

March 11, 2024

VNC Ad Hoc Venice Community Plan/LCP Committee
Ocean Front Walk and Abbot Kinney Subareas

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Planning Process

When you look at all the photographs at the Venice Heritage Museum, so little has changed except for the clothing that people were wearing at the time. And according to Jeffrey Solomon, who ran Venice Beach Walking Tours, that's what makes Venice "The People's Beach." The people of L.A. all come to Venice, every shape and size and age and political ideology and religion and everything else. And we run a terrible risk of losing that charm that brings the 10 million people a year to Venice. So, I encourage everybody to get behind these efforts to say what we want and what we need and what we deserve. So many of us have lived here for so long and want to keep the wonderful character and its characters.

Ocean Front Walk

We don't want national chains on the boardwalk. That changes the character right there. I would like to incorporate policies or regulations in the Community Plan update that would limit, prohibit or manage national chain stores on Ocean Front Walk. Cities all over the country, including San Francisco, have enacted laws and ordinances to protect the uniqueness of certain areas, protect independent stores from not being able to compete economically with large corporations, and protect creative communities from becoming homogenized and losing their appeal. The national chains also drive up commercial rents and make it unaffordable for new businesses, displace neighborhood serving businesses that have been viable for decades, and erode the individual feel of the area. The former councilman, Mike Bonin, put forth a motion in November 2018 that was approved by the City's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee in April 2019. PLUM requested City Planning to study the impacts of independent retail uses on the social fabric of a community and report on the levels of economic, social, and cultural activity such uses support, including the number of jobs per square foot and the diversity of residents; and PLUM also instructed City Planning, in consultation with the City Attorney, to report on the feasibility of using zoning and other land use planning tools to encourage the siting of independent retail uses on Ocean Front Walk in the Venice community. The Venice Community Plan update is the perfect time to accomplish a restriction on these kinds of companies that, left unfettered, would eventually take over and homogenize our famous walkway that is best known for being unique, creative and different.

The new plans indicate that Ocean Front Walk is a Regional Center land use designation, which is defined as a hub of regional commerce, usually along major transportation corridors, mid-rise to high rise, active shop fronts and active streets, provides a significant number of jobs in addition to residential, retail, government, entertainment, cultural facilities, and health facilities. That sounds more like Century City than Ocean Front Walk, so I'm not sure going in that Ocean Front Walk should be designated a Regional Center.

Along Ocean Front Walk, I'm not sure it's going to be acceptable to increase density/living units and bring in a lot of new building to the extent that City Planning is proposing, because of sea level rise and

increased flooding. It's not clear City Planning has considered that, but the Coastal Commission will consider it when they review for the LCP, and so the community plan will need to match that. So, it remains to be seen if increased density is going to continue in the plan at that level.

Abbot Kinney Blvd

I think we ought to propose, at the very minimum, a five-foot setback for any new buildings on Abbot Kinney, because we need the space on the sidewalk for moving safely and for being a nice experience for tourists and residents alike. It's just too narrow. It's lovely to have outdoor eating.

In the description of Villages (the land use designation assigned to Abbot Kinney) it says that Abbot Kinney is historic and a cultural regional niche market. My concern about a lot of this is that it's going to stop being historic if we allow new building, especially up to five stories. The thing that makes Abbot Kinney so charming is all of the original architecture that's still standing, and I think that it would be great to try and put in the plan that we'd like to retain that whenever possible, and that maybe there's a certain percentage that has to stay that way. Or we might even want to have some of these buildings get distinctions where they cannot be changed or they cannot be torn down. Otherwise, we're going to look like everybody else. Same for the Boardwalk.

Drive down Abbot Kinney. I drove there with my husband the other night. And I said to him, five stories--that would be the top of those palm trees. Think about whether you want buildings going up to the top of the palm trees.

