

Feedback Summary

Community Open House

(Community Workshop #1)

CONTEXT & PURPOSE

On behalf of the City of West Hollywood (“City”), Gensler and Designing in Color held a **Community Open House** at **Kings Road Park** on **March 2, 2024**. This was the first of three community workshops planned as part of the WeHo 40 Strategic Plan development process. The Open House served as the public launch of WeHo 40 and was also the project team’s first opportunity to hear and collect feedback from the broader community.

The primary purpose of this event was to publicize the strategic planning effort, generate excitement and awareness for future community engagement activities, and to collect additional feedback that will allow the project team to assess the validity of key themes and issues that Gensler has identified to-date.

During the event, participants were invited to learn more about the project and leave feedback at several informational stations, each with a particular focus. WeHo 40 project team members were present at each station to hear directly from community members and answer questions about the project. Community members were also invited to participate in ongoing Griot Circle conversations, which included a mix of community members and project team members. This document summarizes feedback gathered during these activities.

Prior to this workshop, Designing in Color and Gensler also engaged individuals and community organizations for preliminary feedback in two separate forums: the Action Team and Core Coalition, both of which were organized by Designing in Color in consultation with the City. Feedback from those meetings as well as Gensler’s previous engagements with City staff informed the format, content, and activities at this Open House.

STATION #1: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE/ACTIVITY IN WEHO?

Participants were asked to call out their favorite places or activities within WeHo by marking them on a map of the City.

KEY FINDINGS

Comments left by community members indicate a strong sense of civic pride and a deep appreciation for the city’s community gathering spaces and urban amenities.

- **Public open/green spaces and the community events hosted at these venues** were the most frequently noted by a fairly wide margin. Specific places mentioned include West Hollywood Park, Plummer Park, the Library, dog parks, and recreational spaces like pickleball courts received several mentions. Popular events included farmers markets, jazz concerts, and Drag Story Hour at West Hollywood Library, all of which received special mentions.
- **Restaurants, cafes, bars, and other local businesses**, ranging from gay bars to Russian bakeries, were marked as favorites by a number of participants; many offered personal anecdotes or noted deep personal significance of such spaces.

- Community resources like the Log Cabin and the Recovery Center were recognized as vital assets for public assistance and community support. These facilities play a crucial role in enhancing the well-being and resilience of WeHo residents.



FULL COMMENT SET

The table below includes all comments posted, which were transcribed from hand written sticky notes.

Comment	Category
1 Bars during the day with baby	Restaurants/Bars, Inclusivity & Diversity
2 Drag Story Hour at the Library	Community Amenities/Event, Inclusivity & Diversity
3 Rocco's	Restaurants/Bars
4 Pickleball Courts are great	Community Amenities/Event
5 WeHo Pool	Community Amenities/Event
6 Hanging at the amazing WeHo Library	Community Amenities/Event
7 WeHo Dog Park	Community Amenities/Event
8 Log Cabin and Recovery Center	Public Assistance
9 Turf for dogs	Community Amenities/Event
10 Dog park for different sizes	Community Amenities/Event
11 Bike lane appreciated but could be better	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure
12 Housing Works participant Deborah Leigh Stevens	Community Organizations, Public Assistance
13 Historic Sunset clubs and music history	Culture/History

