

Public Comments from the February 7th Planning Committee Meeting on the Southwest Venice & Venice Canals Subareas

Summary of the Public Comments Ordered by Topic:

Planning Process Related:

- Maybe we should ask Planning to provide us a precedent analysis, looking at what the existing recent history, sort of post bungalow era, of what people have been building and what Planning's goals are in terms of changing it.
- I'd like to know what it is that made them reach out to try to add this density in what is one of the most dense parts of Los Angeles.
- Georges-Eugene Haussmann was the architect and urban planner who redesigned Paris 100 or more years ago. He built 6-story buildings, but he created huge, wide boulevards, so you don't have these narrow, dark canyons and you don't have large 5-story or 15-story buildings stealing shade and air from smaller buildings.

Residential Related—Canals:

- Back in the 70s and 80s, the residents crafted building rules and ensured that the character of the Canals would be preserved. We want to maintain the existing RW-1 height limits, the side yard setbacks, front and rear yard setbacks, and especially the second story [step]backs that ensure the Canals are not walled in by the big boxes that you see built elsewhere.
- If you need to increase housing, I think it should be in other parts of CD-11 even more than in Venice, because Mar Vista, Westchester, Palisades, Brentwood, they all have significantly larger lots. We already have a community of substandard lots. We're one of the most dense parts of Los Angeles. This seems highly inappropriate. One of my friends circulated the proposal for 15-story buildings on Washington. I just was like, is this some kind of fake news or something? I had trouble believing that anybody would propose putting 15-story buildings across the street from 1- and 2-story buildings. What I expected would soon come out of this process was that on major corridors, which would be Washington, maybe Main Street, maybe Venice Boulevard, and those are the only three I really can think of, we might go from 3 to 4. And frankly, I think 5 is too much because you realize that those are backing up in some cases on 1-story buildings.
- I'm on a two-sided street, why should the building across be 3 or 5 or 6 stories and my house is limited to 30 or 33 feet?
- Courts A, B, C, and D have 20-foot-wide streets. Court E has a 10-foot-wide street/alley. The city calls it a street. Courts A, B, C, D are all 30 by 95-foot lots. Court E is only 30 by 80 feet. It is 15 feet shorter than the other four surrounds. As people do development with this plan that the city has, they have to take 5 feet away from this lot on the opposite side of our street. But out of 19 lots along here we only have 6 that the 5 feet has been done. We need this plan to address the 5-foot, 15-foot setback all the way along Carroll Canal.

- Raising the height in the Canals is a big mistake.
- Why are we adding more height in the Canals and more density in an area where they are telling us that we are under stress for future potential catastrophic events?
- If you increase density at the terminus, you have more people evacuating in an emergency, whether it's earthquake, tsunami, gas leaks, or major flooding, and it's happening all over California. So, we're not exempt. We've been lucky so far, but sea level is rising. That needs to be a part of this plan, a very specific part of this plan, it should be a chapter of the plan.
- I don't care for rooftop developments, which nobody ever uses, because when they find out how windy it is, they go down. So, it's a useless feature.

Residential Related—SW Venice:

- For Southwest Venice, we've seen a couple of major developments that snuck through that really stick out like a sore thumb. And that is a single-family, low-density neighborhood that requires probably the most protection of all. So, we need to consider what we can do to protect that neighborhood from overdevelopment.

Venice Canals—Historic Resource:

- This community has a historical meaning. It's been this way for many years. It's actually an attraction for people who come to town. They want to see what the city was. Making change is necessary, but to change something that has historical value is ridiculous. And I think that they should look elsewhere to make changes.
- It's unique. It's a unique resource. It's a cultural resource of Southern California. And I think it kind of describes and shows Venice and the history of it better than any other neighborhood. Let's not ruin this unique thing by overbuilding.
- Tourists are walking around all the time, getting great joy from seeing the Venice Canals and enjoying the character. That's super important in the Coastal Zone. It's all about visitor serving areas and protecting the character of these areas for future generations.

Infrastructure Related:

- There's nothing addressing our infrastructure. We don't have an infrastructure that can handle a lot of increased density, number of people living there using washing machines, etc.
- One of the problems we have on this street is we have no hydrants on Carroll Canal.
- Currently there're yards and about a 450 square foot permeable area. We'd like some more permeable area right now with this flooding that we're having. Our

street doesn't have drainage. I know Linnie Canal doesn't have it. That's not being addressed.

- Anywhere in the Coastal Zone that's near the water, you have to look at if it's a flood zone and there're all different levels of flood zones, so I think city planning really needs to do their homework on that.
- Re. the infrastructure, I pay \$40,000 in property taxes. I get no street cleaning. I get no drainage on my street. The trash truck can barely get through, and all the people who own the buildings across from us are now turning their buildings into apartments, into condos, adding ADUs. There's no more parking.
- The Canals are 100 years old and the whole Canal system needs to be repaired before anything is done in any part of the Canals or adjacent properties. We currently have storm drains flowing into the Canals. The whole system is preposterous.
- Currently the Canals have a few issues. We have a leak we can't figure out. We lose about a foot a day, is what the maintenance company tells us. And so, the city has not figured out how to repair that or how to fix it, but the Canals are leaking. All the streets, not just the Canals, but in the lagoon as well, flow from the streets into the Canals, unfiltered. And right now, they're protected from flooding because we release the water prior to a rain, and then we release the water again after a rain. And we're really concerned that we may get a high tide with full Canals and not be able to release the water. But the water is going in is polluted. So, one of the things we're trying to get the council office to work on is a stormwater capture system that would clean the water before it goes into the Venice Canals or the Ballona Lagoon, and before it goes out to the pumping station, in the circle, out to the ocean. So, we get a clean ocean, clean Canals, and a clean lagoon.
- I just want to make sure that any buildings that are being built here, that we're thinking about the rains, we're thinking about the flooding. That's something that should be a requirement in this. We need to be thinking about buildings and safety in that way.
- We are required to have a 450 square foot permeable area to drain from our structure. If you own a building across the street from Howland Canal, there is no requirement for a permeable area at this point. So, all the apartment buildings basically drain into the street.
- If you come along and you make a change to your apartment building, such as from apartments to condos, it is mandated that you have to then put a drain down the middle of the street, a two-foot-wide concrete drain, but it doesn't go anywhere, not based on any actual public works plan for drainage from the area.
- It doesn't make any sense for Strongs Street to have one zoning and the opposite street another one. It doesn't make any sense for Eastern Canal and across the other side to have a different zoning. The surrounding neighbors will all be as tall as they want to be, and we'll be stuck in the middle, basically with this sort of periphery of 5 or 11 story homes.

