

More Opposition to the City Proposed Hollywood Plan

Los Angeles City Planning file: 12.0303
By Phil Brown AIA, April 15, 2012

The Hollywood Community Plan as conceived by the LA City Planning Department is inadequate because it is but a small piece of a misdirected LA City and County overall plan for transportation and population distribution. In the Hollywood Plan in particular, the result is proposing too much regional commercial development without the community protections, land uses that would support both the residential and commercial interests and most importantly the necessary local transportation improvements to avoid the gridlock of traffic that is developing and would become catastrophic to livability if not brought under control.

The Hollywood Plan is not a template for other community plans as the City contends, but is a warning to other communities that they must begin to raise awareness to the flaws and assumptions contained in the Hollywood Plan. By the willful disregard for the proper function and livability of the residential communities generally, the communities of the LA Basin must begin to work together to solve the underlying problems all communities in the Basin share. Therefore they should support the citizens of Hollywood who have begun to see the detrimental impacts the plan as proposed can have.

Over the next 25 years LA County will probably add, and need to add for economic adaptation reasons, another two million people. The present Metro radial patterned transit plan is focused on the LA Basin and is given their major priority. This replicates the flaw of the east coast "core" cities where too much commercial developed in the core and communities between the core and the suburbs were over run and deteriorated along with the adjacent core residential communities. The answer to avoid the excessive concentration, especially in the sprawled form of Los Angeles, is to distribute work center employment by way of the "Centers Concept", thereby putting work close to home and reducing the length of commuting trips as well.

So there is a real and present need for medium length transportation facilities that support the consolidation of the new population in a more dispersed pattern of development. It is more affordable for housing, new business formation and for the provision of improved transportation (BRT) as well. The message for the communities of the LA Basin is that there needs to be a "medium" scaled transportation facility, regarding capacity and trip length, that allows circulation in the Basin and that will protect the communities of the Basin from uncontrolled traffic and development.

The reference to the Hollywood Plan and the LA Basin as well, is that the majority of growth should generally be planned to occur outside of the Basin so that excessive concentrations of regional commercial employment does not get jammed into communities that have inadequate vehicular capacity and transportation infrastructure which does not protect existing communities from cut through traffic and gridlock.

Don't city planners understand that communities have to be livable in order to develop well? This means that the medium length improved transportation infrastructure and amenities should come about first and a balance of increased commercial later so as not to severely impact the existing community. The Hollywood community must be given support by a revised plan to cure its existing problems and work with the commercial interests that see the existing subway as an opportunity to attract commuters to their development. There is the very likely chance that developers may misjudge the opportunity with over development and will instead invest into a bankruptcy. It is best for developers to work with the existing community in a comprehensive approach for improvement and not let some fatal flaw create a major setback for the developer and the community. This would serve to adjust the Hollywood Plan for the short term to see that failure does not result.

In the longer term the LA Basin needs an infrastructure that protects and serves. The problem is that an ambitious Metro mainly promotes expensive heavy and light rail projects, both of which have difficulty in being accommodated and balanced at the mainly community scale. It's the bull in the china shop situation, where in this case the blunt force of over development makes the unintended consequences of unlivable traffic due to modal-split attraction and not having transportation facilities that control and balance. Metro wants "big", and due to the incapability of the city planning department for lack of expertise, they defer to Metro when it comes to transportation planning. So the result is that community scaled planning does not get done right. For the lack of expertise of appropriately scaled transportation improvement, large portions of the basin are in jeopardy including Hollywood.

The missing "medium scaled" transportation facility comes under the classification of ITS, Intelligent Transportation System design. It would be good for those involved in the planning of Hollywood to Google "Intelligent Transportation Systems" (ITS) and begin to learn the virtues of such techniques. There is also a "Preliminary Plan" for the Santa Monica Boulevard corridor that employs ITS in its concept (it can be found on the web at www.flowblvd.com/basinplan2.html). The plan is not finished and fully expressed conceptually as yet; but when it is it will obsolete the City's plans.

It would be good not to think of the Hollywood Plan as a 20 year plan because there is so much re-thinking and innovating to get a plan that would be appropriate for twenty years. At this juncture it would be prudent to revise the plan and scale down zoning for project size and/or think in terms of phasing projects. A five or ten year plan is a more appropriate time frame for the planning department to think in. The main objective is to arrive at a process which promotes livability, economics that work and to begin to realize that the transportation in the LA Basin cannot continue in ever worsening congestion with impacts on communities.