



# HOLLYWOOD HILLS WEST NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

## SCALE

### A POSITION PAPER

#### **INTRODUCTION**

*Many HHWNC stakeholders have expressed concerns about the current wave of development taking place in the area. The purpose of this series of position papers is to draw attention to those concerns and to suggest a new direction for development which will contribute to the vibrance and prosperity of the area, while respecting its historic character and creating a sustainable community. The HHWNC held a series of open meetings to get input from stakeholders, and that input forms the basis for these papers. We welcome the opportunity to work together with developers as we all try to make Hollywood a better place to live.*

#### **SCALE**

The Mayor and the City Council have made it clear that they want to see higher density development in Hollywood, and this naturally means building on a larger scale. Many of the projects currently being considered are asking for variances to allow greater height and increased floor area ratio (FAR). It's now common for developers to ask to reduce setbacks or eliminate them altogether. These are the concerns expressed by HHWNC stakeholders, listed in order of importance:

*Views, Character, Open Space/Green Space, Preservation, Height, Human Scale, Walkability, Architecture, Views/Sightlines, Light, Setbacks*

#### **COMMERCIAL CENTERS**

The drive to build on a larger scale is changing the look and feel of districts that have an established character. For example, many stakeholders are concerned that taller structures on Hollywood Blvd. will dwarf the historic buildings that give the street its character. Many residents also feel that Sunset Blvd. is defined, in part, by the low-rise buildings that line it. This unobtrusive built environment allows those who frequent the district to enjoy the light and space that are so much a part of the LA lifestyle. And while elected officials talk about walkability, sidewalks are growing more crowded as shops and restaurants occupy more space, at times making it difficult for pedestrians to pass.

#### **MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

The character of these neighborhoods has changed significantly, with smaller apartment buildings and bungalow apartments being replaced by large complexes that are often built right out to the property line. Some apartment dwellers who used to have a view are now staring at a blank wall. Others find that their homes, formerly filled with light, are now in perpetual shadow. Apartment building landscapes that used to offer gardens and trees are disappearing, reducing the amount

of open space and green space. Adjusting to drought conditions should not mean the elimination of green space, but instead rethinking it to reduce water consumption.

## **HILLSIDE COMMUNITIES**

Scale is relative. A twenty story building might not seem out of place in a commercial district. But in residential neighborhoods where single-family dwellings dominate, even a two-story house can seem like an intrusion. The hillside communities are seeing a rash of mega-mansions. These are often built with little concern for architecture or the character of the neighborhood. New construction seems to be all about maximizing square footage. Older houses in keeping with the character of the community are often leveled and replaced by massive structures that come right up to the property line. Single story houses are replaced by two and three-story houses which stick out from the rest of the neighborhood. Residents who used to be able to use their backyard with the expectation of privacy now find themselves trying to relax in full view of neighbors in taller buildings.

To avoid compounding the problems discussed above, we believe the following requirements should be included in the planning process:

- Height transitions should be utilized when buildings with different heights are adjacent to each other.
- Buildings should step back from the street to reduce scale and increase sidewalk width.
- In residential neighborhoods, heights of new buildings should not exceed the height of existing buildings adjacent or across the street by more than one story.
- When considering reductions in setbacks, it is necessary to demonstrate a pressing need for the reduction, which must be weighed against potential negative impacts, especially with regard to safety.
- Privacy for adjacent residential buildings and yards should be maintained.
- Massing should utilize multiple planes, step-backs and architectural treatments such as recessed windows, columns, moldings and projections.

## **CONCLUSION**

*We do not want to stop development. We want to engage city officials and developers in creating a sustainable future. The Hollywood Community Plan Update was overturned in court, but development has surged ahead with no framework in place. This is unacceptable. We need a new plan, this time based on actual data and realistic assessments of our infrastructure and resources. We insist that planning for Hollywood's future start with the community so that we can ensure sustainable, responsible growth.*