Public Comments Made

Mark Galanty: Feedback we've gotten from our members and from the community members, is that there's not a clear understanding of the changes that are being proposed. It's hard for people to comment about them if there's not an understanding of what's the difference or what's the change. In the 1980s, Ruth Galanter, as you know, Councilman, had workshops to allow the different neighborhoods to come up with plans and thoughts about how the changes should affect them. And then they did that neighborhood, usually run by an architect, but whoever it was then gave feedback and then that was implemented. And so, what I'm proposing tonight is that maybe for the Canals, we would run some workshops, try to get a better understanding of what the changes are through that, how to do that. Understand what proposed changes are, do some workshops within our own neighborhood and then give feedback. And we kind of hope you won't give a report until we have a better understanding of what the changes are. And the community as a whole can give more input.

[00:01:15] **Susan Painter:** I'm Susan. Thank you very much for having this meeting. I live on Sherman Canal, and I may have missed something in your introduction, but I don't understand what the content of the report is that you're going to be doing. Is that going to be just simply the information that you've gathered from the people who are coming to the meeting and giving their questionnaires and stuff? Or does your brief go further than that in terms of what the report is going to be about?

[00:01:45] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** So, the City Planning department for the last 4 or 5, 6 years has been having workshops out in the community asking the very same questions that you're asking and presenting what they propose. The issue is that it continues to change. It has changed, and there's iterations of their suggestions. And so, what we're doing is trying to have a more intimate group of neighborhoods to come to these meetings and to talk more specifically about what it is that is your preference in reference to what they are proposing. What they're proposing is on their website. And so, we thought that if we partitioned it. So instead of talking generally, but more specifically about how neighborhoods are being impacted, that we would have a better opportunity to get feedback from you. So, this is the way that we're presenting it. There will probably be other meetings as other questions rise, but this is a work in progress, if you will. And in terms of what goes to the Venice Neighborhood Council, it is outcomes of what comes from the comments that are being made here in terms of collecting that information, how it will be presented and what format. We have not made that decision yet. And as far as did I answer your question as well?

[00:03:28] **Mark Mack:** Also, we are collecting or giving out questionnaires here in this group, but we will also electronically send it out to about 6,000 stakeholders. And everything that's on

these manual questionnaires and the digital information will get collected and analyzed, and then we will probably have a meeting to present these findings here. But for the individual meetings, Richard will give a quick overview. What are the changes, are there any changes. And then you will have a chance to talk about. And Mark, we did appreciate.

[00:04:20] **Alix Gucovsky:** Just one more thing to add to the group. The reason that this is ongoing is that the maps are a changing process. So, we're going to have new maps from the city anywhere between 4 to 6 weeks. The other neighborhoods within CD-11 and all over the city have been going through this process and collecting comments from the community. So, they're a little bit ahead of us to Naomi's point as to why we don't know. There're still changes coming. We've got to keep the dialogue going and open.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

[00:26:07] **Sean O'Brien.** Hey, Frank, maybe you can help me with this. All the maps I've looked at in the Canal area, it looked like Venice Boulevard between Ocean and Dell, and quite possibly Dell to Pacific is subarea 14 and subject to 5 stories. Is that correct? The maps on here and the maps on the city, they're always blocked out by a word or an arrow. And it's hard to get the information.

[00:26:39] **Frank Murphy:** Well, none of those subareas allow 5 stories, to my knowledge, at this point in time.

[00:26:45] **Sean O'Brian:** No, if you look at the city's map.

[00:26:55] **Frank Murphy:** Is this what they're proposing or what?

[00:26:56] **Sean O'Brian:** No, go back to the map.

[00:26:58] **CJ Cole:** They've excluded it on the map.

[00:27:01] **Sean O'Brian:** So, the Canals has one area. Keep going back. See there. The Canals is one area that's a subarea. And then along Venice Boulevard there where it's pink, I saw subarea 14. Venice Boulevard, on the Canals. Right there. That whole block is subarea 14.

[00:27:47] **Frank Murphy:** That's limited to 30 feet in height.

[00:27:51] **Sean O'Brian:** But I saw with bonuses, it's got a FAR bonus of 1.75 and a FAR base of 1.25 and a density base of 400, I didn't understand that. It's got a height base of 3 stories with a height bonus of 5. And I'm just trying to make sure I've read the maps right. Like everybody in here, we don't understand the information the city is providing. And when I see maps like this,

you see it's a different color than the Canals. So, is that multi-family residential medium or residential medium?

[00:28:44] **Mark Mack:** See the line? The black line is excluding this area. So, the surrounding what we are talking about today is surrounded by the black line. So, it's north of that, which is another meeting.

[00:29:32] **Richard Stanger:** His point is correct. But it is officially in North Venice area, which is a little illogical, but your numbers are correct. And I'll talk to you about that later.

