native of the Bay Area and dismayed by what's happening there. This comes back to Proposition 13. Cities now have incentives to promote jobs to boost the tax base. Santa Monica and Culver City are examples. They have seen little population change but job growth has skyrocketed. Producing jobs is easier than producing housing.

There is a complicated set of questions. People are trading space for time. Younger people prefer to live in smaller spaces if they can avoid long commutes to work. This happens all the time among younger people. This is a big shift. He felt that there would have been a much bigger uproar if a large housing project took over the Westside Pavilion space instead of Google. Why is that?

We have a system where it's easier to say no than yes. The people who are housing secure are the ones controlling the conversation about the future of housing. We have to make room for people who are struggling to live here. We need to be able to welcome new ideas and new people.

Finally, Hawthorne asked the audience what are your thoughts on the Silver Lake Reservoir question? It is an intriguing project. You can email your thoughts to him at Christopher.hawthorne@lacity.org

There was applause.

5. MOTIONS & RESOLUTIONS –

a. 4101-4121 Santa Monica Boulevard Case Number ZA-2018- CUP for the sale of alcoholic beverages for on and patio. Proposed hours of operation are 11am – 2am daily.

Mark Levin, representative for the owner of the property.

He said that the building is a mixed use project. He is referring to one of 10 spaces on the ground floor. This is near Sunset Junction. It's a small restaurant about 3300 square feet. There are a total of 124 seats, including 81 seats indoors. The proposed hours are 11am to 2am.

It's not a bar. They probably won't use the 2am hours every day of the week. That's very unlikely. The parking requirement is 1 space per every 100 square feet, which is onerous. The building has two subterranean levels.

We want a full line of alcoholic beverages. There will be no entertainment.

Joe Ferrell said that this is a new territory for us as there is no tenant. This is like writing you a blank cheque. Levin said it's a chicken and egg problem. In other neighborhood councils, we could get your support and require the future tenant to come in and speak with you guys.

Cliff Towne asked what's adjacent to the patio? A Woman who lives next door asked why are we having a bar open until 2am? Levin offered that we can close the patio roof of the restaurant to control noise. That's fair.

Liza Temple asked about El Cid? Levin replied that El Cid has a different vibe.

Barbara Ringuette asked what else is in this building? Who is the developer? There is a building going up on Sunset with a covenant for parking. Levin said that this is mixed use residential. Parking is per code. There are 81 total parking spaces for this building.

Mark Duncan expressed concern about noise outside until 2am. He suggested that it's more prudent to begin with shorter hours. This is onerous for people who live there.

David Wheatley said that he's inclined to ask people to send this back. The graphics in this presentation are too small to see.

Scott Plante noted that there is no tenant. This is all theoretical. It could be completely different.

Christine Kantner said you need to come back with your tenant. Bars show menus. Our decision is made by how they would serve the community.

Levin commented that it does make my job easier to have a tenant here. The problem is that chefs don't want to wait 6 months.

Bob Lissauskas said that while this is unique to our neighborhood council, it is typical throughout the City. I suggest that we talk about reducing hours and enforcing tenant approval.

Carol Cetrone said that another project said similar thoughts about closing their outdoor patio. Must there be an outdoor patio? Levin said that the building is to open this summer. Cetrone suggested using glass to mitigate noise.

Barbara Ringuette asked you've already designed the building? You want approval for this? Perhaps you should have outdoor parking nearby.

Mark Duncan commented that that area has been rough. I'm happy that something is going there. However, I'm worried about setting a precedent for the residents and facilitating bar creep.

Levin said there will be total retail space of about 10,000 square feet. The project is a mix between residential and retail. Think of how it's oriented towards a very large street.

Janis Purins said that he is looking at other businesses in the area with patios. They close earlier, about 10pm except for the bars. He mentioned the Eagle and the 4100. They have different setting.

Levin said we want community support. Wheatley asked about the proposed hours. What if we say no? Bob Lisauskas said that if you don't make concessions and deal with us you'll be left with nothing.

Levin commented on default hours? It's a negotiation. The Los Angeles Police Department and the Council District are involved. The default time is either 10pm or 11pm.

Scott Plante proposed that the restaurant closes at midnight and that the patio closes at 10pm. Liza Temple seconded.

VOTE
8-2-0
PASSED

Yes Votes:
Scott Plante
Carol Cetrone
Barbara Ringuette
Cliff Towne
Liza Temple
Bob Lisauskas
Mark Duncan

David Wheatley

No Votes:

Christine Kantner
Joe Ferrell

Present, Not Voting:

None

Wheatley commented that he wants to see cards sent out within 500 feet for residents. Levin said 662 cards were sent out.

ITEM NOT ON AGENDA

Plante explained that there is an emergent situation for restaurant and beverage. The Government Affairs Committee is facing a deadline. They need feedback by mid-February. He learned of this yesterday. He said that he wants to use the Brown Act to vote to discuss this. A 2/3's vote is necessary. There were no objections.

Barbara Ringuette read the motion: "The SLNC does not support the PTC 2018 60 CA the restaurant beverage program as written. The proposed program fails to pay sufficient respect to neighboring residential or commercial interests. We believe the proposed program must include advance notification within 500 feet and to the neighborhood council, require a public hearing, and an appeals process. The draft program proposal allows no opportunity for public input before a clearance is granted. The program would eliminate the opportunity for site specific, operations specific, or neighborhood specific comments. Stakeholders in neighborhoods know their communities the best and their input results in better projects including restaurant and beverage programs." Cliff Towne seconded.

Plante said this is designed to ease the approval process for restaurants. At the Government Affairs Committee they voted unanimously to not support this. Ringuette said the Planning Department presented this at a River Committee meeting. There was almost unanimous opposition. It limits our voice. That is scary. Plan Check also had people come to discuss this program.

There will be a meeting this Saturday about this program. The Planning Department and the Building and Safety Departments will be there. Enforcement is very difficult.

Barbara Ringuette added that she is against this program as it stands. It doesn't serve us. If they meet all 30 requirements, they don't need

approval for restaurants with up to 200 seats. There are no restaurants in Silver Lake with more than 200 seats. Cliff Towne asked how do we know that they will keep to these hours?

Plante made a motion to support the Government Affairs Committee in opposition. Cetrone seconded.

VOTE
10-0-0
PASSED

Yes Votes:

Scott Plante
Joe Ferrell
Carol Cetrone
Barbara Ringuette
Cliff Towne
Liza Temple
Christine Kantner
Bob Lisauskas
Mark Duncan
David Wheatley

No Votes:

None

Present, Not Voting:

None

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 9:22pm.