

WLASNC Board FY 2022-2023

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Planning Dept.

Re: Resolution: West LA Community Plan update - revisions to proposed Commercial zoning

To the City,

At the Jun. 28, 2023, meeting of the West Los Angeles Sawtelle N.C., the Board of Directors voted 10-0-0, to request the following revisions to the West LA Community Plan Update's proposed Commercial Zoning Standards, and authorize the Chair to submit a Community Impact Statement:

1. The base zoning height is too large, and developers can build large buildings without having to provide affordable housing.
 - a. For example, Santa Monica Blvd. would allow 6-story buildings with no affordable housing. Developers will simply build that by-right with Type III or V wood construction (the cheapest type). Increasing to 8 stories requires 3 stories of concrete, which is expensive, and the bonuses that require affordable housing may not make that additional cost feasible.
 - b. In the current code, 6-story buildings are allowed only with affordable units, so 11-15% affordable units are provided. The new code would eliminate this requirement, and 6-story buildings would not be required to provide any affordable units.
2. The incentives are massive. They should be reduced per below, or the required affordable housing must be very high -- much more than today's required 11-15%. An incentive to increase height from 3 stories to 8 stories is a 160% increase.
 - a. For these massive incentives, the minimal affordable housing requirement should be 25% (very low-income units, sliding scale).
 - b. Or, the incentives should be reduced, per below.
3. The FARs are massive, and will prevent trees from being planted on the site and prevent public plazas or open space at ground level.
 - a. A 5-story building with a 3.0 FAR can expand to 5-ft setbacks on all sides, which prevents any trees from being planted onsite, and no plazas, parklets or open space onsite.
 - b. Lot coverage maximums should be proposed (70-75%) to ensure that trees can be planted and open space can be provided at ground level.
 - i. Buildings can cantilever over portions of the open space above the 3rd story, to provide shade, but should not inhibit trees from growing tall.
4. The building breaks should be widened. A 15-ft break with 5-8-story walls on each side is imposing and thin.

- a. 15-ft breaks should be widened to 25 ft.
- b. 30-ft breaks should be widened to 45 ft.
- 5. The length of building that requires a break should be reduced.
 - a. 140-ft buildings should be reduced to 120-ft. length.
 - b. 160-ft buildings should be reduced to 130-ft. length.
 - c. 210-ft buildings should be reduced to 175-ft. length.
- 6. Rear setbacks of 10 ft. should be required, especially along alleys with residential across the alley.
 - a. All concrete and pavement creates noise and pollution. Trees soften the impact, clean the air, and provide beauty.
- 7. Rear setbacks should be required – 10 ft. for every story about the 2nd story, 50% on top 2 stories.
- 8. Frontages should mandate:
 - a. Corner plazas (30 x 30 ft so seating, trees and fountains can be installed).
 - b. Notches (10x10 ft) for trees to be planted onsite.
 - i. Street trees alone are insufficient for a green Los Angeles.
- 9. Open space and public parklets should be provided in side or rear yards.
- 10. Residential can be designed like brownstones/townhouses with stoops and direct access to the sidewalk, which provides good natural surveillance and reduces crime.
- 11. Eldercare and senior center facilities should be provided in all land uses.
- 12. The cultural heritage of the Sawtelle commercial district shall be preserved and enhanced.

Findings and justifications:

- 1. This upzoning is a step in the right direction, because the city should channel housing to the commercial corridors (per 2 previous WLASNC resolutions).
- 2. As a corresponding step, upzoning to R1 and R2 should be eliminated in the proposed Residential zoning standards.

WEST LOS ANGELES Proposed Draft General Plan Land Uses (GPLU)

Proposed GPLU & Subareas	Proposed Density Base	Proposed Height Base (Stories/Feet)	Proposed Height Bonus (Stories/Feet)	Proposed FAR Base (Floor Area Ratio)	Proposed FAR Bonus (Floor Area Ratio)
Neighborhood Center					
WLA: 35, 36, 37, 38, 39	8	3	5	1.5	3.0
Villages					
WLA: 40	4	3	8	1.5	5.0
Community Center					
WLA: 41, 42	4	6	8	3.5	5.0
WLA: 43, 44, 45	4	Unlimited	Unlimited	3.5	5.0
Regional Center					
WLA: 46	FA	Unlimited	Unlimited	6.0	8.5

Regional Center: Wilshire Blvd. (#46)

Base zoning: Unlimited height (skyscraper), 6.0 FAR.