[00:35:26] **Robin Murez:** Robin Murez. There's nothing in the paperwork, nor in the presentation that seems to be addressing our infrastructure. And within the past, I think just 12 months, we've had two water main breaks on the Canals. I know that on Washington Way, Regan Kibbee told me the other day she had another power outage. I mean, I see that we don't have an infrastructure that can handle a lot of increased density, number of people living there using washing machines and everything. So, is that something that would be addressed? And then if I still have a moment to speak, I'll say we have tiny lots on the Canals and allowing people to build within three feet of the property line is obscene. I hear every single word of neighbors if they have their windows open and they're within three feet of the property line. Again, there's nothing here about side yard setbacks, so it just seems like there's not a lot of acknowledgement about how tiny our lots are in Venice, and that we are already very dense in Venice. And if you need to increase housing, I think it should be in other parts of CD-11 even more than in Venice, because Mar Vista, Westchester, Palisades, Brentwood, they all have significantly larger lots. So why are we even having to address this?

[00:37:22] **Barry Cassilly:** I just wanted to address the FAR issue with respect to the Mansionization Ordinance, because this keeps coming up. When they did the Mansionization Ordinance, and this is all addressed in council files, when they did the Mansionization Ordinance, they used a 7,000 square foot lot to do their calculations because that's a common lot size in Los Angeles. The average lot size in Venice is 2,700 square feet. So, if you use a .55 FAR on a 7,000 square foot lot, you get a 3,850 square foot building, which when they put the Mansionization Ordinance in place, that was a down zoning from a larger building that was possible on a lot like that. What people have found in practice is that you get problems with the ordinance, even when you get down to a 5,000 square foot lot. What ends up happening is you have... because they also do this, it's called a wedding cake colloquially, a design where you chop out parts of the second floor so you end up you can still use that FAR, but you have almost no backyard on your average Venice lot. And specifically, the Mansionization Ordinance did not extend into Venice because of our substandard lots. If you use that same .55 calculation, you end up with a 1,480 square foot house on your average Venice lot. So that was the reason that the Mansionization Ordinance doesn't extend here. So just a point of clarification.

[00:39:12] **??:** My question is, the items that are on the questionnaire that we're filling out, either here or online. Where did those questions come from? Who developed those questions and on what basis? Because obviously the data that you're collecting is very much based on what the questions are.

[00:39:34] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** So, the city's plan focuses on land use, housing, and open space. So, the questions that are on your survey are focused to cover those areas in particular.

[00:39:56] **??:** And were the questions developed by the Neighborhood Council, or are those developed by the city?

[00:40:01] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** No, we developed those questions, the committee.

[00:40:19] **Mark Ryavec:** My name is Mark Ryavec. I'm president of the Venice Stakeholders Association and I'm, as of May, a 35-year resident of Venice. The first question, I don't expect anybody is here to answer it from the City's planning staff. But the question is, what was the thinking behind the planning staff's putting forward this particular proposal for our community? And I would say that maintains for all of the subareas. I'd like to know what it is that made them reach out to try to add this density in what is one of the most dense parts of Los Angeles. And I find it highly inappropriate. I'd like to second what Ms. Murez had to say, that we already have a community of substandard lots. We're one of the most dense parts of Los Angeles. This seems highly inappropriate. One of my friends circulated the proposal for 15-story buildings on Washington. I just was like, is this some kind of fake news or something? I had trouble believing that anybody would propose putting 15-story buildings across the street from 1- and 2-story buildings. I mean, there's a ridiculous nature of this. What I expected would soon come out of this process was that on major corridors, which would be Washington, maybe Main Street, maybe Venice Boulevard, and those are the only three I really can think of, we might go from 3 to 4. And frankly, I think 5 is too much because you realize that those are backing up in some cases on 1-story buildings. You have to take lessons from Mr. [Georges-Eugene] Haussmann, who was the architect and urban planner who redesigned Paris 100 or more years ago. And yes, he built 6-story buildings, but he created huge, wide boulevards, so you don't have these narrow, dark canyons and you don't have large 5-story or 15-story buildings stealing shade and air from smaller buildings. Thank you very much for letting me speak. I hope that the committee will look very hard at some of the presumptions that apparently have been made that drove these rather, in my estimation, ridiculous proposals. Thank you.

[00:42:53] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** The other thing is that, to answer some part of that question, the city of Los Angeles has been mandated by the state to provide 455,000 units of housing, and each city council district has a responsibility for deciding where they're going to put parts of that housing. And so, we don't really know how they're thinking, but when we talk about

density and when we talk about size of buildings, we don't know what our numbers are in terms of these areas, but we know that that's part of what is driving the city in terms of increasing height and increasing density.

[00:44:04] **Mark Ryavec:** So, I just ask that you invite the planner who did this to be here and each one of your meetings.

[00:44:09] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** We're hoping that the kind of comments that we're making here will get to those individuals who will change their perspective about what needs to happen and where it needs to happen.

[00:44:30] **Bert Fallon:** My name is Bert Fallon. I live in the Venice Canals and have for about 52 years. Back in the 70s and 80s, the residents crafted building rules and ensured that the character of the Canals would be preserved. We want to maintain the existing RW-1 height limits, the side yard setbacks, front and rear yard setbacks, and especially the second story [step]backs that ensure the Canals are not walled in by the big boxes that you see built elsewhere. Parking requirements need to be maintained. If we're going to be subject to the Sacramento density rules, there must be adequate parking provided on the lots and the guest parking is not cut out [the current rear setback in the Canals must be kept to insure that a car for guest parking can be parked behind the garage], and in fact, every one of our neighbors [if guest parking isn't required this has a negative impact on the adjacent neighborhoods]. Our alleys need to remain clear of cars on the interior Canals as that's the only means of egress for emergency vehicles. There should be no lot consolidation. At one time in the Canals you could live on five contiguous lots. That's not available now and we want to maintain that. Thank you for your consideration.