Parking and Traffic

The concern that I have, and I think most of my neighbors have, is really with traffic and the intensity of population. We already have very, very dense traffic in this whole area. There are signs posted all over the peninsula that talk about how to egress during a tsunami, but people laugh about it because the reality is there are hardly any exits out of the area and they're all going to be horribly congested in the event of any incident. So, the question becomes, what's the plan for increasing the infrastructure that will support this kind of increase in density? Because the highways and roads and the streets are all heavily congested now. If you increase density from three floors to five floors and increase the FAR, you're going to have a huge impact on traffic in the area. What is the city's intent in terms of building additional highways and roads and streets?

Environment

Centennial Park should get more trees because it's just a really shadowless spot.

I have deep concerns about five stories on both Ocean Front Walk and on Abbot Kinney. To build five stories on Ocean Front Walk you would need to de-water because of sea level rise. There are lots of environmental concerns and infrastructure concerns. Our Hyperion plant is barely covering us as we are.

An increase in density usually results in a decrease in green space, things like trees and plants that actually capture and infiltrate rain and runoff that goes down the gutters to the ocean. Being a coastal town, we should be concerned with that and think about how all that additional hardscape is going to affect our water quality.

Density

What we don't have is an inventory of what can be built. We need to know, particularly for our commercial corridors, how much could be built now, additional square footage for all of these commercial corridors, so we can see whether we actually have to go to five stories. It could be that if everybody built out to what's allowed now, we may be able to provide the units, including the affordable units that the city and the state are saying that we need. We need a baseline assessment provided by planning that tells us what the developers/property owners could build out now before we get forced into accepting, with bonuses, five stories. When you look at Thornton Lofts, you see how dense Thornton Lofts is, which you can do under the current zoning. Every community in all the districts has been asking for this information--what can be built with the current zoning?

If you read the 2004 Community Plan, it states there that the zoning allows for density for a population of 46,000 by 2010. And that was one of the features of the Community Plan in 2004. Venice population is now 38,000. So, the zoning as it exists apparently would allow for a population of 46,000 according to the 2004 Community Plan, and we're nowhere near that at this point.

The Density Bonus law and the Coastal Act law, which are both state laws, must be harmonized. It says that specifically in the law, and that means that in the Coastal Zone, when there are density bonus projects, you have to consider protection of coastal resources. It's a very subjective review and coastal hazards also need to be considered – sea level rise, flood zones, etc. So, it's not a slam dunk that a project would get five stories or whatever because they added an affordable unit. There're other factors that will be considered in the Coastal Zone.

Venice is a special coastal resource for the Coastal Commission and we're one of 13 in the state. And I kind of feel like maybe being one of 13 special coastal resource towns, we should get a decrease in the density bonus, a density deduction, a density reduction bonus for being special.

Infrastructure

You're talking about creating all this new housing and height and a lot of new units, and we've already got some sewage overflows down at the breakwater. There're problems. Old infrastructure has not been upgraded. We've got some things to deal with before we start adding significant units to this area.

Affordable Housing

The city of LA is barreling ahead as if the Coastal Act never existed. The Coastal Act requires, among other things, that the Local Coastal Plans consider the need for access for all people, not just the wealthy. So, we could insist that half the dwelling units created are restricted to tenants of low income and half the recreational facilities, for example hotels, should be youth hostels--again, accessible to people of no means or less means. I mean, one affordable unit for 19 market rate units, I think is unacceptable for the Coastal Zone.

Up zoning is not about creating affordable housing. It is about increasing the costs of the land with a bare minimum giveaway on affordable housing. And so you understand the economics when we talk about these density bonuses, when you put in the density, you put in more market rate housing. And as a result, you raise the area median income. And as a result, your rents go up as well.

New development actually increases the rent for low-income people.

Below is the complete version of the Public Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

(Times are from recorder used by committee)

[00:28:48] **Deborah Keaton:** Where Mar's auto body used to be, that's now a big empty lot. And the owners of the property have already got plans approved by the city to do a multi-use development. It's going to be retail on the bottom, business on the top and then it has a deck on the very top. I believe it's three stories. Or four with a roof deck. I don't know when they're going to break ground.

