

City of Beverly Hills Planning Issues Report

This Chapter presents a matrix of the issues identified in the preceding chapters of this Technical Background Report (TBR). The issues presented here, in concert with those identified by the General Plan Topic Committees, represent *opportunities, constraints, challenges, or problems* facing the City of Beverly Hills as related to each of the topical areas to be covered in the General Plan update. The identification and assessment of issues is an important component of the planning process as it provides a basis to target resources towards the goals, policies, and implementation programs that will be incorporated into the updated General Plan.

Table 7-1

Technical Background Report Issues

LAND USE AND URBAN FORM

Land Use

The City has almost no vacant properties. Thus, any additional development will occur as infill or re-use of existing properties. There is particular competition for land in the Industrial Area for a variety of different land uses.

The lot depths of commercial properties in strip locations such as Wilshire, La Cienega, and Robertson Boulevards, S. Beverly Drive and Olympic Boulevard are typically between 100 to 150 feet. Although commercial setbacks and operational restrictions designed to ease transitions between commercial and residential land use are in place, this lot depth constrains the amount of area on a development site that can be devoted to design features intended to provide a buffer between commercial or mixed use development and adjacent residential property.

The desired character of commercial development in the area located east of the Business Triangle along Wilshire Boulevard needs to be more adequately defined.

Wilshire Boulevard is a major commercial street and traffic arterial, however maximum allowable commercial heights are limited to 45 feet or 3 stories, and some adjacent areas zoned for multi-family residential are allowed a higher maximum height and number of stories (55 feet and 5 stories). These height limits are in contrast to one another.

Older, one-story, smaller scale single-family houses are being replaced with much larger, two-story houses, thereby changing the character of these neighborhoods.

Older multi-family residential areas often have inadequate off-street parking.

Although a demand for mixed-use development has been identified, there is very little of this type of development within the City. The City does not have established development standards or a standard practice in place for identifying appropriate locations for mixed-use development.

Property ownership in areas zoned for multi-family residential is generally of single lots. Assembly of sites larger than two lots, thereby making more efficient use of land and resulting in fewer curb cuts, is difficult.

There is little Class A office space with large floor plates, and consequently, certain desirable tenants do not locate in Beverly Hills or leave when they need to expand. There are a large number of older, legally non-conforming office buildings in need of upgrading that exceed the current height restriction. However, reconstruction does not occur because heights and allowable built area are limited to 45 feet or three stories and a floor area ratio of 2.0. The cost to provide the amount of parking required by the zoning code is also a disincentive.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues

Demographics and Housing

The City’s daytime population surpasses its resident population to a significant degree. While this is not uncommon for a major employment center, this situation merits special attention for emergency preparedness and disaster planning efforts by the City’s and other public safety agencies.

The resident population is characterized by a high median age and significant percentage of people over the age of 65. At the same time, the number of very young children has increased significantly over the past 10 years and may continue to grow.

There are significant disparities in household incomes.

There is a significant disparity between the median household income for City residents relative to the cost of housing in the City. This disparity has continued to grow in recent years as housing prices have continued to escalate without comparable increases in income. This is particularly significant for the City’s existing lower income seniors and families with children.

Existing housing product types are generally limited to single family residential (in a wide range of sizes), newer large condominium units in small-scale buildings, and older, under-parked, small-scale apartment buildings. While there are a limited number of anomalous examples, there are no development standards that permit or encourage housing products such as mixed use development, townhouse (row) type development, attached, zero-lot line type units, or large-scale luxury apartments or condominiums.

Conversion of apartments to common interest developments such as stock cooperatives, to the extent that such units are in older buildings with fewer amenities, may accelerate the loss of more affordable apartments, and, depending on how conversions are regulated, will extend the economic life of older more character-defining and possibly under-parked buildings through seismic, life-safety and aesthetic upgrades.

New, large scale single family developments continue to replace older small houses on relatively small lots, changing neighborhood character, although architectural quality is expected to improve due to the recently enacted requirement for design review.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

Water System

By reducing the amount of water used for private and municipal irrigation, the City will help reduce reliance on water imported from MWD.

Locating and permitting additional water facilities is difficult in Beverly Hills. Additional emergency water storage may be required in the future if the criteria change for MWD outages or LADWP emergency supply rates, or if an existing reservoir is removed from service.

In various locations in the City, water lines, fire service lines, and fire hydrants are located in such a way that a failure of water service to an individual hydrant needed to respond to a fire would result in the need for much longer lengths of hose being laid to reach the next nearest hydrant, thereby increasing response time to fires. New water services lines that would permit additional hydrants will require a substantial capital investment.

Sewer/Wastewater

A Wastewater Management Plan is needed to identify the extent of any system deficiencies, identify users, and support long-term capital planning.