[00:46:02] **Darryl Dufay:** I live in the Canals. I've lived there 44 years. I bought my lot in the 1970s. We have, it hasn't been pointed out, a special zoning code for our RW-1. It lays out what was just said--how big it can be, how small it can be, etc. We are also in the dual jurisdiction between the city and the Coastal Commission, so everything has to go through them. The only thing I have that I would like to see is to do away with things that are put on top of a 31. That would be a 100 square foot entrance to get on top of the roof, which is supposed to be set back to the [rear area of the roof]. I wish we would also look at these things that are in the code, that exist, and address it. My concern about everything since the day I walked in on January the 10th is there is so much that you need to know but don't need to know. You're then given the survey, which I appreciate. Probably number ten is the only one that really relates to that--that's the size of the Washington buildings. And we're going to go through this and we're going to gather all this data of what you have heard today, and they don't quite know yet what they're going to do with the data and how it is going to address the specifics of the other issues that you brought up. Thank you.

[00:48:26] **Earl:** My name is Earl. I live in the Canals. I would just like to say that I understand the state's need for housing changes. But this community has a historical meaning. It's been this way for many years. It's actually an attraction for people who come to town. They want to see what the city was. Making change is necessary, but to change something that has historical value is ridiculous. And I think that they should look elsewhere to make changes. For example, when you have a historical building that's designated as a historical building, you're not allowed to change it. I think the community should not be allowed to change the way it appears and the attraction that it creates for all the people that live here, there should be restrictions. And I think that if there's a need for more housing, it should be in other areas and not to change the look and the feeling of the area we live in.

[00:49:55] **Stephen Christiansen:** I'm Stephen Christiansen. So, thanks for having this meeting. I guess I had a question. So, a point for you, which is just, do you know what the timeline is for these planning department changes? I'm just curious about that. And then I just wanted to echo your comment on the FAR. That was really surprising to me because I have a house on the Canals that's 20 plus years old with an FAR of 1.32, which is not unusual. So, I feel like what we maybe should ask Planning to provide is kind of a precedent analysis, looking at what the existing recent history, sort of post bungalow era, of what people have been building and what their goals are in terms of changing it--we want 20% less, we want to keep it similar, whatever their objectives are. I think that would help us understand their thought process. Because right now, the .45 seems kind of plucked from thin air. Thank you.

[00:50:49] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** I think we did say earlier that the city is developing new maps. So, in terms of a timeline, it is in fact a work in progress. And so as much as we can keep pace and understanding what it is that they're doing and we can present that, then we will do that. So, we don't know exactly when that process is, when the city is going to come to a conclusion about what it is that they will finally propose. Because as I said earlier, I've been going to the city planning meetings for the last six years. They started out having community meetings. They started out having workshops. They had meetings in this building. They had meetings over at Mark Twain Junior High in the auditorium. They've had them in various places throughout the community. Our effort is the first time that we've had these kinds of neighborhood-focused meetings. They've been more generally talking about what's happening throughout the entire area. So, hopefully by having smaller neighborhood meetings like this, looking at what it is that they're specifically planning for a neighborhood, then we can get better understanding from them, and we can be more pinpointed in terms of what it is that they expect as we move forward, and then we'll be able to deliver that message in the kind of format that we're receiving it.

[00:52:34] **Mark Mack:** This is a draft proposal. So, it isn't the first draft proposal. There's another draft supposed to come the end of this month, which apparently incorporates some of the sessions which the city then did with the community. But we want to hold back that draft so

other things can also get incorporated. So, it's no use to have another draft on top of the draft, which has not been vetted. So, I think that will probably be after we get through these corrections.

[00:53:19] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** Yeah, the city has an advisory committee--West Los Angeles West Community Advisory Committee. It had three meetings. There's a 52-member board of that advisory meeting. They're now talking about restarting meetings. We just don't know at this point if it's going to be with the same individuals that were on the advisory committee or if they're going to add more, but we'll know more about that. So, it just goes to show us that the city has balls in the air, too, in terms of what it is that they want to do and how they're going to go about getting it done. And we're just trying to keep eyes and ears open to what they're doing so that we can, in fact, address it.

[00:54:28] **Gavin Langley:** Gavin Langley. Reference this, which is your zoning map that you're talking about. So, I can point out a couple of things. I'm at Carroll Canal. This is the zoning map that everybody should be aware of. As disclosure, I work in architecture, so I'm a homeowner here on the northern side of Carroll Canal here. Basically, we have five Courts. Court A starts down just about 28th Street. We have Court B, Court C, Court D, and Court E. I live on Court E on Carroll Canal. Court B fronts Sherman and Howland. Court C fronts Howland and Linnie and Court B Linnie and Carroll and then Carroll only had one side to the street. The one issue I want to point out is that Courts A, B, C, and D from a zoning and planning issue have 20-foot-wide streets. Court E has a 10-foot-wide street. [Alley.] The city calls it a street. Courts A, B, C, D are all 30 by 95-foot lots. Court E is only 30 by 80 feet. It is 15 feet shorter than the other four surrounds. For those who live on Eastern, your lots are 30 by 90 and on Strongs it is also 30 by 90. And Strongs has a 35-foot street.