[00:29:23] **Alix Gucovsky:** And Deborah, they'll have to environmentally mitigate, which is because it was an auto shop, which is probably why it's taking so long. And I think Steve Ehrlich is the architect.

[00:29:36] **No name given:** So just a question regarding the Ocean Front Walk and the five-story new build. Is that something that we can contest or has that been designated already.

[00:29:46] **Richard Stanger:** No, that's something that we can contest. And the basis for our contention would be the opinion of the neighborhood. So, if the Venice people, especially along Ocean Front Walk, show us through the surveys that they want a certain thing then that allows us, gives us the ammunition to contest forcefully what it should be. So don't give up hope. We're here to provide it.

[00:30:19] **Robin Rudisill:** And through their comments tonight.

[00:30:21] **Richard Stanger:** Yeah. And the comments tonight, which will all go to City Planning and be available.

[00:30:28] **Alley Bean:** Can I ask you a question? How many affordable units do you get from a Density Bonus. I'm just curious, the five stories on Ocean Front Walk.

[00:30:36] **Richard Stanger:** According to the rules now you need 5% to be very low. Which is 1 in 20. If you have 20 units, one of them has to be very low affordable and you get these bonuses. For 10%, if you have ten units one of them has to be low or moderate to allow you to get these bonuses. So that's the way it is now. We can ask for higher percentages for low and very low units.

[00:31:10] **Jack Gremer:** Can you go back to the slide where it talks about the density bonuses.

[00:31:15] **Jim Robb:** I've got one question, too. Have you guys spoken to the BID about any of this? The Business Improvement District?

[00:31:21] **Alix Gucovsky:** No.

[00:31:22] **Jim Robb:** Okay, well, they should probably be involved since they're supposed to be controlling that part.

[00:31:29] **Alix Gucovsky:** Well, they should come to the meetings.

[00:31:44] **Jack Gremer:** Can we go back to where it actually says how you qualify for the density bonuses?

[00:32:50] **Jack Gremer:** So, I'm Jack Gremer. Nice to meet you guys. I work in retail leasing with Matthews Real Estate. Wanted to come to the meeting and be in a better position to inform my clients on what's going on in Venice. So just to kind of go off of the density bonuses right here, I think we kind of need to define what very low-income household and what low- or moderate-income household, what that really means, because there's two different ways to qualify for the density bonus. One is having at least 5% of the very low-income households, or 10% for the moderate-income households. So, I think to really understand how to qualify for these density bonuses the community who's going to be voting on it needs to understand what the threshold for very low-income household is and then what the moderate-income threshold is.

[00:33:42] **Alix Gucovsky:** Jack, I spoke to that. Did you not hear me when I brought up what the two different thresholds were?

[00:33:47] **Jack Gremer:** Yeah, I heard you say that it was based off of the median income, but I didn't get the actual 5% of units that needs to be this rental rate per month.

[00:33:54] **Alix Gucovsky:** So, let me just clarify, because this comes up a lot. Area median income is \$120,000 right now as we currently stand. It's different in every area in the city. For low income, which is the 10% (not very low income) that's based off 60 to 80% of the area median income, which is \$120,000. And I believe that the very low income is 40 to 60%, in that general region. So hopefully that clarifies to everybody what that means, and what's considered what you should be paying in rent is a third of your salary. So, these are the numbers that we work off of. I just wanted to clarify that.

[00:34:59] **Jack Gremer:** No worries. And I guess kind of just to go off this a little bit, for a developer who is considering building a mixed-use project like this on the Ocean Front Walk, they're going to need to know--5% of my units need to be at this price. So, although we know the incomes and whatnot, the actual rental rate that's going to be charged for the housing unit, I think is relevant for the community to know.

[00:35:26] **Alix Gucovsky:** That's based on...so you would figure a third of what you're making. You take 60% of \$120,000, which is \$72,000. And you take a third of that, which is \$24,000, and that would be \$2,000 a month rent for what's low income (not very low income). But it could be \$2,150 depending on where you net out in that range between 60 to 80% or 40 to 60%. But that's how you do the math.

[00:36:05] **No name given:** \$120,000 per household?