As over half of the City’s sewer system is more than fifty years old, the City will likely face regular deficiencies in the system as time progresses.

The Los Angeles RWQCB may require the City to complete a sewer system management plan to address emergency spill response, preventative maintenance program, establish legal authority, and FOG mitigation measures.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues**Storm Drains**

Considering the age of the majority of the City's storm drain facilities, the City may face structural deficiencies in the next two decades. Currently, only a small portion of the system has been visually inspected for deficiencies.

As federal and state stormwater requirements become increasingly strict, it will be more difficult for the City to remain in compliance. There are many unknown cost implications to the new storm water requirements, such as the possibility of treating base flows, that provide a great deal of uncertainty to the City.

Solid Waste

The City may face challenges due to decreasing land fill space and increasing hauling costs, that require a more aggressive approach to decreasing waste and encouraging recycling.

The nearly 40 percent of the City's solid waste that is green landscape material could be reduced through promotion of water-efficient landscape practices.

Electricity

Existing electricity service, which includes transmission lines and substations, may need to be expanded to accommodate additional growth associated with new or expanded development.

The City does not currently have a comprehensive energy conservation program. This could guide the provision of energy as new or expanded development occurs.

Participation in Community Choice Aggregation could increase the percentage of renewable energy over that available from Southern California Edison, including rate setting that would promote conservation.

Natural Gas

Existing natural gas service, which includes transmission and distribution lines, may need to be expanded to accommodate additional growth associated with new or expanded development.

Telecommunications

A new franchise will need to be negotiated with any successor to Adelphia Communications.

Internet services provided through wireless connections are expected to increase in number. The availability of satellite television as an alternative may also have a slight impact on the number of cable television subscribers.

Circulation

Local and destination traffic competes with regional and pass-through traffic in Beverly Hills. A circulation plan that sets goals and provides a program of short- and long-term improvements should be formulated and strategically implemented by decision-makers both independently in the City and in concert with regional partners.

A circulation plan should include a position with regard to expansion of various forms of transit service in Beverly Hills, including enhancements to bus service, bus rapid transit, and extension of the Metro RedLine.

Santa Monica Boulevard congestion must be addressed. The State Route 2 relinquishment to City control and the Santa Monica Boulevard Transit Parkway project present opportunities to develop a circulation plan that would improve traffic flows such as a potential additional westbound lane on the north roadway. The corollary issue is identifying the optimal functional relationship between the north and south roadways of Santa Monica Boulevard and identifying improvements to bring about any changes deemed appropriate by decision-makers.

Monitor traffic flows and any planned transportation improvements to avoid intrusion into residential areas from Wilshire Boulevard. For example, there are concerns with the role of Metro Rapid Bus on Wilshire Boulevard in the event peak hour bus priority lanes are contemplated in the future. Such lanes must be integrated with traffic flow while accommodating stops for passengers, critical left-turn movements, and medians, and avoid impacts of spillover auto traffic into surrounding residential areas.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues

Commuter traffic between the City and the San Fernando Valley using the canyon routes disrupts the residential areas on the northern edge of the City, however, the impact on the streets in the northern area must be taken into consideration when contemplating any improvements for traffic flow in Santa Monica Boulevard, such as reducing the number of closely spaced signals adjacent to the Business Triangle.

Residential neighborhoods continue to experience pressure from the traffic intrusion from regional and other non-local traffic, which could be reduced by encouraging motorists to remain on the primary arterials.

The City is challenged with the ability to provide adequate off-street parking for the Business Triangle while ensuring that the area does not become overbuilt with parking spaces.

The lack of adequate numbers of appropriately priced off-street parking spaces in commercial areas leads to increased congestion from drivers searching for street parking and intrusion into residential areas. Policies are needed to address parking utilization of existing parking (by employees and business patrons) to reduce such congestion and better accommodate parking demand. The impact of parking policies and supply on urban form, character, and land use should be considered, particularly as they affect under-parked, older commercial streets such as Robertson Boulevard, South Beverly Drive, and Olympic Boulevard.

The gap in the bike path on Santa Monica Boulevard should be considered and the City's policy reassessed at such time as planning for improvements to Santa Monica Boulevard takes place.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Education/Schools

All schools within Beverly Hills are currently operating below allowable capacity and the student enrollment is decreasing. As funding from the state is based on average daily attendance (ADA), this decrease in student enrollment impacts the District's revenue.

Parks and Recreation

The City currently does not have a standard or goal for open space-to-population, and is deficient in park acreage according to national standards. Furthermore, future population increases will increase demand on parks and park facilities.

With limited open space in the city, a Park Master Plan of existing facilities and park space, especially for La Cienega and Roxbury Parks, would be instrumental in planning for the future.