14	Public art and median displays	Culture/History
15	Walking everywhere	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure
16	Dream Catcher art installation	Culture/History
17	Sunset on Santa Monica Boulevard	Culture/History
18	Formosa Pocket Park	Community Amenities/Event
19	Dog Parks preferably with turf rather than wood chips	Community Amenities/Event
20	Restaurants	Restaurants/Bars
21	Neighborhood parks	Community Amenities/Event
22	Jazz concerts at King's Road Park	Community Amenities/Event
23	Farmers' market on Sundays	Community Amenities/Event
24	Norm's restaurant	Restaurants/Bars
25	A government that listens to residents	Citizen Engagement, Accountability to People
26	City Hall	Citizen Engagement
27	Small Town feel – Worldwide concerns = WeHo	
28	Out of the Closet	Retail
29	Plummer Park – mixes green with historic buildings	Community Amenities/Event
30	Plummer Park – What a real park should look like	Community Amenities/Event
31	Pedestrianize fountains	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure
32	Russian Bakeries – a great thing!	Retail, Culture/History
33	Ysabel restaurant	Restaurants/Bars
34	WeHo Rec Center and Pool	Community Amenities/Event
35	Love living in WeHo – Affordable and Safe	Affordability/Attainability
36	Love living in WeHo – Affordable and Safe	Public Safety
37	Plummer Park Pickleball Court	Community Amenities/Event
38	Javista	Restaurants/Bars
39	Displacement – razing of apartments	Justice/Support for People
40	Need parking	Motorized Vehicle Infrastructure
41	Need protected bike lanes	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure
42	Plummer Park – lots of community events and outreach, farmers' market, beautiful space	Community Amenities/Event
43	Plummer Park – Farmers' market	Community Amenities/Event
44	Community Center – Enjoys activities and community meetings	Community Amenities/Event
45	WeHo gateway businesses	Support for Economy
46	Walkability	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure
47	Safer Bike infrastructure	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Public Safety
48	Keeping people safe at crosswalks	Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Public Safety

COMMENT COUNT BY CATEGORY

Category	Count
Community Amenities/Event	19
Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure	7
Restaurants/Bars	6
Culture/History	5
Citizen Engagement	2
Retail	2
Community Assistance	1
Community Organizations	1
Affordability/Attainability	1
Public Safety	1
Justice/Support for People	1
Motorized Vehicle Infrastructure	1
Support for Economy	1
Public Assistance	1
Inclusivity & Diversity	2
Accountability to People	1

STATION #2: WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF WEHO?

Participants were asked to articulate their individual future visions for the City of West Hollywood through one or more of the following methods: illustrating a mock social media post, writing “headlines from the future,” or making a video recording.

KEY FINDINGS

This activity elicited a wide range of enthusiastic and creative responses. Viewed as a whole, the sentiments expressed generally relate to one or more of the following broad aspirations:

- A model for inclusivity and equity.** Specific supporting elements mentioned include mixed-use neighborhoods, affordable housing, livable wages, and the protection and empowerment of underserved communities. Many also point to the need for inclusive spaces and policies that consider the needs of a broader range of identities, age groups, and household types.
- Community well-being, supported by essential social services.** Specific services mentioned include access to food banks, guaranteed income for aging individuals, and assistance for unhoused, disabled, and other underserved communities.
- A beacon of arts and culture.** Several comments focused on arts and cultural events or assets, including live performances, the City’s historical archives, eateries, entertainment venues, a thriving theater scene, and maker spaces.

- **High-quality and safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.** Some would like to see a future West Hollywood that is even more walkable and safer for non-motorized modes of transportation. Specific suggestions included the closure of streets for pedestrian-only use and the creation of more alleyways and green corridors.
- **A leader in urban sustainability.** Specific suggestions include sustainable housing to mitigate CO2 emissions, more trees, achieving 100% carbon neutrality, and transitioning to alternative energy sources.
- **A magnet for the next generation of young talent.** This would entail a vibrant arts and culture landscape, world-class micro-mobility and public transportation infrastructure, and an abundance in urban amenities, like nightlife, bars/restaurants, and entertainment.

