West Hollywood Design District Streetscape Master Plan
Public Space Workshop #1 | Summary of Input from Participants
June 22, 2014 | 1pm – 3:30pm | West Hollywood Library Community Meeting Room

Workshop Overview
On Sunday afternoon, community members, members of the West Hollywood Design District Working Group, and City Commissioners gathered to discuss the design of three new public gathering spaces in the West Hollywood Design District, identified in the Design District Streetscape Master Plan (adopted August 2013 by City Council).

The workshop included:
1. A presentation on the project goals, schedule, and scope, as well as maps of the future public spaces and precedent photos of potential design elements, activities, and programming for public spaces to be considered during the design process.

2. Group Walking Tours. Participants broke into three groups to visit one of the following sites:
   a. Robertson North (between Santa Monica Blvd and Melrose)
   b. Melrose/Norwich (new public space at SE corner of intersection created by right of way realignment along Melrose as part of Streetscape Master Plan)
   c. Beverly/Robertson (new public space to replace surface parking lot in front of Coffee Bean)

3. Break-out Group Discussion and Design Exercise. Following the walking tour, participants discussed the key design goals and concerns for each site, offering suggestions for the future character, uses, and design features for the new public gathering spaces. Participants of the Melrose/Norwich and Beverly/Robertson groups created small scale, 3D site plans of the future public spaces (see photos).

Below is a summary of the input received from the workshop. The consultant team, led by Pat Smith, will develop two potential design schemes for each site based on the input received and engineering analysis and best practices. The City will hold workshops in July and August for the community to provide greater input on these design schemes. For information on future workshops, please check the project website at www.weho.org/designdistrictplan.

Robertson North
Participants discussed their preferences for a variety of design issues, listed below, to create a “flexible festival street” that could be closed at key times to serve as a pedestrian space within the Design District.

1. Segment for Closure: general consensus to close the street from Santa Monica to El Tovar to create a pedestrian space for key events/times.
   a. Interest in traffic study information to understand access requirements to and from public parking structures near library. Could Robertson (between El Tovar and Melrose) be one-way with cars going north on Robertson to access parking and park facilities, while exiting on San Vicente? City Staff explained that two points of access are needed to parking and park facilities, necessitating two-way traffic on Robertson, south of El Tovar.

2. Segment for Special Paving: general consensus to pave street with special treatment from Santa Monica Blvd to Melrose, to “lead” people through the Design District.
   a. Interest in using a variety of materials (not necessarily one single paver) for length of street to create visual interest.
3. **Time of Closure:** general consensus and interest in closing street on Friday and Saturday evenings and potentially Sundays during the day.
   a. Concern for businesses in area and how parking will be addressed during closure hours. Requests to work closely with businesses to develop parking solutions, and address valet parking, taxi drop-off, and loading.

4. **Curb vs Curbless Street:** Lack of consensus regarding curb vs curbless street design along Robertson North. Some participants felt that the cost of creating a curbless street was too great and that project related funds should be allocated to other design features. Others felt that cost should not be an issue for this street as it will serve the city for many decades to come. Most participants felt that a pedestrian-oriented street could work with or without curbs and would like to see how a curbless street would work and better understand the difference in costs and hydrology issues given the high water table in the area.

5. **Widen sidewalks vs. maintain sidewalk width:** Lack of consensus regarding whether design should widen sidewalks, which requires removal of one lane of on-street parking, or maintaining sidewalk width and on-street parking. Some members felt it was important to increase sidewalk space for outdoor dining, landscaping, and more space for pedestrians and that there is sufficient parking in district to accommodate the loss. Others felt that parking loss may hurt small businesses. Some mentioned that parking loss may be fine if it could be “timed” with the creation of new parking as part of new development proposed in area (i.e. Robertson Hotel and Melrose Triangle).

6. **Midblock crossings:** consensus regarding the desire for mid-block crossings along Robertson. The group is interested in a “super-sized” crosswalk between the park and the proposed hotel development on the west side of Robertson. The group would like the large crosswalk to be raised to have a flush edge between the park and the west side of the street. There should be no parking along super crosswalk.
   - Support for an additional mid-block crossing at El Tovar.
   - Interest in using unique paving materials to articulate crosswalks.
   - Crosswalks need to be designed in a way that there is a sense of safety for pedestrians/vehicles.

7. **Paseos** – consensus to encourage pedestrian paseos that connect Robertson North to La Peer. Would like paseos to have active uses (i.e. restaurants, cafes, retail) to make the space inviting and safe for pedestrians.

8. **Sidewalks/Paving:** support for quality paving materials. Interest in contrasting color or textures to accent and differentiate the street from the sidewalk (rather than one consistent material from curb to curb). Interest in artistic, “softer” materials rather than concrete.

9. **Other design elements/concerns**
   - Interest in festival lighting along Robertson North
   - Interest in public restroom(s) in area
   - Interest in seating for people watching
   - Question on whether the utility boxes on SE corner of Robertson and Santa Monica Blvd will be removed during the undergrounding of utilities. Would like these boxes to be removed.
Robertson North presentation.
Robertson North precedent images “liked” by group members.

