

# WHWCNC PLUM: June 20, 2024

## *Southwest Valley Community Plan*

### **Discussion Guide**

*Discussion on the presentation received from Los Angeles City Planning updating the committee on the Southwest Valley Community Plan. The Committee will discuss the presentation and develop next steps for the committee to contribute comments to the plan review process.*

At a 5/16/24 Joint Meeting of the WHWCNC PLUM Committee and the full WHWCNC Board, the LA Planning Department made a presentation of the proposed revision of the Southwest Valley Community Plan as required by law. While the plan covers the areas of Woodland Hills, West Hills, Winnetka and Canoga Park, this analysis and discussion will focus on the areas of Woodland Hills that were the primary concerns during that presentation.

#### ***Planning Dept. Presentation findings/proposals:***

The process to update the Community Plan began in 2017. In 2020, the State set land use proposals. Most housing in the area was built in the 1980s and earlier. In the last 5 years, housing construction has slacked off. Planning intends to re-zone parking zones and assign one (1) land use and one (1) zoning use for each parcel. Parking will utilize 2009 Standards.

#### ***Existing Commercially zoned areas:***

- Land use standards between Winnetka and Mulholland will be a height of 45 feet with additional 10 ft. setbacks for every additional 10 ft. of height proposed. The “Bonus Height” will be capped at 8 stories. Major buildings on key transportation corridors will require active uses on the ground floors and will have transparency requirements.
- The intent is to encourage more residential (multi-family) housing. Community zoning will be from 3 stories to 8 stories. There will be “Bonus Allowances” that states that from 3 to 5+ stories can be added. If the structure is non-residential, the developer will have to provide a “Community Benefit.” Examples: Publically Accessible Open Space/ Daycare facilities/ small groceries/bodegas.
- The southern portion of Ventura Blvd. in the “Community Center” portion of the map will be commercial, have a 45-foot height allowance and can add up to 3-5 additional stories in “Bonus Height.” That means buildings along Ventura Blvd from Mulholland to Winnetka can rise to an 8 story height.
- Transitional height –again a base height of 3 stories with an additional “Bonus” of up to 5 more stories—total 8 stories.
- “Re-Imagine Ventura” areas will allow heights up to 45 feet –3 stories. But the “Bonus Height” further allows an additional 5 stories--however the base floor must have commercial uses” along the frontage.
- No drive-thrus will be allowed in future Re-Imagine Ventura areas, and any building parking may not be seen from Ventura.

- “Neighborhood Center” land use will allow buildings up to 8 stories with a required 5-story base. But existing multi-family units will be maintained.

***Low Density Neighborhood Residential areas:***

- In RD, RD-2, R-1 and RA zones, heights will be limited to 3 stories (33’-45’).
- In Low and Medium Density Residential land use areas, 1-4 units per location lot will be allowed.
- South of Ventura Blvd., the hillsides can’t be used for tall buildings. Limited to 3 stories.
- Walnut Acres: No changes proposed, however existing laws from Sacramento may change status.
- Existing RA-1 zones will not change and a minimum lot size must be maintained of at least 17,000 ft.
- One (1) unit will be allowed for conforming lots.

***Answers to Some questions posed during presentation:***

Q: Specifically what type of building is allowed on Topanga, south of Ventura?

A: Dumetz and Topanga are zoned as a Neighborhood District so it can have transitional height, though projects will be scaled-down. FAR will be less than it is today—about 1:3.

Q: You haven’t provided any specifics about proposed lot splits in Walnut Acres. (No Response)

Q: Since many tall building may not be required to provide on-site parking, is there any plan to restrict parking for homeowners in existing R-1 areas?

A: It depends on City Parking determinations to clarify that.

Q: Are you planning on any changes to the existing lot split rules?

A: Not at this time

Q: Will Density Bonus allowance over-ride existing Specific Plan rules?

A: Density Bonuses would apply

Q The new propose bike lanes on Ventura and on Topanga: how will they impact your plans?

A: We haven’t really looked into that yet.

Q: You haven’t discussed “Transit Neighborhoods.” Why?

A: Most of the neighborhoods in Woodland Hills don’t really have access to City-provided transit options.

Q: Where are the jobs and businesses coming from to provide the employment opportunities for all these population-dense projects? What about water?

A: We’re still looking at forecast plans and trying to attract more large employers to the West Valley. DWP is looking at water issues. Housing will be analyzed in our EIR.

Q: Why have you made properties owned by “faith-based” organization basically a category that would allow virtually anything to be built on those properties—almost totally without restrictions?

A: We will work with “Faith-based organizations” to try to make sure that the proposed developments fit in with existing neighborhoods.

Q: What is the definition of “Publically Accessible Open Space—PAOS”?

A: Planning does have a definition, but we will have to get it to you.

Q: Why the 10-ft setbacks for Walnut Acres?

A: We are waiting for advice from the City Attorney to explain how SB-9 impacts that community.

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## **Key Areas of Concern in the proposed new Southwest Area Community Plan**

### ***1. High Fire Zone Areas***

According to information provided by the Planning Dept., they state that development is “being directed away from Very High Fire Zone areas.” However, public land such as school sites and parks, properties that are owned by Faith-Based organizations and portions of Ventura and Topanga Boulevard are located in the fire zones yet are shown as being up-zoned.

- \* Why aren’t those properties limited as to what may be built there?

- \* Exactly where are those “high fire zones” No street identifications have been provided.

### ***2. Proposed up-zoning along Ventura Blvd.***

There is a long-established Specific Plan (Cahuenga-Ventura Corridor Specific Plan) that already governs development along the street frontage. We need to get specifics on how the proposed up-zoning along Ventura Boulevard in this new Community Plan will be incorporated into the existing Specific Plan without it denigrating other sites in the district.