[00:56:00] One of the problems with this plan that I see from an urban design point of view, is that both sides of the street, opposite the Canal streets, should be part of the Venice Canal Zone. So, Mr. Sean O'Brien mentioned about the lot here on Venice Canal South. New disclosure on a building on South Venice in this very lot here opposite my house here on Carroll Canal. The problem here is we have a ten-foot-wide street. As people do development with this plan that the city has, they have to take five feet away from this lot on the opposite side of our street. But out of 19 lots along here we only have 6 that the 5 feet has been done. We need this plan to address the 5-foot, 15-foot setback all the way along Carroll Canal.

[00:56:45] We had a fire on October 2nd, 2022. I was on my roof trying to save my house and the two adjoining houses. If anybody saw the video, I also got the people out of the houses next to me and woke them up before they burned to death in their house. One of the problems we have on this street, we have no hydrants on Carroll Canal. We have them on Courts A, B, C, D and I've walked around and seen them. We've had them also here on Eastern Canal and we also have them on Strongs Canal. We do not have a hydrant on Carroll Canal. They were trying to

get firefighters through between the buildings on Venice Canal and they're all gated. So, Mr. Murphy's property is gated. They couldn't get through from Venice Canal, from the hydrant that's in front of his building through to our lot. We waited 45 minutes to an hour. The house burned to the ground. The house next to it burned to the ground. The house next to it is being repaired now. It only survived because basically the architecture is better construction. The other house, called the Hawkins House, is gone because it was not built to the same standard as the houses next to mine.

[00:57:45] The other issue we have in this area is that as we do work, we cannot get the trash through. We cannot get construction through to rebuild. The street is blocked. We also have a problem with the zoning. The house that burned to the ground, just to make you aware, they're talking about a 30-foot building that exists now. When the rule was changed to a higher amount of height that they're talking about because of this flood issue of three feet, that building was allowed to be approved, superseded as long as somebody signed a waiver and allowed them to waive that if it flooded, they couldn't sue the city. So, it went up. It went up to 30 feet with the roof. Previously, the roof had to be non-habitable. You couldn't have a flat roof on the top. So, in that particular case, they were allowed to then build a 42-inch balustrade on top. What you're talking about now is if you allow it to be 33 ft, you're talking about 33 ft plus a four-foot balustrade. That means you're talking about almost 37 feet. The code is actually 42 just to let you know.

[00:58:53] I'm not anti-development. I work in architecture. I'm not for development or against it. What I'm for is that everybody is aware of what the issues are here, which is if you allow it to increase to 33 feet, it won't be 33, it will be 36.5/37 based on the balustrade, because they've already allowed other buildings to have roof balconies. It's nothing about the roof. The other point is, the document I've read through, of course, which is the local plan that basically you're here to do. This is the one page of the Venice Canals that you can read and talk about that's actually in there. There is use--the single-family dwelling, there is density, how much is allowed on site, a buffer, setbacks. You need to provide 15 feet and 10 feet from the Canals, but it can be manipulated depending on where you put your house. There're yards and about a 450 square foot permeable area. Well, we'd like some more permeable area right now with this flooding that we're having. Our street doesn't have drainage. I know Linnie Canal doesn't have it. That's not being addressed.

[00:59:59] Somebody said re. the infrastructure, I pay \$40,000 in property taxes. I get no street cleaning. I get no drainage on my street. The trash truck can barely get through, and all the people who own the buildings across from us are now turning their buildings into apartments, going into condos, apartments wanting ADUs. There's no more parking. What's happening is, they're all getting approvals. I'm writing comments back to planning, asking for these things to be adhered to. And basically, people not putting roof decks on there where there's 40 people on the roof. People are not putting parking limitations on here because they've changed the

structure under the building to be upgraded, and the parking spaces have gone down from 12 to 6. So, what's happening is, this zoning is just the first part. Coastal Commission gets this, and my recommendation is this plan takes the streets around it and includes them in the Venice plan because I'm on a two-sided street, why should the building across be 3 or 5 or 6 stories and my house is limited to 30 or 33 feet?

[01:01:32] **Paola Pini:** Hello, everybody. My name is Paola Pini. I do not live in the Canals. I live in East Venice, where the FAR for a single-family 6,000 square foot lot or less is .65. So, the Mansionization Ordinance was indeed put in place for R-1 single-family lots. But the city did what they call R-1 variation for most of the single-family zone area in the city, including East Venice, and the max FAR is adjusted depending on the size of the lots. I think raising the height in the Canals is a big mistake. I'm European, I do love our history and I think that the Venice Canals is losing it. The Canals and the area we are discussing today is also designated as a flood zone. So all of a sudden, why are we adding more height in the Canals and more density in an area where they are telling us that we are under stress for future potential catastrophic events? I feel sorry for the people that bought in the Canals just for land value and therefore, you know, unbridled capitalism, if you want to call it that, where making the biggest, meanest, tallest and largest building possible is just to make the biggest bucks possible. In the Canals I personally would put a limit at the two-story mark, but that's my preference and we are long gone from that building size. As far as other elements proposed by DCP, I brought this up before, we have to start thinking about how we want to see these commercial mixed-use spaces and including more open space at ground level, which fosters a better pedestrian experience and exchanges, connection and communication. We are becoming more and more lonely and mental health is a big issue. And all of a sudden, we are building only one-bedroom apartments with zero space for interaction with other people or our neighbors. Thank you.

[01:03:19] **Robin Murez:** Actually, I want to ask Mark Galanty to say something about, again, the problem in the Canals, which are 100 years old and the whole Canal system needs to be repaired before anything is done in any part of the Canals or adjacent properties. We currently have storm drains flowing into the Canals. The whole system is preposterous. I am wearing tall boots out of necessity. The flooding, as Gavin said, in several of the Courts is obscene. And there are no French drains. It's crazy to be continuing to allow any kind of building without addressing our basic infrastructure. And Mark, you know way more about the whole Canal system and what's wrong with it. So, I'm inviting you to make sure that gets addressed.

