

INTRODUCTION

The VISION Committee was founded in 2012 as part of the Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council (SONC). The committee studies various aspects of our built and landscaped environment with the overarching mission of a greener, more beautiful community with enhanced walkability. We documented our initial studies in *A Vision for Sherman Oaks*, as approved by the SONC Board in 2013. Over subsequent years, we restudied various aspects of our community and developed a set of visions for future evolution of Sherman Oaks over the next 20 years. Our studies evolved a detailed specific set of inputs to the City's 2020 Sherman Oaks Community Plan Update, as provided in this document.

In preparing our VISION Committee inputs for the City's update, we were challenged by what data to provide and how best to assemble it. Over eight years of monthly public meetings, we conducted multiple studies to help us understand the potentials of our community, identify the specific benefits that would enhance the lives of all who live, work, and visit Sherman Oaks, and guide discussions of future land use opportunities. We began by looking into Sherman Oaks history, then focusing on the purposes of the Community Plan Update, and finally on the base principles of our inputs to the update.

BRIEF SHERMAN OAKS HISTORY

Sherman Oaks began as a land speculation development triggered by a new Los Angeles Aqueduct terminus in the San Fernando Valley. General Moses Hazeltine Sherman, owner and operator of the Los Angeles Suburban Homes Company, focused his early development in Sherman Oaks, which continues to bear his name. In roughly 1927, Sherman subdivided his company’s first one thousand acres, selling each for about \$780 per acre.



Since its original development almost one hundred years ago, Sherman Oaks has grown to approximately nine square miles as shown on the map to the right. In our current Community Plan, Sherman Oaks is divided into Sherman Oaks and North Sherman Oaks. The 2018 American Community Survey lists Sherman Oaks’ population at 70,176 persons and 30,414 households, with an average age less than 40 years. The community is transitioning from a sleepy, bedroom community to a vibrant community of young and middle-aged professionals. The majority of single-family residential units are located south of Ventura Boulevard and the majority of multi-family residential units north of Ventura Boulevard. Sherman Oaks enviably has one of lowest community densities in the City of Los Angeles at 7,500 persons and 3,300 households per square mile.



PURPOSES OF A COMMUNITY PLAN

A Community Plan provides the land-use vision and values for a distinct geographic area. The plan's goals and policies, together with the General Plan Land Use Map, guide decision-making with respect to land use, including legislative decisions, adoption of overlay zones, supplemental development regulations, and amendments to the land use or zoning maps.

The Community Plan establishes a community's primary concepts and overall desires, as stated in the community's Vision Statement. As the City implements its Community Plan, decision-makers use the community's vision to help them strike an appropriate balance between competing goals and policies. This shapes and molds positive community change, fosters sustainable land use patterns, and trades off unique community character with citywide policies and regional initiatives. The City's final Sherman Oaks Community Plan Update will be a working document that guides development for a decade and benefits all sectors of the community including:

- Residents and Neighborhood Councils – The Community Plan identifies the type and scale of land uses permitted, describes changes that may impact neighborhoods, and explains policies, design guidelines, and implementation programs that guide future development decisions.
- Businesses – The plan identifies land-use measures that support businesses and encourage future success. The plan includes policies to support and enhance commercial and industrial development. It further discusses land-use strategies for attracting new investment in commercial centers and corridors.

- Developers – The plan introduces the community and its desires, and provides background information. Developers use the plan’s maps, policies, design guidelines, and implementation programs to better understand what type of development may occur, and where.
- Public Officials – The Community Plan is a part of the citywide General Plan, which is the basis for land use decisions by the City Planning Commissions, other boards and commissions, and the City Council.
- Public Agencies – The plan supports future decisions and actions, such as transportation infrastructure improvements, parks, and schools. Community Plan policies establish boundaries and priorities for planning decisions.

PRINCIPLES OF OUR COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE INPUTS

Good land use planning in a well-crafted and engineered Community Plan creates vibrant neighborhoods and supports economic prosperity. A healthy, well-planned community strives to achieve quality housing at all income levels, great food and dining options, plentiful shopping and services, multiple recreational and open spaces, and a diverse variety of entertainment choices. In a vibrant neighborhood, property owners invest in their property, keeping living conditions safe and property well-managed and maintained.

Sherman Oaks neighborhoods, including single-family ones, are well-established and neither expect nor desire meaningful change as other parts of the community grow. We anticipate the Community Plan to generally direct growth away from these existing residential neighborhoods. We encourage transit-oriented districts and corridors in commercial centers. We encourage transformations with increasing residential and commercial density in specific areas of Sherman Oaks. We expect the Community Plan Update to accommodate much of Sherman Oaks' projected 2040 population increase along major transit corridors such as Sepulveda Boulevard, Van Nuys Boulevard, Fulton Avenue, Coldwater Canyon Boulevard, Ventura Boulevard, Riverside Drive, and Burbank Boulevard. We encourage enhancements toward a unique urban lifestyle in our walkable commercial district along Ventura Boulevard featuring restaurants, entertainment, and shopping.