### ***3. Opportunity Corridors***

Planning’s “Opportunity Corridor Map” shows areas that are shown only as Low Medium Residential on your Community Plan Map? Which “law/intent” is Planning going to follow? For instance, will the properties south of Ventura Boulevard along Topanga be limited to 3 stories--or with bonuses 5 to 8 stories? Obviously these decisions also would affect if a 3-5 story “transitional height project” could be developed in the

single family neighborhoods on the blocks directly behind these properties. This proposal needs very specific rules that need to be clarified before the Community Plan is put into effect.

#### ***4. Transitional Height construction***

This is another proposal that has not been spelled out with specific rules and limitations. “Transitional height development” is now being proposed behind commercial properties on major arteries like Ventura and Topanga. Would townhomes, small lot subdivisions, complexes and courtyard homes be allowed on existing single family properties adjacent to what has been shown as “Opportunity Corridors” such as on both sides of Topanga south of the Boulevard, on Victory west of Topanga, and behind the commercial properties that are on Ventura Boulevard? Should these sites be limited to two stories in keeping with most adjacent residential areas? The Community needs specifics before this Community Plan proposal moves forward.

#### ***5. Density Bonuses***

One of the more troubling aspects of the initial SW Valley Community Plan proposal, Density bonuses would allow buildings to be constructed that could be between 5 to 8 stories high along the entire length of Ventura Boulevard without regarding the already existing rights of neighboring residential properties. The Community needs to see and weigh rules that would prevent the infringement of rights to adjacent residential properties including the potential reduction of their privacy, and increasing the shade and shadow cast over them. Or, a proposal where either the developer or the City would have to make mandatory payments for usurping the rights of these homeowners, or the City grants permanent major tax reductions on those properties in order to balance this potential injustice.

#### ***6. City Zoning Code Rules that protects rights and values of neighborhood properties.***

Planning Department members have mentioned/hinted that the new Zoning Codes will provide many rules that protect neighborhoods. But, at this point in time, no specifics have either been generated or discussed. Where is a copy of what Planning has in mind available, and has it been adopted by City Council and/or the Mayor? And will those rules/regulations be protected from the County or State changing or trashing them? A draft of those rights needs to be distributed to the community and the State and County officials who represent these areas?

#### ***7. Faith-based Organization properties***

This proposal in the new Community Plan is one of the most troubling issues contained in the project new SWV Community Plan. It basically sets no limits or restrictions on these entities or the properties they already own or intend to purchase in the future:

- First, exactly what qualifies as a “faith-based” organization?
  - Can some obscure religion on a tiny island claim they qualify for the unlimited honorific and then build whatever they want?
  - Is there an “ownership time restriction” on those properties (For instance—only applies to Faith Based properties that have owned or operated on them prior to a specific date?
  - What would be the specific development rules--including height and parking--for the Faith Based Organization Properties especially when located within residential neighborhoods?
  - If a Church, Synagogue, or School site exists in the middle of a residential neighborhood (and also anywhere else,) these sites would be allowed to be developed for affordable housing complexes.
  - What is the status of rules limiting the date(s) of ownership? Would a minimum time of ownership need to be established?
  - And would adjacent/connecting properties be included as part of the Faith-based organization property intended for development if they are purchased at a later date than the initial property?
  - Will Faith-Based organizations are allowed to construct multi-family affordable housing on sites in the middle of existing SFD residential neighborhoods?

***8. Local-serving retail, and future community services needs***

Exactly where is this Community Plan proposing to allow local serving retail and what would the development rules be--especially concerning parking, uses, mixed uses and height? Everything in the proposed new SWV Community Plan appears to be oriented toward building population density. However, with increased population, it will put a strain on critical infrastructure needs like Fire stations and police services. In the plan presented, there is no indication of any addition fire stations—especially critical due to the rise in weather temperatures and the increase in large fires (remember, a significant portion of the community will be in a High Fire Zone.) Logical areas for increased local-serving retail also appear to have been ignored. AS have additional school sites to properly serve the growing population.

# **Specific Areas of the SWV Community Plan that need more explicit explanations and rules:**

## **Opportunity Corridors/Opportunity Corridor Transitions:**

Opportunity Corridors are proposed to be designated on Ventura Boulevard and Topanga, south of Ventura to Mulholland and other areas. The “Corridors” allow buildings of 5-8 stories high.

A critical factor is that these Opportunity Corridors is that this plan also triggers current residential properties adjacent to these designations (within 150-350 feet of the Opportunity Zoned properties) to be up- zoned to up to 10 units and 3 stories. This dramatically affects large portions of the single family neighborhoods in those areas. These areas will be called Opportunity Corridor Transition Incentive Zones. Yet the details and issues of this Opportunity Corridor policy have not yet been fully explored, shared with communities potentially impacted, and a list of possible future issues been published not resolved. The WHWCNC and the entire community need this area fully explained and potentials need to be addressed before anything is put into law.

## **Transitional Use Zones:**

The impacts and possible solutions of the Transitional Use zones have not been fully explored or addressed. This is a dynamic of the future Plan that needs very specific answers and even more explicitly determined solutions that existing property holders can weigh. For SFD communities located directly behind a proposed building that could be planned for 5, 8, or umpteen floors behind it where once only a 2-story building stood, the ownership right of many of these property holders will be lost forever, subsequently diminishing the value of their property without receiving any restitution for that loss.

## **Empty and under-used School Properties:**

The SWV Community Plan includes several LAUSD and private school sites that are identified for use for higher-density development. Which site are the “most vulnerable” for development under this plan, and what limitations would/could be imposed to retain these school sites for future school needs?