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## Hollywood Community Plan

1 message

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# The Hot-Button Hollywood Community Plan will Fail ... Here's Why

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Dick Platkin



PLANNING LA - On Tuesday of last week the LA City Council Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUM) held its first public hearing on the proposed Update of the Hollywood Community Plan. This hearing confirmed what the Plan's skeptics have maintained for years – this planning process is dedicated to real estate investment. Its only implementation program is dramatic increases in permitted heights and densities. It does not offer funded programs to advance Hollywood through far-reaching improvements to public infrastructure and services.

This is why the reports and testimony supporting the proposed plan focused on real estate matters. To be fair, several backers mentioned parks and streetscape, but these only referred to concepts embedded in the Update, not to any funded programs.

In response, the Plan's opponents reiterated their criticisms about shoddy methodology, in particular the Update's failure to use 2010 census date, failure to calculate the build-out capacity of existing zoning, failure to calculate the build-out capacity of the vast program to increase permitted densities, and failures to address the plan's environmental impacts,

especially on health and safety.

While these shortcomings are all spot-on, the proposed Plan suffers from an even larger problem. It will not deliver what its boosters claim: the plan will produce successful transit oriented development, exactly what a car-oriented city like Los Angeles needs

This is an admirable goal, and city planning professionals fully understand that sustainable cities are those in which most residents use mass transit and live in apartment houses. In Green Metropolis, David Owen has explained, in detail, why the residents of New York City have a much smaller carbon footprint than the residents of most U.S. cities, including Los

Angeles.

This planning principle, however, needs to be applied to other cities correctly. Otherwise high-density schemes, like the Hollywood Plan, will be doomed to failure. Furthermore, when not executed correctly, it means that claims that a proposed plan has been prepared for environmental reasons are just window dressing for real estate speculation.

What then would be the correct application of the New York City high-density model to Hollywood? Owen spells out the answer: high density paired with high amenities.

The most important amenity is mass transit, primarily subways that have frequent trains, locate stations within several blocks of most residents, and offer destinations throughout an entire metropolitan area. While we all hope Los Angeles will eventually have such a transit system, high density housing without it will not succeed.

The second necessary amenity is a diversity of land uses that can be reached on foot. Owen argues that New York City's high density works because it is a walking city. Unlike Hollywood, parks, restaurants, stores, and services are within an easy walking distance of most apartments.

The third amenity is high quality sidewalks. This means sidewalks that are wide, well maintained, with a tree canopy and street furniture. Los Angeles not only gets extremely low marks for its beat-up sidewalks and piecemeal urban forest, but this plan also offers no public works program to address these obvious deficiencies.

My conclusion is that Hollywood needs a community plan that takes this comprehensive approach. It is not enough to green-light large buildings but otherwise ignore the public and private amenities that allow high density living to succeed.

*(Dick Platkin lives in Los Angeles where he teaches, consults, and writes on city planning. He is also active in the Beverly Wilshire Homes Association and the East Hollywood Neighborhood Council where he serves on the Planning Entitlement Committee.*