3rd St. Promenade, Santa Monica, CA
Pedestrian street “works” with curbs

Korea
Like the contrast of paving textures

Bourbon Street, New Orleans, LA
Pedestrian street “works” with curbs

River St., Batavia, IL
Like the contrast of colors

Republic/Marchessault Sts., Los Angeles, CA
Like the “soft” cobblestone texture
Melrose / Norwich

Tour Notes
Vision for space

- More of a passive space or respite
- Garden-like space that you can walk through
- Sense of openness
- Water element
- Creative and sculptural elements
- Trees and/or other shade elements
- Do not want playground equipment
- Do not want restaurant to take over public space
- Concern about encouraging alcohol or noisy people gathering and drinking at night
- Want public benches – artfully done
- Should be open to businesses
- Potential for:
  - Interactive element
  - Introduction to Design District
  - Information incorporated into sculptural elements
- Abate street noise by using berms or water feature
- A place to sit in the grass, there are so few public places to sit in West Hollywood
- Utilize local artists and creative people to help create the park
- Perhaps pavers or sculpture or benches could involve artists
- A movable art show
- Feature rotating art from Art on the Outside
- Elements (trees, sculpture, etc) should not obscure nearby businesses signage
- Not blocking pedestrian or car view of business windows
- Draw business from people walking or driving by
- Flexible, movable seating
- Benches as art pieces
- Enough people to activate rather than have it programmed
- Periodic events
- Passive, yet informative spot
- Design oriented, but natural
- Gathering space could be part of Street Walk
- More green than built up
- Opportunity to help guide visitors
- Use technology (wifi kiosk with downloadable information) to provide an over-arching context of the immediate WeHo neighborhood

Design Exercise Notes
After much discussion the group defined the following as the main characteristics of the Melrose/Norwich gathering space.

- More natural, garden-like, park space
• A natural water feature (with rocks) that flows throughout the site and follows the natural, soft curving path
• The sound of water to travel through the space to abate noise from street traffic
• Individual seating that can be moved throughout the site
• Art-inspired seating
• Informational kiosk that’s connected by wifi
• Artwork featured on a rotational schedule
• Use trees, berms, and planters to create intimate secluded space, yet placement should of these items should not obstruct businesses from pedestrian and car traffic
• Outdoor dining to be limited to City’s allowable space, not to encroach on Gathering Space.
• Use of lighting to keep safe and visible from the street
• Utilize, natural tree canopy for shade rather than other elements (majority agreed on this)
• It should be a place where people can sit and eat lunch
• Natural elements
• Mellower, softer curving pathways
• Clear path(s) to businesses
• Keep restaurant dining next to the building
• Plants that are more structural so it is natural yet look designed
• Path along water
• Low planting and benches along curbside
• Incorporate informational/interactive kiosk into a bench or sculptural element
• Perpendicular planting to not interfere with view of businesses.

Note from others during Design Presentation
• Extend street trees along Melrose on west and east side of Norwich as much as possible to more create canopy
Melrose/Norwich presentation.

Melrose/Norwich Plan – looking south from Melrose, Norwich is on the right.
**Beverly/Robertson**

**Tour Notes**

- Screen adjacent residences visually.
- Replace parking.
- Make sure motorists know they should avoid driving east on Bonner if they are not residents or visitors.
- Buffer Beverly traffic.
- Address neighbors’ concern re: homeless and undesirable night time activity by illuminating the space, keeping it relatively open from Beverly and activating it with tables/chairs that can be used by Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf patrons and the public (like the New York park Shake Shack example) and events.
- The manager of the Leica Gallery met the group on site and shared his concern that there be a clear view of the gallery (including sign) from the street and his willingness to help activate the space by including it in events. Note that Leica occasionally uses the parking lot for the purpose currently but does not like to take the parking away from other businesses. If the parking is replaced with curbside spaces as shown on the plan, Leica will be able to use it more often, recognizing that the outdoor use needs to be respectful of adjacent residents.
- Keep the space open from the two corners, so businesses are visible and the space is inviting.
- A fountain in the middle, aligned with the Leica gallery, could provide a focal point.
- Keep walkway in front of businesses clear and move tables/chairs to the gathering space to activate it.
- A more park-like, soft surface, such as stabilized decomposed granite would distinguish the space from the adjacent sidewalks.
- Look at eliminating eastbound left turn from Beverly to Bonner if neighbors are OK with it.

**Design Exercise Notes**

- Tour comments were reiterated, especially concern for adjacent residents and adjacent businesses.
- Keep in mind sight lines that make the space inviting. There are currently many people who would approach the space on foot from Robertson. There are fewer on Beverly.
- Look at a few options for visually screening the neighboring residences:
  - Berm – after drawing some, concern that they might take up too much space
  - A combined planter wall/berm (straight on one side, sloping on the other
  - A wall or fence with planting
  - A stepped planter, like a corten steel Richard Serra sculpture
  - Cottage garden planting to tie into Robertson and West Hollywood West.
- Look at several means of mitigating traffic noise:
  - Setting uses back from the street
  - A berm with “amphitheater seating” on the back side was considered but dismissed due to concern re: loitering
  - A wall with a sloping lawn on the back side was similarly considered and set aside.
  - A series of water elements that create white noise to mask traffic noise along the entire Beverly frontage but allow people to enter the space. It was noted that a fountain can typically provide this benefit for 15 – 20 feet.
- Place tables/chairs or furniture in a way that makes it obvious that it is public and not just an extension of the Coffee Bean.
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- Shade should be primarily from trees rather than shade structures.
- A double-sided bus shelter so you can face both ways.
- Bike racks (there is already one on site) and a bike repair station (pump and tools) especially since Beverly is proposed to include bike lanes.
- An automatic toilet (like the ones in LA) was suggested; others suggested that the Coffee Bean has a restroom.

Participants drew their own design concepts and then collaborated on a single concept (see below).

_Beverly/Robertson Site Visit_

_Beverly/Robertson Presentation_
Beverly/Robertson Sketches

Beverly/Robertson plan