[00:36:08] **Alix Gucovsky:** Yes. Correct. And these are not my numbers. Sean is here. You can talk about that with him.

[00:36:21] **Jack Gremer:** So, \$2,000 per month is the threshold. At least 5% of units.

[00:36:26] **Alix Gucovsky:** No, that's on the 10%. That's on low income. So, for ten very low income you would take 50% of \$120,000, \$60,000. And then you would take a third of that which is \$20,000, and that would knock it down to \$1,700.

[00:36:47] **Jack Gremer:** So, we have \$2,000 a month. 10% of all units need to be at least \$2,000 a month or cheaper.

[00:36:54] **Alix Gucovsky:** But Jack, remember, the low income is a range between 60 to 80%. So, there's going to be a low end of that income of that rent. And then there's going to be a high end of that rent. It's a range. Same thing for the very low income. It's between 40 to 60% or somewhere in that range of the area median income. So don't sit there and be like it's \$2,000 a month.

[00:37:22] **Robin Rudisill:** And it changes every year.

[00:37:24] **Jack Gremer:** But for a rough estimate, we can say for these developments at least 10% of all units need to be \$2,000 or at least 5% need to be \$1,400.

[00:37:41] **Sean O'Brian:** And then those qualify for annual bump ups.

[00:37:47] **Jack Gremer:** Yeah. What would the rent increases be?

[00:37:49] **Sean O'Brian:** It could be 5% plus inflation. So, it could be as high as 10% annual.

[00:37:55] **Judy White:** Hi, I'm Judy White. I have lived in and owned property on Marina Peninsula on Ocean Front Walk. And the concern that I have, and I think most of my neighbors have, is really with traffic and the intensity of population. We already have very, very dense traffic in this whole area. There are signs posted all over the peninsula that talk about how you can egress during a tsunami, but people there laugh about it because the reality is there are hardly any exits out of the area and they're all going to be horribly congested in the event of any incident. So, the question really becomes, what is the intent or what's the plan for increasing the infrastructure that will support this kind of increase in density? Because the highways and roads and the streets are all heavily congested now. If you increase density from three floors to five floors and increase the FAR, you're going to have a huge impact on traffic in the area. And so, what is the city's intent in terms of building additional highways and roads and streets? Thanks.

[00:39:03] **Alley Bean:** So, my question is... I called Ruth Galanter, who was our Councilwoman that created the Coastal Act, just to get clarification, because I was under the impression that affordable housing and affordability was a key component of the Coastal Act, to make the coast accessible to everyone in Los Angeles. That's really the reason. So, she wrote this back. She said this is what triggered the initiative in 1972 that became the Coastal Act. The city of LA is barreling ahead as if the Coastal Act never existed. The Coastal Act requires, among other things, that the Local Coastal Plans consider the need for access for all people, not just the wealthy. So, you could insist that half the dwelling units created are restricted to tenants of low income and half the recreational facilities, for example hotels, should be youth hostels--again, accessible to people of no means or less means. Of course, the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act were what the city is supposed to follow until they have a Local Coastal Plan that the state commission has said is okay. She said that she hopes that

Venice will stay vigilant as these land use plans are being formed and everybody should read Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

[00:40:36] **Alley Bean:** You can download it. It's really specific. And what I just saw--and I should know this as I've been living here for 30 years, but it never really occurred to me--is how few of these special resources have been picked to be on the coast. I mean, it's 13--Carmel...and I can't remember where they are, but only 13 places in the entire coast of California were picked to be special coastal resource places. They picked Venice because it already had a lot of affordable housing, a lot of apartment buildings back in the day, which are being torn down at a pretty terrifying rate, especially along the coast. So that's why I called her, to just get clarification. So, my question would be to the Planning Commission is how we are going to, I don't know what the word is, kind of make sure that lots and lots of affordable...I mean, one affordable unit for 20 units, I think is unacceptable for the Coastal Act. It might be acceptable for the city, that is acceptable for the city. But for the Coastal Act, I don't believe it's acceptable.