Given limited City-owned land available for recreational facilities and open space, the City could explore acquisition of additional sites or facilities if feasible and the properties fit criteria for function, location and cost.

As the City's tree inventory continues to age and decline, continuation with additional phases of the Street Tree Master Plan is warranted.

Libraries

The Library facility on Rexford Drive is approaching the midpoint in the life span of a library facility. Things such as security, storage, general maintenance and electrical, HVAC and other key issues should be addressed to extend the life of the building.

Library staff should be tasked to evaluate collections and services to ensure they are provided consistent with community needs.

The Roxbury Library facility is in poor condition. A facility needs analysis should be considered in conjunction with other services provided at that location.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Plants and Animals

Although the City is essentially built-out, if it was determined that a federally or state-listed species was present in an area, this could impact redevelopment activities within the City.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues**Hydrology and Water Quality**

Increasing urbanization will increase impervious surfaces, increasing stormwater runoff and sedimentation, thereby triggering potential decreases in water quality. Compliance with NPDES permit requirements related to stormwater quality would require implementation of TMDLs by the City, as stormwater discharge and compliance with federal and state regulations are increasing concerns.

It is estimated that less than 10 percent of irrigation and stormwater runoff goes back into the groundwater table in the Los Angeles region. This is not sustainable practice.

Implementation of the Water Efficient Landscape permit requirement, development and dissemination of a water efficient plant list and additional reductions in municipal usage could help in reducing water consumption.

Topography and Hillside

Due to the City's steep hillside and mountainous areas, fire, floods, and landslides propose a hazard for the City. The City currently has mitigation strategies that are outlined in the Municipal Code and 2004 Hazard Mitigation Plan, which need to be implemented and continually updated.

Visual Resources

There is an opportunity for the City and County to jointly nominate Santa Monica Boulevard as a scenic highway under the California Scenic Highway Program. The designation of major scenic roadways that traverse the City could bring benefits such as preservation of the scenic resource, tourism promotion, community image enhancements.

As redevelopment takes place throughout the City, increased densities are likely to occur. Higher densities could lead to obstruction of views.

Air Quality

Lacking any heavy industrial uses, the primary source of air pollutant sources in the City are motor vehicles that travel within the City as well as commuters within the Basin. These emissions could be reduced through planning programs that reduce the length and or number of vehicle trips, and encourage residents to work locally, rideshare, telecommute, or use alternative forms of transportation.

Emissions from motor vehicles owned by residents in the City could be reduced through the promotion of mixed-use development in commercial areas.

Continued development within the City will increase the number of stationary air pollutant sources. These sources are predominantly from construction activities and boilers that provide heat for building structures. These emissions will be limited and regulated by the SCAQMD through their New Source Review (NSR) permitting procedures.

The northern portion of the City (north of Sunset Boulevard) consists predominantly of residential uses that are segregated from the greater mix of land uses in the southern portion of the City. This land use pattern does not allow for pedestrian activity and encourages vehicle use which contributes to vehicle emissions.

Alternative means to meet vehicle power needs continues to develop both from technological and regulatory perspective. As these technologies become more robust and air quality regulations become more consistent, alternative fuel sources will become more economically and operationally viable for both the public and the City. The City has an important supporting role in the use and development of these alternative fuel technologies, but must balance this role with competing needs and services demanded by the public.

It is likely that the number of sensitive receptors in the City will increase with population growth and new development. It will be necessary to identify measures to protect these sensitive receptors and also solutions to reduce local pollution emissions.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues

Historic

There are approximately fifty-six state-registered historical resources, six of which are listed on the National Register.

An established local register of historical resources and an expanded local adopted historic preservation ordinance (i.e., stays of demolition, design guidelines, appropriate treatments) could protect and promote the preservation of the City’s historic resources. Such policies could also contribute to the overall attractiveness of the City to residents, businesses and visitors.

The City is in the process of updating the Historic Resources Survey. The completion of that work may prompt discussion by the community and decision-makers of expanding the scope of promotion of historic preservation in Beverly Hills.

Although there is an informal historical archive maintained in the municipal Library, there is a lack of a formal repository for material such as an ownership history of historically significant commercial and residential buildings within the City. Such a repository, with associated historical photographs, could provide a stronger link between the community and historical resource organizations. Continued indexing of local periodicals such as the Beverly Hills Citizen newspaper, Architectural Record, etc. could improve research and documentation capacity.

The pressure for redevelopment continues to threaten historic residential and commercial structures within the City. A large number of the existing historic areas have been negatively affected by incompatible architectural designs that do not acknowledge the historical context of surrounding development.