With bonuses: Unlimited height (skyscraper), 8.5 FAR.

Reduce to: 7.0 FAR. 75% lot coverage.

Regional Center areas function as hubs of regional commerce and activity, and are usually located near major transportation hubs or along major transportation corridors. The building form ranges from Mid Rise to High Rise, with active shopfronts and active streets. Regional Centers typically provide a significant number of jobs, in addition to residential, retail, government, entertainment and cultural facilities, and health facilities on a regional scale. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 400 square feet (R4) of lot area to 1 unit per 200 square feet (R5) of lot area; residential density may also be limited by floor area.

Community Center: Olympic Blvd. (#44)

Base zoning: Unlimited height, 3.5 FAR.

With bonuses: Unlimited height, 5.0 FAR.

Reduce to: 12 stories with 50% stepback on 8th-12th floors. 3.5 FAR. 70% lot coverage.

Community Center: Santa Monica Blvd. (#41)

Base zoning: 6 stories, 3.5 FAR.

With bonuses: 8 stories, 5.0 FAR.

Reduce to: 7 stories with 50% stepback on 6th & 7th floors. 3.25 FAR. 70% lot coverage.

Community Centers are vibrant places of activity typically located along commercial corridors, in concentrated nodes, or adjacent to major transit hubs. The building form ranges from Low Rise to Mid Rise, and may extend to Moderate Rise in the Downtown Community Plan. The use range is broad and may include commercial, residential, institutional facilities, cultural and entertainment facilities, and neighborhood-serving uses. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 800 square feet of lot area (R3) to 1 unit per 200 square feet (R5) of lot area; residential density may also be limited by floor area.

Villages: Pico Blvd. (#40)

Base zoning: 3 stories, 1.5 FAR.

With bonuses: 8 stories, 3.0 FAR.

Reduce to: 6 stories with 50% stepback on 5th & 6th floors. 3.0 FAR. 70% lot coverage.

Villages are characterized by walkable and fine-grained block patterns that serve as historic and cultural regional niche market destinations. The building form is Very Low Rise, Low Rise, or Mid Rise, and typically includes a height limit for uniform building mass. Commercial uses, such as restaurants, retail, services, and small offices may be interspersed with a range of housing types; commercial uses on the ground floor help promote a pedestrian atmosphere. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings and infill development is responsive to the historic and cultural legacy of these areas. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 1,200 square feet (RD1.5) of lot area to 1 unit per 200 square feet (R5) of lot area; the residential density of Villages that are close to transportation hubs and/or Regional Centers may be limited by floor area.

Neighborhood Center: Sawtelle Blvd. (#39)