To these ends, we propose carefully designed and coordinated sequences of public spaces creating a sense of community emphasizing the value of public realm and urban fabric. We recommend public amenities throughout Sherman Oaks, bringing an enhanced quality of experiences within walking distance of our many residential areas. We suggest lively new gathering places bringing refreshed energy to our neighborhoods with designs that respect and build upon the existing environment. We address increased density head on, seeking a cohesive identity as a walkable garden community with an inviting public realm and stately trees. We have focused our inputs to the Community Plan Update around five key principles:

1. Outlining a vision for Sherman Oaks’ long-term physical/economic development and community enhancement;
2. Providing strategies and specific actions that allow this vision to be accomplished;
3. Establishing a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with Community Plan Update policies and standards;
4. Directing City departments, other public agencies, and private developers to design projects that enhance the character of our community and take advantage of its setting and amenities; and
5. Establishing priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the Zoning Ordinance, design overlays, development standards, the Capital Improvements Program, facilities plans, redevelopment plans, and area plans.

ORGANIZATION OF OUR INPUTS

We submit our VISION Committee inputs to the City’s Sherman Oaks Community Plan Update for community review and look forward to additional inputs, ideas, and critiques. We organized our inputs document into seven sections: (1) History; (2) Goals; (3) Committee Reports and Recommendations (for open space, commercial, and residential); (4) Land Use; (5) Parks & Landscape; (6) Mobility; and (7) Guidelines.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Kalban, Chair
Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council Planning and Land Use and VISION Committees

SUMMARIES

History

In 2017, a group of Sherman Oaks stakeholders, led by historian Tom Boulet, put together a pictorial history celebrating the Sherman Oaks 90th anniversary.

These images tell the story of our community's evolution from a land development by General Moses Sherman to the first developer subdivisions to 2017. The one overriding tale is one of the developer-led built environment.

Reports & Recommendations

The VISION Committee along with other Sherman Oaks stakeholders established three research groups. The Open Space Study Group led by Maria Pavlou Kalban, the Commercial Areas Study Group led by Tom Glick and the Residential Study Group led by Sue Steinberg. These groups researched their subject matter and studied examples from around the world. Each group looked at what makes for more effective public space, lighting, and signage, better housing developments, and enriched retail experiences. Their recommendations highlight opportunities for an enriched lifestyle emphasizing ideas that may be implemented in Sherman Oaks' input to the Community Plan.

Land Use

The VISION Committee along with other Sherman Oaks stakeholders studied a large, detailed map of Sherman Oaks looking for opportunities for developments that may contribute to an enhanced public realm. In a five-month period of public meetings we identified 22 Opportunity Sites.

The Land Use Component proposes carefully designed and coordinated sequences of public spaces creating a sense of community and emphasizing the value of the public realm over the individual structure.

Public amenities are to be located throughout Sherman Oaks bringing a robust quality of experiences within walking distance of our many residential areas. Lively new gathering places bring refreshed energy to our neighborhoods with designs that respect and build upon the existing environment.

As we face increased density, we seek a cohesive identity and inviting public realm with stately trees and a walkable, garden community.

Parks & Landscape

The VISION Committee put together a list of park and landscaping opportunities over a six-month period with input from all stakeholder groups. The purpose was to identify land parcels large enough to become public parks as well as smaller parcels for landscaping opportunities.

Every area of Sherman Oaks was considered. Meant as a complete survey of opportunities, the study includes both public and private properties.

The goal was to establish a more visually beautiful community, increase residential and business property value, improve business, enhance civic pride, and foster exceptional quality of life in Sherman Oaks.

Mobility

The SONC Vision Committee and the entire Sherman Oaks community are tremendously concerned about reducing traffic, enhancing all forms of mobility, and improving safety. This section includes recommendations and support for the Metro Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project's fully underground subway concepts under either Van Nuys or Sepulveda Boulevards, and also for a potential monorail concept running above the 405 freeway median. The Vision Committee opposes and rejects Metro's two concepts that would operate elevated above Sepulveda Boulevard in Sherman Oaks and Van Nuys.

The section further offers recommendations and specific opportunities for improving pedestrian connectivity, optimizing mass transit, easing congestion, enhancing livability, and helping to beautify Sherman Oaks.

Guidelines

The Vision Committee offers six guidelines to enhance livability in Sherman Oaks. The guidelines are built around recognition that affordable housing and higher density mandates are necessary and coming in the near future. The guidelines provide information to property owners and developers that will allow achieving needed housing and commercial space while retaining the unique qualities that make our Sherman Oaks Community so desirable.