[01:04:39] **Mark Galanty:** Currently the Canals have a few issues. Number one, we have a leak we can't figure out. We lose about a foot a day, is what the maintenance company tells us. And so, the city has not figured out how to repair that or how to fix it, but the Canals are leaking and there's lots of theories on it, but none of it makes sense. Number two is right now there are being built around Los Angeles, these storm capture systems that are really amazing, where they take the street runoff, they collect it, they filter it, and they release it back out as clean

water into the ocean. And unfortunately, there's maps from the city and the county showing the Canals have stormwater capture, without the clean. All the streets, not just the Canals, but in the lagoon as well, flow from the streets into the Canals, unfiltered. And right now, they're protected from flooding because we release the water prior to a rain, and then we release the water again after a rain. And we're really concerned that we may get a high tide with full Canals and not be able to release the water. But the water is going in is polluted. And now we're having these algae blooms that are causing fish kills and smells and complaints from the neighbors. And so, one of the things we're trying to get the council office to work on is a stormwater capture system that would clean the water before it goes into the Venice Canals or the Ballona Lagoon, and before it goes out to the pumping station, in the circle, out to the ocean. So, we get a clean ocean, clean Canals, and a clean lagoon. So that's one of the infrastructure issues, for a few of the alleys that were mentioned by several people. There have been, each alley here, Mr. Pick here, did these assessment districts where they built basically French drains and some of them need to be done on Court E and Court D.

[01:07:13] **Bob Cooper:** My name is Bob Cooper and I live on Howland Canal. And the reason I mentioned that the alleys are not streets, is because the city does not pay for the alleys as they do for streets. The ones that have been improved were done through an assessment district, and we had to pay for it. So, the city contributed to it only because the price went up after the assessment district was formed and, on my alley, it was a 17 to 17 vote, and the then City Council person was the one who broke the tie.

[01:07:55] **Robin Murez:** We can't get them to do it on our alley.

[01:08:08] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** I understand how this is important, sir, and we do have city people here who are responsible for handling some of these issues that are current problems now. I understand that, but I want to keep focused on what it is that we need to hear from people in terms of what is important. I understand all of it is important, but what I'm saying is that we want to capture what it is that we want to do in reference to what the city is planning in their plan. There are issues every single day, and we know more about what some of those are with the recent rains that we've had, because they become more obvious. But some of the things are not within the purview of this ad hoc committee. And there are people, on the city level, who need to hear some of the things that we're talking about that need to be addressed by our City Council and by other entities within our city area. So, all I'm saying is that we can just really deviate and get caught up in some other things that are not within the purview of this ad hoc committee focusing on the Venice plan, land use, housing, and open space.

Mark Mack: We can make comments to address this as part of the issues which are different in different areas.

[01:09:38] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** And I have no issue with us making comments. But I also know that we can't problem solve it here. So okay. Yes, sir.

[01:09:46] **??:** The question is related to zoning and land use, but the condition of the streets themselves, is that an issue that would be related to the land around them, like the condition of the streets and repair of streets and areas where you're planning on rising the population.

[01:10:08] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** I understand what you're saying, but for this particular issue, no.

[01:10:21] **Jack Samuel Galanty:** I know this was said earlier. I just want to make sure that any buildings that are being built here, that we're thinking about the rains, we're thinking about the flooding. That's something that should be a requirement in this. And I think that other people have said that this area is going to flood. We need to be thinking about buildings and safety in that way. But part of this should be a requirement for these developers, when they're building, to have that in mind, because if there's no teeth for them to require any of this, they're not going to do it, they're just going to do it the cheapest and easiest way.

[01:11:01] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** You're saying in terms of enforcement. I grew up in Venice, so I'm not unfamiliar with flooding. I woke up one morning and our furniture was floating around in our living room. People were using rowboats. And this was right over here off 7th Avenue and Indiana and Vernon Avenue, and that was in the 50s. So, I totally understand what it is that you're saying.

[01:11:40] **Gavin Langley:** I just wanted to clarify for you what's in our local Land Use Plan. So, for anybody in the Venice Canals, we are required to have a 450 square foot permeable area to drain from our structure. If you own a building across the street from Howland Canal, there is no requirement for a permeable area at this point. So, all the apartment buildings basically drain into the street. And that's one of the problems we've had. If you come along and you make a change to your apartment building, such as from apartments to condos, it is mandated that you have to then basically put a fence like a drain down the middle of the street, meaning you have to take the road and put a two-foot-wide concrete drain, but it doesn't go anywhere. So, our street is full of six of these that just basically flow into each other with nothing in between, because the buildings across the street from us, if they don't get updated, they don't go anywhere. So, my house doesn't have them in front, my neighbor doesn't have them in front, but the other neighbor has one in front. It's just a completely random drainage system, not based on any actual public works plan for drainage from the area. The second thing about the actual assessment is when you're paying property taxes and your street is not being cleaned or it's not being drained, did you just pay for an assessment to change it on the street you live in?

[01:13:09] **??:** So yes, there was an assessment district born for that purpose.