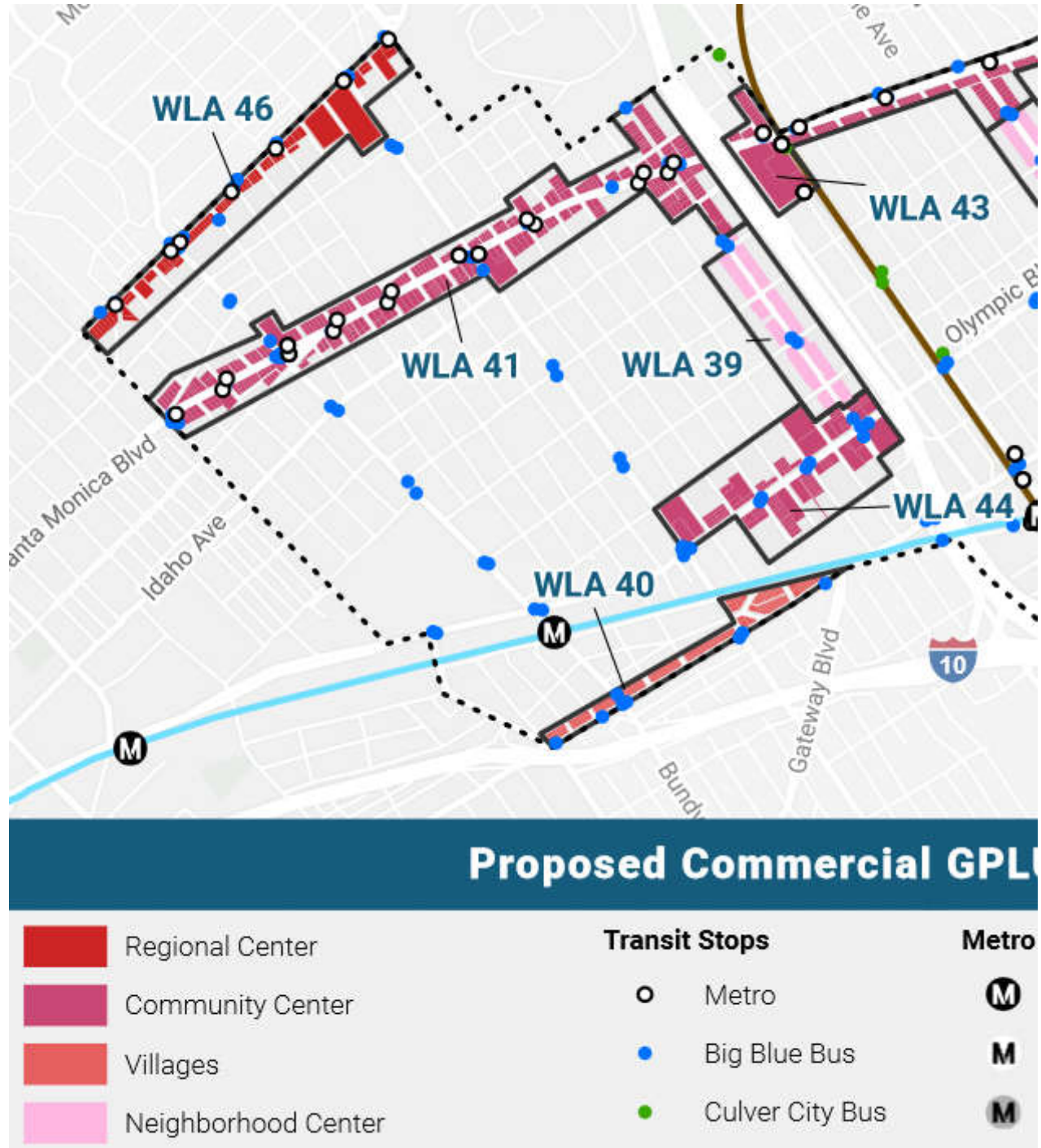
Base zoning: 3 stories, 1.5 FAR.

With bonuses: 5 stories, 3.0 FAR.

Reduce to: 4 stories with 50% rear stepback for 4th floor. 2.75 FAR. 70% lot coverage.

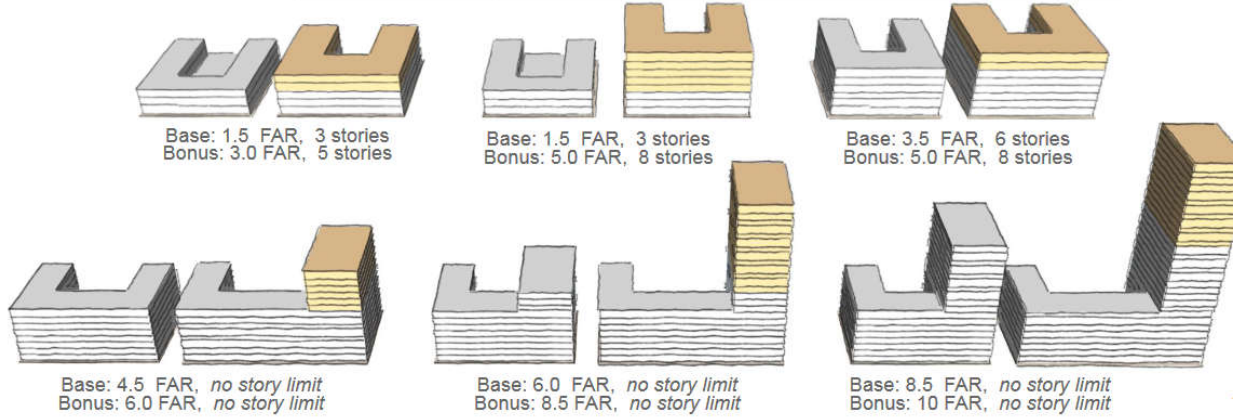
Neighborhood Center areas are focal points for surrounding residential neighborhoods and

