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Makeover That Makes Sense for L.A.? The Hollywood Example

By ERIC GARCETTI

THE City Planning Commission recently endorsed a 14-point plan to transform the way Los Angeles looks at and thinks about its built environment. Each point followed from the 14 letters of Planning Director Gail Goldberg's motto and mantra, "Do Real Planning." Taken together, they represent a bold corrective to the haphazard tradition of Los Angeles development that, when it has any reason at all, favors drivers over pedestrians, asphalt over grass, and sprawl over urban density.

Can we give our city a makeover that makes sense? Fortunately, Angelenos who want a preview of L.A.'s urban future don't have to depend solely on their imaginations. In Hollywood, the transformation to an urban Los Angeles has already begun. In the six years that I've served the 13th Council District, and extending before, Hollywood's comeback has been noted by tourists and natives seeking new options for everything from nightlife to entertainment post-production. Less noted has been the development of an urban template that foretells our city's destiny.

Below, I've taken the 14 points that spell out "Do Real Planning" and grouped them thematically. If you'd like to see the point-by-point evaluation of the manifesto, please read it on my blog at cd13.com.

Demand a walkable city. Narrow road widenings. Identify smart parking requirements. Require density around transit. It's no easier to imagine Los Angeles without the automobile at the center of our lives than it was for Copernicus to realize that the sun, not the Earth, sat at the center of the solar system. But I know where you

can get a glimpse – and you can take the Red Line to get there. New developments such as Hollywood & Vine have located residential and commercial density directly over transit. Our experiment with using the Holly Trolley to shuttle visitors from parking garages to nightclubs, restaurants and theaters is just the first step in creating a parking district and unified valet service that will make visitors' experiences about their destinations, not their cars. And efforts like the Great Hollywood Walkabout – for which I joined neighborhood council members, architects, and planners in an all-day census of sidewalk widths and street conditions – will lead to pedestrian-friendly visions for our streets.

Housing Issues

Locate jobs near housing. Advance homes for every income. Neutralize mansionization. "Housing," says G. Allen Kingston, the chief executive of Century Housing, "is where jobs go to sleep at night." Let's keep this in mind as we build our city. Hollywood provides a good example of how density can advance sensibly. In the 1980s, Santa Monica attracted jobs but built no housing; the result is that the flow of traffic on the 10 Freeway flipped, and now it's impossible to travel westbound in the morning. In Hollywood, we're developing residential buildings at the same time as we attract employers such as Nielsen Media and retain entertainment companies such as Capitol Records. An "adaptive reuse" policy has allowed market-rate residential opportunities to transform under-used commercial buildings on Hollywood Boulevard. One Red Line stop to the east, near the corner of Hollywood and Western, six different affordable

apartment buildings have risen. It's not only just and fair that the working-class people who fought for Hollywood don't get priced out of its renaissance. It's also good planning.

Produce green buildings. Landscape in abundance. Buildings consume 36 percent of total energy use in the United States, account for 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, 30 percent of raw materials, and 12 percent of water consumption across the country. The Casa Verde apartments on Selma Avenue were an early example of affordable housing that incorporated energy-efficient design. And Hollywood & Vine will meet a national measure of environmental friendliness.

Arrest visual blight. Offer basic design standards. Hollywood's sign ordinance removes ugly billboards and encourages stylish neon and historic signage, giving the area a unique character. I am proposing a special enforcement team to deal with the seemingly intractable problem of illegal signs. As an epicenter of urban design, Hollywood owes much of its good fortune to the Design Review Committee that I have empowered to review new projects in the redevelopment area. Made up of architects, urban designers and preservationists, it is fearless about sending architects and developers back to the drawing board if their work is not deserving of the most famous neighborhood in the world.

Nurture Planning Leadership. Eliminate Department Bottlenecks. Give Planning Input Early. The Hollywood Community Plan has languished for years, but it's starting to gather steam. In the meantime, I've worked to bring planning professionals and community leaders together in my Planning 101 workshops. The

result has been a constituency that favors density, rejecting L.A.'s NIMBY traditions: When developers of a new project at Santa Monica and Western proposed to a residents' group that their project could be three, five, or eight stories, the residents demanded eight or better! Of course, changing our departmental culture is going to have to happen within City Hall before we see results on the street. But we will.

I'm an unqualified fan of the "Do Real Planning" mantra. Will it work? The proof is in the pudding: Hollywood is a neighborhood where you can wake up, go to work, see a movie, buy a CD, dine out and dance until dawn without ever getting in your car. The future of Los Angeles can be urban. Come see for yourself.

Eric Garcetti is president of the Los Angeles City Council.