[00:41:52] **Paul Abascal:** Hello, I'm Paul Abascal. I've lived down here since 1984, so I had a couple things. Just, firstly, this 40% of 20 plus this and you can put three units in or... That was incredibly confusing to me--based on median income and all that. This sounds like a loophole for developers to cram in five story buildings and say they're going to do something and they're going to end up not and there's nobody to police it, which leads me to my next comment. I live right off the Ocean Front Walk, and these vendors--I brought this up before--the vendors that are renting these motorized scooters that are getting bigger and beefier and faster, and people are screaming up and down the boardwalk. We've already had a few people get seriously injured, and there needs to be something done about this. The vendors need to be responsible for these vehicles that they're leasing. They're making money, and they don't really care if anybody gets hurt.

[00:42:58] **No name given:** Those vehicles are privately owned.

[00:43:01] **Paul Abascal:** They're businesses. And I'm not trying to shut anybody down, but they need to be told by the city officially that these vehicles are not allowed where everyone is walking on the Ocean Front Walk. It's incredibly dangerous. You get these young kids that are screaming around, the tires are a foot wide. These things accelerate incredibly fast. People have gotten hurt. The third thing I'm going to say, last thing--the bollards that were put in at the north side of the boardwalk still don't work. A woman's been killed by a vehicle that went on there a few years ago, a beautiful woman on her honeymoon. Recently, a gentleman was struck by a car driven by a drunk guy that sped down the boardwalk and got on to the boardwalk because the bollards that the city or somebody paid for have never worked. They've never worked. So, I don't know who's in charge or who didn't do what, but they need to be fixed.

[00:44:03] **Jim Robb:** Let me answer a couple of those real quick. I was the chair of the Ocean Front Walk.

[00:44:14] **Sean O'Brian:** I think that woman died about 12 years ago.

[00:44:18] **Jim Robb:** I was the chair of the Ocean Front Walk for six years. The bollards are almost in, but they built them under two different bids. There was one to build them, and there was one to run

electricity to them. They didn't do them at the same time. So, they started running the electricity to the ones close to Santa Monica. They're on my street right now, which is North Venice. They're almost to Washington. So, I would say probably in the next couple of months that will be done. The second thing is the scooters. I hate the scooters. Everybody knows that. Electric bikes, whatever they are. So, Bird, all the ones that are mass produced, they have geofencing. All the ones that they're renting now do not. We have sent motion after motion to the city. There's supposed to be signage. There's a \$196 fine for anybody riding on the boardwalk. They are supposed to rent them to go down Speedway only. There's supposed to be signage. So, the problem with that is there's no enforcement. Nobody wants to enforce it. I don't know if the BID should or who should do it, but there's no enforcement. LAPD used to enforce it. They don't want to enforce it.

[00:45:35] **Paul Abascal:** We have to tell them to enforce it.

[00:45:37] **Jim Robb:** Yes, we do.

[00:45:38] **Paul Abascal:** It's very dangerous.

[00:45:39] **No name given:** It's very dangerous.

[00:45:42] **Jim Robb:** The big ones are the big buildings. Each of the small ones pay \$4,000 a year to the BID for the people to clean. And then the security. The only thing security does is ride their bikes around. So, I don't know how to get everybody involved, but I'll help you.

[00:46:02] **Paul Abascal:** I'm talking about who rents the retail spaces.

[00:46:05] **Jim Robb:** Who owns the building. There're people that own buildings right here. So, whoever rents that.

[00:46:10] **Paul Abascal:** So, we should just tell them they can't rent to them.

[00:46:11] **Jim Robb:** Yes. Okay, so that's all I've got to say, but I'm helping out.

[00:46:14] **Paul Abascal:** No, no, I appreciate it, but maybe being realistic... Well, hang on a second. Being realistic, they could restrict them to the bike path, but not the Ocean front Walk.

[00:46:39] **Richard Stanger:** Little away from land use, but it is an important issue.