HEADLINES FROM THE FUTURE

Headlines	Themes
WeHo Provides Food Banks for Everyone	<i>Support for People, Great Services, Community Well-being</i>
Guaranteed Income Available for WeHo Older Adults	<i>Support for People, Aging in Place, Community Well-being</i>
West Hollywood embarks on sustainable Housing to Reduce CO2 Emissions!	<i>Environment & Sustainability, Housing Policy</i>
Neighborhood for Everyone, Not a Selective Neighborhood	<i>Diversity & Inclusivity</i>
WeHo is an International Leader in Protecting and Empowering Trans Rights to Live Safe Happy and Vibrant Lives	<i>Diversity & Inclusivity, Community Well-being, Support for People</i>
West Hollywood is the World's Most Racially Diverse City in the U.S.	<i>Diversity & Inclusivity</i>
Alleyways and Green Corridors with Micro-Retail (Mom & Pop Shops) and Pedestrian Friendly Streets	<i>Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Great Services, Support for Local Businesses & Economy</i>
WeHo Lowers Small Business Expected Permits and Fees	<i>Support for Local Businesses & Economy</i>
WeHo Increases Mixed-use Communities	<i>Diversity & Inclusivity, Support for Local Businesses & Economy, Great Services</i>
WeHo Plants More Palm Trees	<i>Environment & Sustainability</i>
WeHo Brings Back Founding Visions and Values to Serve Underserved Communities	<i>Support for People</i>
WeHo Introduces More Live Performances and Monthly Events	<i>History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment</i>
Every Block in WeHo is 100% Carbon-Neutral	<i>Environment & Sustainability</i>
WeHo: A Place Where Everyone Wants to Live	<i>Diversity & Inclusivity, City Identity</i>
WeHo Opens Its Own History Archives	<i>History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment, City Identity</i>
WeHo: Safest, No Unhoused, Biker Friendly, Inclusive City in the County; Other Cities Follow its Footsteps	<i>Support for People, Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Diversity & Inclusivity, Community Well-being</i>
WeHo Introduces More Pickleball Courts	<i>Public Amenities & Events</i>
WeHo Pioneers Equal Pay Initiative, Ensuring Livable Wage for All Residents	<i>Support for People, Community Well-being</i>
WeHo Builds Affordable Housing Units for Disabilities, LGBT, and Chronically Homeless Populations	<i>Support for People, Aging in Place, Housing Policy, Diversity & Inclusivity, Community Well-being</i>

New Affordable Housing Units to House Older Adults Experiencing Chronic Homelessness in West Hollywood	<i>Aging in Place, Housing Policy, Diversity & Inclusivity</i>
WeHo is Abundant Housing	<i>Housing Policy, Affordability</i>
WeHo Rediscovered Its Roots.. Becomes More Affordable for Everyone	<i>Affordability, Support for People</i>
No More Human Beings Sleeping on the Streets	<i>Support for People, Community Well-being</i>
Deal with Homeless but Differentiate Between Hard Luck and Mental Illness - 2 Causes of Homelessness That are Conflated All the Time	<i>Community Well-being, Support for People</i>
Metro Light Rails Opens in WeHo	<i>Public Transportation</i>
WeHo is the Front Runner of Alternative Energy	<i>Environment & Sustainability</i>
WeHo is a Great Place to Live: Many Eateries and Entertainment	<i>History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment, Great Services</i>
WeHo Opens A New Maker Space for Residents	<i>Public Amenities & Events, Great Services</i>
New LGBTQ Theatre Opens	<i>History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment</i>
WeHo Celebrates City PlayHouse Success	<i>History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment, Entertainment</i>
WeHo Welcomes All Family-Oriented Couples and Establishes Kid-Friendly Activities with Historic Activities	<i>Diversity & Inclusivity, History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment</i>
WeHo Celebrated as a Haven For Mobility for Young and Old	<i>Public Transportation, Aging in Place, Diversity & Inclusivity</i>
WeHo is a Safe Space	<i>Urban Village, Diversity & Inclusivity</i>
WeHo Celebrates 40 Years of Unique Urban Balance: Residential Neighborhoods and Profitable Businesses	<i>Urban Village, Great Services</i>
New School District Opens with Middle and High School	<i>Education, Young Population</i>
Santa Monica Boulevard becomes a Complete Street - Pedestrians, Bicycles and Micromobility Only!	<i>Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Urban Village</i>
WeHo Wins Award for the Safest and Most Walkable City	<i>Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Urban Village, City Identity</i>
WeHo has Great Dog Parks with Astro Turf	<i>Public Amenities & Events</i>
Santa Monica Boulevard Closes to Vehicles	<i>Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Urban Village</i>
We Preserve So Many Rent Stabilized Unit Units in Our City.	<i>Environment & Sustainability</i>
In 2040, West Hollywood Is Going to Be the Area for Affordable Housing on Catering to Populations of the Disabled, LGBT Plus, as Well as the Chronically Displaced Populations.	<i>Housing Policy, Community Well-being</i>
In 25-26 Years I See WeHo as Being a City That Is Welcoming to All. Even if You're if You Fall on Part Times and You Come on, House WeHo Isn't the City That's Going to Turn His Head and Not Feed You and Not Help You Find Solutions.	<i>Housing Policy, Support for People</i>
If You Have a Substance Abuse Problem Because of Stress, We Hold the City That's Going to Help You Work These Problems Out.	<i>City Identity, Support for People</i>
In 2040, West Hollywood Will Be a Place Where People Will Feel Safe Bicycling on the Streets and Using Many Alternative Forms of Transportation to Get Around.	<i>Support for People, Community Well-being</i>