[01:13:16] **Gavin Langley:** And you have residents in R-1 on each side of the street, correct? [Yes.] We have RW-1 and we have R-3 on the other side of the street. And my understanding is, the people who own the R-3's on the opposite side of the street refused about 10, 15 years ago to actually update it. And so, as a result, we are saying unless all the R-1's on one side of the street pays for it, which I'd be willing to do, R-3 owners that are here today aren't willing to buy a drainage system on the street. So, what do I do, sir? [Good luck.] But it's in the plan. [certified Land Use Plan Policies IV.C.1. and IV.C.2.] The reason I'm bringing it up, Madam Chair, is it's in the plan about drainage and about setbacks. And it actually has a whole section on drainage about the Venice Canals, which is not just about this permeable area. So, what I'm saying is this is a great start, but the details and what people call the weeds of this, about all the setbacks, all the street widths, all the adjacent zoning across the street from each of us...because it doesn't make any sense for Strongs Street to have one zoning and the opposite street another one. It doesn't make any sense for Eastern Canal and across the other side to have a different zoning. And basically, it will look like Central Park eventually. I'm exaggerating, but it'll look like Central Park, it'll be Central Park, and the surrounding neighbors will all be as tall as they want to be, and we'll be stuck in the middle, basically with this sort of periphery of 5 or 11 story homes.

[01:14:49] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** I'm not going to ask Sean to speak, but he is here from LA city, CD-11. I'm sure he has taken note of all the things that you have said, that is why he's here, to hear what's going on in these meetings so that City Council member Traci Park can also understand the concerns and comments that are being made at these meetings so that she is aware as well. And as I said earlier, the Venice plan is being developed from many sides, multifaceted approaches to developing this plan. And so, I think what we're doing here makes more sense than some of the other things that are happening because we are, in fact, capturing the information in a way that is pertinent to the people who live in the community.

[01:15:55] **??:** I have a question about one of the questions, it's question number ten. If more multifamily housing is built within Venice, where should it be built? And then the choices are within the neighborhoods, outside the neighborhoods. But what does that mean? I don't understand.

[01:16:08] **Dr. Naomi Nightingale:** When you look at your particular area that you live in, within your neighborhood, in the Canals, if there's going to be additional low-income housing built, should it be built within your community or outside of your community, [on the] arterials. It's a tough question because every neighborhood is going to say yes, we may need low-income housing, but we don't have the space for it. For an information point, I just got information from the Sawtelle area that there have been some concerns raised to the city planning department, and they have been able to get some concessions in favor of things that they would like to have in terms of where changes will be made in the proposed plan. So,

there's discussions going on all over, as Alix said, so many changes are still up in the air and there's still possibility for further changes.

[01:17:23] **Alix Gucovsky:** Westchester also has had concessions.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS:

[01:17:55] **Frank Murphy:** Naomi brought up the numbers that are required of the community, of the city to address its issues around housing, and it's not an either-or type of situation. We can say we don't want to have anything here and it's somebody else's responsibility. Mark and Robin have alluded to that, and that's a perfectly viable ask. It's just that that does not preclude change. If you put everything in a stationary point, it changes because everything around it changes. So anyhow, I just wanted to make the point that we have an opportunity to address this stuff. The planning department works for us, and we lose sight of that. [Grumbling.] Well, you accede to that if you... They work for us, and part of the power of this committee is to hold them to task. So, we need to be making suggestions to them that help them resolve the issues that they have, however that may be. I don't know how we're going to do that, but that's my comment.

[01:19:30] **Alix Gucovsky:** I said this at the last meeting, and for those of you that weren't here, the larger view for me is, are we a commodity or a community? And I think we need to ask ourselves that question every time we look at that plan, because this plan is not a vision for a community, it's a vision for a commodity and a commodity that doesn't serve the people but serves those who are developing it.

To the infrastructure issues--these are very, very real. I live on Grayson, so I live in this area. And about two weeks after the Maui fires, I was sitting in my house and half the power in my house went out, so we thought it was a circuit breaker. But we come to find out it's our power transformer that sparked it. And long story, we called Department of Power and Water. They didn't come out. They thought the problem was fixed. We called them again. We said, you have to come out, it's sparking and it's windy. And they came out and they said, good thing you.... First they looked at it and they said, wow, we haven't seen one of these in a long time, we didn't even know these were still being used. And then they said, it's a really good thing that you called because your cables were loose going into the power transformer and had winds blown you could have taken down your whole neighborhood. This happened to our neighbors across the street. That's probably enough said on infrastructure, but it needs to be addressed.

Ecological issues. Many of you know me, I'm a surfer. We have a vibrant bird community in the Canals and in Ballona Creek. We're a migratory pattern for these birds. Our ocean is sick. We had a terrible algal bloom last year. Our Councilwoman's doing amazing things, trying to ensure the health of our bay and our sea life. It's not just the people that live here. We have to

share this place with the creatures in the sea and in the trees. It's super, super important. I'm highly opposed to 15-story buildings along Washington Boulevard. I think we definitely need some height. Our infrastructure can't support it. Our communities can't support it. Three, four stories. And I think we need to really rethink about mixed use, because we see empty storefronts all over the city. And retail is going the way of the dinosaurs, so what does that mean? And I think maybe what the question is, as we sit here sort of throwing our hands up with planning, what do we want our communities to look like, and then dictate that to planning.

[01:22:24] So, maybe we need to start by thinking [about] what are some of the design elements, not just the zoning. What do we want our community to look like so that we can move through it as a community with children playing, with adults mingling, with services that our neighborhoods need, with community centers, with open space, with sensitivity to flooding and everything else. And I think that's the part that this plan is missing and why so many of us are so incredibly frustrated. And lastly, this is going on all over the city. I sit on a group that is working across the city. Westchester has had changes to their plans. New maps are coming out. Do not think that this is just unique to Venice.

[01:23:14] **Robin Rudisill:** So, the thing about the Canals, and someone said it earlier, is that it's an historic area [and it's designated as a highly scenic area by the Coastal Commission]. And you're getting tourists walking around all the time, getting great joy from seeing it and enjoying the character. That's super important in the Coastal Zone. It's all about visitor serving areas and protecting the character of these areas for future generations. And the residents get great joy too, my own family gets a lot of joy walking through the Canals all the time. I'm very concerned about infrastructure. I learned a lot, in analyzing the Venice Median project, about drainage and what we don't have now, and that we don't want to increase the problem by increasing drainage due to added density. I think we have to really think through that. Anywhere in the Coastal Zone that's near the water, you have to look at if it's a flood zone and there're all different levels of flood zones, so I think city planning really needs to do their homework on that.