Although not all older structures are considered significant historic resources, the City contains many architecturally interesting buildings, such as 9101 Wilshire Blvd., which are unique models that could not be constructed under current development codes.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY

Geology and Mineral Resources

No issues have been identified related to geologic resources.

Extraction at the well site of the City’s mineral resources could be incompatible with future development as well as existing land uses.

Responding to perceived hazards from oil and gas extraction activities regardless of merit can require significant resources.

Mineral resource extraction, over the long term, could become economically infeasible.

Seismic Hazards

The City of Beverly Hills is located within a seismically active region. Therefore, existing and future developments within the City are likely to be subject to potential seismic hazards, including subsidence, landsliding, and liquefaction depending on their location.

Implementation of improvements identified in the 1998-99 building inventory will reduce risk associated with seismic hazards, however appropriate analysis of cost-benefits needs to be undertaken and policy direction provided from decision-makers before implementation can occur.

Flood Hazards

Beverly Hills is highly urbanized and as a result of increased paving, can lead to an increase in volume and velocity of runoff after a rainfall event, exacerbating the potential flood hazards. The City’s steep hillside areas are also more susceptible to runoff. New development in these areas will require stricter grading, soil compaction, maximum slope and drainage regulations.

With the completion of the upgrade to the Holly Hills drainage system, modifications easing construction restrictions in the City’s flood zone may be warranted.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues**Fire Hazards**

There are two high-rise (75 feet or higher) multi-family residential buildings on North Oakhurst Drive in the City that do not have a fire sprinkler system, which is a potential fire hazard and potential loss of life for the City.

Flammable wood roofs in Beverly Hills are numerous and expansive in volume. Many contain too much exposure for an engine company to handle. Under current conditions, flammable wood roofs will be a significant problem during a wildfire. Currently, an ordinance requires that all non Class A roof coverings be replaced by the year 2013. An accelerated plan for replacement of these roofs will make the community safer, sooner.

Wild land fires that occur during high winds and/or low humidity conditions can create a situation beyond the capabilities of the City's available fire fighting force. Under these conditions it would become necessary to activate the state Mutual Aid System.

Evacuation of hillside homes could be difficult to coordinate in a timely manner due to terrain, narrow streets, and population density and has the potential of delaying ingress and deployment of fire resources.

Water supply, both in terms of volume and pressure, is always a critical factor in fighting fires and particularly in keeping fires in the wildland/urban interface areas manageable by initial attack forces. Generally speaking, the water supply to most areas of the City is very good, however an area of concern is the area served by Zone 9. This area is known to have insufficient gallons per minute fire flow and plans are being developed to improve the flow capacity and reliability to this area.

The current requirement of 100 feet of brush clearance from structures needs to be increased, possibly to 200 feet, to increase defensible space around structures in the VHFHSZ.

Hazardous Materials

With increased development, there is an increased potential danger to the population from hazardous waste/material transportation through the City.

Police Services

Recruitment. The Department is experiencing close to 10 percent retirement rate each year of its sworn personnel and in the next few years, 80 percent of its management staff will be eligible for retirement. The Department is challenged to continue its aggressive recruitment efforts to hire exceptional sworn personnel despite a shrinking pool of eligible applicants and competition from other law enforcement agencies for the same applicant group.

Technology. The advent of new technology has changed the way law enforcement polices. The Department is challenged to keep up with technological changes, and obtaining funding to keep pace with technology.

Terrorism. Homeland Security demands and preventing acts of terrorism remains a high priority. The Department is challenged to maintain increased demands for police service which emphasizes terrorism preparedness.

Fire Protection

The number of EMS calls that the department handles are ever increasing while at the same time, hospitals and emergency rooms in the Southern California region continue to close. Ambulances transporting patients to those hospitals that remain open are experiencing longer wait times and are therefore out of service and unavailable for other calls for longer periods.

Emergency Preparedness

The impact of incremental new development needs to be considered and mitigated by current emergency and hazard management systems. This includes the location and impact of new structures, land uses, and people.

Table 7-1 (continued) Technical Background Report Issues

Noise

New development will likely further increase the number of noise sources within the City. The primary source of increased noise levels will be motor vehicles associated with this new development.

Noise generated by new development can be addressed through building siting, design, and construction.

Increased noise levels at existing noise sensitive uses, particularly residential units located in close proximity to roadways, can be addressed through the implementation of measures to mitigate these impacts. This could include use of construction methods such as wall insulation and double-glazed windows in new construction or remodeled units.

Encourage alternative solutions to sound walls.

In any planning for future improvements to Santa Monica Boulevard, take into consideration ways to mitigate any increases in noise levels or opportunities to reduce existing noise levels, in ways that are aesthetically compatible with Beverly Gardens Park and the residential area immediately to the north.