In 2040 I Imagine That West Hollywood Will Be a Place Where a Lot of People Want to Move, Including and Especially Young People.	<i>Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure, Public Transportation</i>
A Bespoke and Specially Designed City, Being Cutting Edge and Being a Place Where Young People Can See Themselves	<i>City Identity, Young Population</i>
A Place That Prioritizes Modes of Getting Around That Aren't Car Centric	<i>Young Population, City Identity</i>
West Hollywood With Its Combination of Like Entertainment and Nightlife and Restaurants and Infrastructure, I Think You Know Making It the Kind of Place Where We Can Grow and Adapt to a Growing Population and Rising Demand	<i>Public Transportation, Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure</i>
In 2040, West Hollywood Is Going to Set the Standards of What It Takes to Get Human Beings off the Streets and into Housing and into Housing Options Here in West Hollywood Instead of Moving Them out of the Area.	<i>Great Services, City Identity</i>
In 2040, West Hollywood Will Be a Place Where There Will Be No More Human Beings Sleeping on the Streets or in a Place Not Meant for Human Habitation.	<i>Support for People, Community Well-being, Housing Policy</i>

COMMENT COUNTY BY CATEGORY

Category	Count
Support for People	15
Community Well-being	12
Diversity & Inclusivity	11
History, Arts & Culture, Entertainment	6
Great Services	7
Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure	7
Urban Village	5
City Identity	7
Environment & Sustainability	5
Aging in Place	4
Housing Policy	7
Support for Local Businesses & Economy	3
Public Amenities & Events	3
Affordability	2
Public Transportation	4
Education	1
Entertainment	1
Young Population	3

STATION #3: HOW WELL IS WEHO LIVING UP TO ITS CORE VALUES?

This station was a modified version of an exercise completed by the City Executive Team. Community members were asked to evaluate the degree to which they feel the City's actions and initiatives are in support of its Core Values.

KEY FINDINGS (BY CORE VALUE)**Respect and Support for People**

- Some residents express concerns about a lack of respect toward persons experiencing homelessness, but many also see the City's social service offerings as robust, albeit underutilized.
- The issue of wages is also viewed as a matter of respect and support for individuals. Some advocate for equitable pay for social service workers, aligning with the compensation levels of City employees.
- City programs noted as strengths or otherwise positive include Block by Block, the 311 hotline, residential inspection initiatives, and sidewalk maintenance.
- Some feel that the City is not inclusive, with queer spaces noted specifically for being overwhelmingly catered to cisgender gay men.