We also need to think about evacuation. Someone at our last meeting went into great detail on that. It's really important because if you increase density at the terminus, you have more people evacuating in an emergency, whether it's earthquake, tsunami, gas leaks, or major flooding, and it's happening all over California. So, we're not exempt. We've been lucky so far, but sea level is rising. I attended the Coastal Commission meeting today, and there was a whole presentation about sea level rise. And they have all the updated statistics and it's rising faster than we originally thought and that has to be considered and how we protect from that. That needs to be a part of this plan, a very specific part of this plan, it should be a chapter of the plan. [The coastal Commission doesn't usually allow increases in density in areas that are flood zones.]

And then lastly, on Southwest Venice, I think it needs more protection. I think we've seen a couple of major developments that snuck through that really stick out like a sore thumb. And that is a single-family, low-density neighborhood that requires probably the most protection of all. So, we need to consider what we can do to protect that neighborhood from overdevelopment.

[01:25:57] **Richard Stanger:** I'd like to address some of the comments about where we go from here. We're going to be obtaining a lot of information from each of the subareas, and we hope that from that information we can extract elements that we know people want to see in each neighborhood and convey that to city planning. Right now, we really don't have that by neighborhood by neighborhood, but we hope to have it, and we hope that we can make it understandable and convincing, understandable to you, the public, and convincing to the city planners.

[01:26:41] **Edward Ferrer:** I hope people are aware that we have the state asking the city to do something, and the city trying to do what it does. And we're here to try to speak out in a way that we can get the city to listen. But all you have to do is drive down Lincoln, around Lincoln, Washington, and we can see what the planners ignored. And certainly, I think this person is talking about all the waivers that, you know, they make all these regulations, and then somehow people get waivers, and so that, who enforces the city following their plan, who knows how people manage to get waivers? I'm sure Mr. Thibodeau and some architects have seen it. I mean, my God, the city will waive it. [The house that burned down.] I was talking to Richard about his neighborhood how they had to add a couple of feet because of the flooding they expect. But as you said, they just waived it. So, let's just hope we can get the city to pay attention to fire hydrants, drainage. It's crazy. [They violate their own ordinances.]

[01:28:29] **Steve Williams:** I think some folks in here covered it pretty well, but I'd just kind of like to add a couple of things to reiterate a couple of things. And for me, with most of my life as a biologist, I'd like to see and think about what the landforms used to look like before we built on them. And the Canals are the low point in Venice. That sounds weird, but I mean it in a good way. It's the old wetlands area--Marina del Rey boat harbor was all natural wetlands. Abbot Kinney obviously saw the opportunity to do something, and he did it. He couldn't do it today, but he did it. And it's kind of a cool thing we have. It's unique. It's a unique resource. It's a cultural resource of Southern California. And I think it kind of describes and shows Venice and the history of it better than any other neighborhood. And the fact that you can go down there and walk on these streets by the water, by the oceans of water and the Canals, and have that quiet, away from the cars and traffic is unique and a blessing. You guys who have lived there are really blessed. It's a really cool thing.

[01:29:44] So, considering all that, I kind of think the whole Canal District should just be declared a historic district in itself. Now, does that mean you can never change anything on

your lot? No, not really, no. But let's not ruin this unique thing by overbuilding, not allowing any more preservation to the ground by filling all the available infiltration areas and stuff like that. Let's just leave some space. The water's got to go somewhere. And again, it's a low point. But someone said all the water is draining from surrounding neighborhoods into the Canals, and that's a problem. I think it can be addressed. I think they need to connect it someday to the Hyperion treatment plant and get the low water, the low flow runoff during the summer, the summer "urban drool." They can shunt it over there like Santa Monica does and other people. So, there are potential solutions for that. But I would just say, let's try to keep things as is. I think already it's over built in a way.

[01:31:02] **Mark Mack:** Personally, I live in the Canals as well. I chose to live there because of its unique character, its uniqueness and its pedestrian sort of travel environment. I'm probably one of the few properties which does not have a fence, and many tourists realize that and sit in my dining room uninvited, expecting coffee? I have to tell them this is not a restaurant; this is just a very open house. And so for me, the Canal is such a unique area in that it mixes publicness and privateness because we're reversing the back yard to the front yard. But we have the benefits of ducks and people walking by, engaging in a slow traffic environment. What I see is--many houses now, even on my Canal, become this sort of, I don't know how they found it, this hedge fund--kind of empty buildings which create no interaction with the Canal. They are just big. They have all the accoutrements of a developer's dream--glass doors, glass staircases, Jacuzzis on the roof, which nobody uses because these buildings have not been occupied for five years. So, there is this kind of, what Alix says, commodity over community. There's this incredible trend to get a trophy house on the Canals, for people who have already other trophy houses somewhere in Vail. And so, I'm for a kind of weirder Venice which existed and a smaller one. There's no need to change the Venice Specific Plan for this area is very much developed. It can be enforced. I don't care for rooftop developments, which nobody ever uses, because when they find out how windy it is, they go down. So, it's a useless feature, but it gives you some more development points. So anyway, I'm very biased about these areas. I want to keep it the way it is and live there until other.

[01:34:09] **Robin Rudisill:** I'd just like to add, I'd like to request that Gavin give us maybe a written summary of some of the things he pointed out tonight, because I think they're really important, and we need to bring them up very specifically.