include uses that serve the needs of residents and employees. The building form ranges from Very Low Rise to Low Rise, and is characterized by pedestrian-scale commercial development. Uses generally include a mix of residential and commercial uses, such as local businesses and services. The residential density generally ranges from 1 unit per 1,200 square feet (RD1.5) of lot area to 1 unit per 400 square feet of lot area (R4).



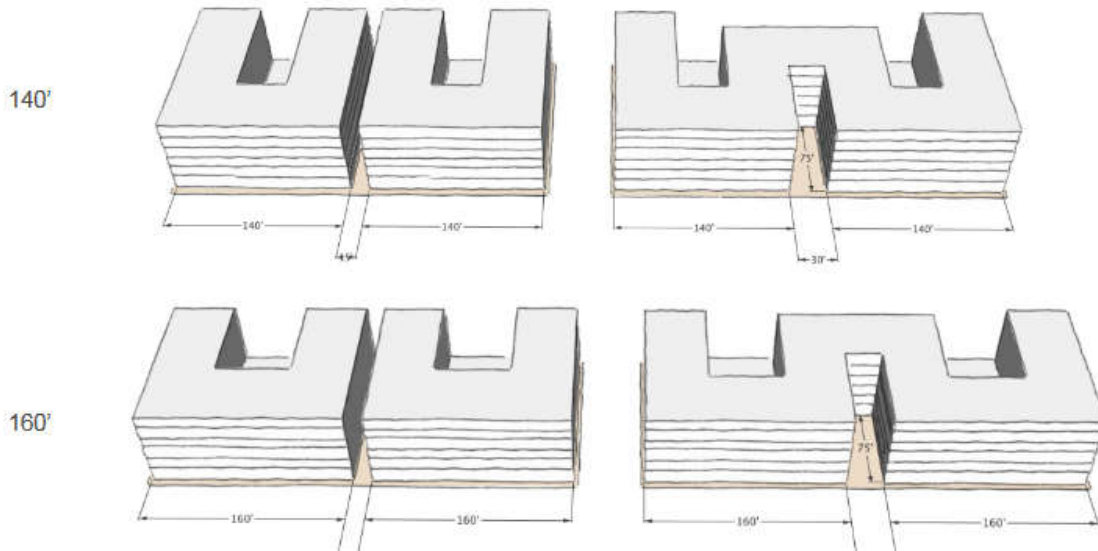
FAR & Height Options:

FORM							
FAR Base	1.5	1.5	3.5	3.5	4.5	6.0	8.5
FAR Bonus	3.00	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	8.5	10
Height Base	3 stories	3 stories	6 stories	unlimited	7 stories	unlimited	unlimited
Height Bonus	5 stories	8 stories	8 stories	unlimited	15 stories	unlimited	unlimited



Building Width Options:

FORM			
Building Width Base	140'	160'	210'
Building Width Bonus	160'	210'	280'



To government agencies: Only the Chair and designated Boardmembers may testify to public agencies on behalf of the West L.A. Sawtelle NC. The Board requests that the Council Office and private/non-profit entities do not testify or speculate on behalf of the NC.

/s/ Walton Chiu

Walton Chiu, Chair WLASNC

cc: Michael Amster, Gabriela Medina, Jeff Khau, Council District #11