Responsiveness to the Public

- Residents generally understand that the City is committed to fostering public participation, and some commended the City's creative approaches to engage its residents more effectively.
- Others feel that the City should empower residents to exert more influence over decision-making through special panels or boards.
- Establishing committees like the Social Justice Advisory Board reflects the city's progress in the right direction. However, the length of time required for implementing recommendations and suggestions is seen as hindering meaningful change.
- Some feel that the city tends to favor landowners over renters.

Idealism, Creativity, and Innovation

- Many prize the sense of belonging that the City offers.
- Some point to the City's public spaces and public art programs as strengths that set a high standard for neighboring cities.

Quality Of Residential Life

- Walkability and high-quality urban amenities, which includes both public open spaces/facilities as well as private establishments, were frequently cited strengths.
- Cost of housing remains a challenge; some point to the need for expanded/continued rent control laws and increased housing construction to achieve affordability.
- The impacts of demolishing older housing stock, especially on the east side, should be more carefully considered and/or managed.
- Some are advocating for the creation of additional public spaces, such as parks.

Promote Economic Development

- Residents value the city's proximity to neighboring amenities, along with the diverse offerings within the city itself. From the vibrant Farmers' Market at Melrose Place to a bustling nightlife scene and community-centered spaces such as the aquatic center, residents enjoy a wide array of experiences right at their doorstep.
- Concerns arise as commercial and storefront vacancies become more conspicuous, prompting a call for urgent action to address business community issues.

- Specific suggestions include monetary support for local businesses, clustering businesses for better visibility, and a vacancy tax to incentivize faster leasing of empty storefronts.

Public Safety

- Most safety issues raised revolve around public infrastructure, emphasizing the need for well-maintained sidewalks, safe pedestrian crossings, and improvements to crosswalk safety and overall traffic management for both motorized and non-motorized modes.
- Many feel that West Hollywood stands out as a safe place to live compared to other cities. However, concerns have surfaced regarding personal and property safety, fueled by perceptions of an increase in incidents like break-ins.
- Unhouse persons suffering from substance abuse disorders or mental illness are cited as a major public safety challenge; some feel that social services need to be made more visible.

Responsibility for the Environment

- Suggested areas for improvement include implementing more green building retrofits, reducing motor traffic, and addressing mosquito-related concerns.



GRIT CIRCLE

The Griot Circle was small group, “drop-in” conversation, facilitated by Designing in Color. This provided an opportunity for community members to interact with and learn more from members of Action Team, Core Coalition, and project team.

City Quality of life Has diminished.

- Traffic and new development are an issue.
- Some residents think the city only wants to work with developers which makes it more difficult for people to live here because of the cost of rent.
- The city has evolved over time.
 - There is no free parking like there used to be.
 - There is not enough public transportation.

Safety and Wellbeing

- The city needs a more progressive way of policing that maintains equitable interactions that do not lead to harassment of historically targeted people of policing.
- The use of drones or other digital surveillance could be used to make people safe.

Housing

- Holloway Housing Project
- Who gets to live here?
- The factors that determine who live here aren't clear to some people.
- Some people seem to think that the selection process is not targeting those who need it instead it's going to people with substance and mental health issues.
- This process in general is not transparent enough or the information is not available.

Cost of living

- Affordable housing and the availability of it does not seem to be a transparent process.
- Rent control is only available in buildings built before July 1, 1979.
 - This limits the amount of people who have access to controlled rent.
 - Overall this makes rents way too damn high.
- There needs to be housing for more people who work in the city and are essential workers or are apart of labor unions
 - These people shouldn't have to travel far to get to the city
 - Can some of the housing projects that are coming online not only target lower-income rents but also those who commute long distances
- Housing Developments should better resemble existing neighborhoods and not foreign highrise towers that are out of context
- Historic Preservation with New Development should be balanced to preserve the distance feeling of smaller-scale neighborhoods
- The city is slowly meeting its quota of housing in the city but has fallen short for many years to meet the housing element
- Affordable renting locations for non-profits is also an issue in the city, non-profits that provide essential services to residents can find space to operate their work

Aging in Place

- The city needs to define better how to protect rent-controlled residents, especially since the city was founded on renter rights
- The Aging In Place 2020 vision plan should be taken into account for this new strategic plan
- Some residents are coming out of retirement to afford living in the city or have no plan to retire because of the cost of housing
- Some elderly residents can't find a job at local restaurants and businesses because of ageism, which is a real issue in the city that branded youth
- Aging at work is a real problem some people cannot find work in the city, it's a big issue

Inclusive spaces

- The availability of inclusive spaces is tied to affordability, if the city is not affordable to live, play, or work in then it will not attract other races or identities
- City needs to do more targeted outreach to people of color and other groups to make them feel included in the city
 - This may include events outside of pride and other gatherings the city is known for
 - Better communication tactics for engaging different types of people in the city would be useful, especially in sharing city services
- Visitors of the city who come for entertainment make the city appear to be more inclusive than it is (compared to those who are residents and live in the city)
- There needs to be more outreach to black and brown organizations in and outside of the city
- Accountability and proof of that to residents especially those who are immigrants and seen as outsiders are important to foster a supportive community

Childcare

- More affordable childcare should be accessible in the city
- The city does provide some plumber parks in other areas but it does not seem to be available
- Can the Kings Road community building be of more service to the community?
 - It tends to be dormant and unused for a lot of the year
 - Can it be available for more community-related services? Such a daycare

Governance

- Voting turnout in the city is poor
- All people who run for election should be given equal access to resources to run their campaign to make the candidate have an equal shot so it's not based on wealth but instead the quality of the candidate
- The idea of neighborhood councils in WeHo, similar to LA, could be a good idea to adopt to

allow smaller populations throughout the city to vote based on their location and demographics

- Smaller groups of people will have more access to power and decision-making
- Implementation tactics and evaluation metrics are important to ensure the staff of the city is carrying out the goals of the strategic plan and that the council is held accountable too

JUSTICE EXERCISE

What does Justice mean to you?

- Responses on the Timeline
 - More LGBTQ+ spaces for women/trans people
 - Subsidized rent for non-profits
 - Urban community farms, CSA farm shares, locally available and distributed food
 - Freedom to express
 - Shared creative spaces/maker spaces, tool library, community garden
 - Historical preservation + affordable and attainable housing + open space co-existing for all in the city
 - Guaranteed income program
- Voice Responses (you can find the full recordings at this [LINK](#))
 - “Where we eliminate inequalities in our environment and people can be free to be who they want to be”
 - “Justice means fairness and accountability”
 - “Justice is a set of actions and a feeling, something akin to an apology. The sum of an intention and an apology. [References Danielle Sered ‘Until we Reckon’ about restorative justice - a guide on how to apologize.] State the harm that you caused, state your role in causing that harm, state that you will never do that again and that something like that won’t happen again. Then you follow through. You recognize part of your own journey to wrongdoing. There is a part of justice where people who feel like the victims have to acknowledge what the limits of justice are. It’s never going to be birds chirping and rainbows everywhere. How can we find a balance where people recognize they have done wrong but I am willing to put my energy into making it better. What is that process?”
 - “Justice involves many components but for me it’s about fairness, treating people equally, and it’s about transparency and ethics. An ethical society is typically a much fairer society than one that isn’t. We are unfortunately seeing events in our country right now that are making us concerned about ethics and justice.”
 - “Justice means removing barriers that prevent justice, first of all, which also comes with recognition of those barriers. From a systemic point of view, as a city
 - employee, its jurisdictions identifying where there are injustices or what is causing injustice and inequity and address them. But more than that, to address it, they need to empower the people most affected to lead the

process. Not saying you know what is best for the community but asking what they need.”

- “Justice is about fairness, justice is about level playing fields, everyone needs to be treated equally and the same. Nobody should have higher access to being found more just than other people who may not have access.”
- “Justice means that everyone has a seat at the table and equal say”