[00:46:49] **Mark Ryavec:** My name's Mark Ryavec, President of the Stakeholders Association. I have lived in central Venice for 35 years. I really would appreciate it if you'd put the one of Ocean Front Walk back up. In the meantime, Paul, I agree with you entirely on the danger of these things. And they're illegal, both on the bike path and on the boardwalk. LAPD has consistently in the past been the one that enforces it. The BID has no law enforcement authority, so they're not going to enforce it. Simply, Traci needs to ask the LAPD to start writing tickets. And I don't know why that hasn't happened. But back to if you could put up the one for, not the boardwalk but Abbot Kinney. One of your members mentioned to me that what we don't have--and part of that, I think, is reflective of the fact we don't have anybody from planning here--is an inventory of what can be built. You go down

Abbot Kinney now and almost all the buildings are one story. So, we need, particularly for our commercial corridors and Ocean Front Walk, how much could be built now, additional square footage for all of these commercial corridors, so we could see whether we actually need to meet whatever the city numbers are being imposed on us, if we actually have to go to five stories. It could be if everybody built out to what's allowed now, we may be able to provide the units, including the affordable units that the city and the state are saying that we need. So, we need a baseline assessment provided by planning before we adopt either the Community Plan or the Land Use Plan that tells us what the developers/property owners could build out now? How many affordable units could they fit into that space--particularly around Abbot Kinney, Venice Boulevard, Washington Boulevard, Rose, Main--before we get forced into accepting with bonuses five stories, which I think is going to... When you look at Thornton Lofts, you look how dense Thornton Lofts is, that you can do under the current zoning. So, the question is, why should we be opening ourselves up to going to five stories?

[00:49:15] **Jason Tong:** All right. I'll be really fast. My name is Jason Tong, and my family's been here forever. 50's. Business owners. Residents. Live here, work here. We've seen it all happen. We've seen it all change. I see a lot of passion here. And I'm just here to remind everyone my store is trying to be left out of the Community Plan Update. Our block was... I'm just here to remind everyone that while the community is more than just one person's vision, right, its businesses, its residents, its homeless, its low-income housing, its tourism, its many more things than just the workers here, right? We have to take this into collective consideration as a whole and not let the reasons that we come here make those things go away. This is a community, and we need to take those things into consideration. It's just not our individual dreams or vision of the place. That's it.

[00:50:31] **Mark Rago:** I was just thinking--the Freakshow building. Those owners, they basically kicked out a bunch of retail stores and it's been empty for, what, six years now? And empty storefronts on the walkway are just not good for anybody. I'm not sure if that can change somehow some way, but I think it's just wrong. And they have a meeting with the Coastal Commission on Wednesday to do a rooftop deck type thing. Meanwhile, they won't let anybody rent a store from the bottom of their establishment. So, I just think it's wrong and I'm not sure if anything can be done about it, but I just wanted to bring it up and point it out.

[00:51:09] **Sean O'Brian:** They're still collecting rent from Snapchat, that's why.

[00:51:11] **Jim Robb:** Yeah, they paid the leases all up front.

[00:51:33] **Sean O'Brian:** Adding on to what the gentleman said earlier about unchained, maybe we should ask the city, for new businesses that come in and redevelop, that they don't rent out the commercial aspect to large chains.

[00:51:55] **Kate Scanlon-Double:** Hi again. I'm Kate Scanlon-Double from Venice, long time 40-year resident. And just one thing about Abbot Kinney I would like in the future: I think we ought to propose, at least at the very minimum, a five-foot setback for any new buildings going there, because we need the space on the sidewalk for moving safely and for being a nice experience for tourists and residents alike. And it's just too narrow, especially... it's lovely to have outdoor eating. I think it's great. But again, we have to be mindful going forward of what those setbacks could be and how that could benefit all. Thank you.

[00:52:39] **Richard Stanger:** Yeah, I'd just like to add that sidewalks are probably serving 2,000 people a day, and the parking spaces are probably serving 50 people a day. So, if you're looking at how to maximize space in front of the buildings maybe looking at the parking spaces would be much better for everybody.

[00:53:13] **Deborah Keaton:** I was reading the description of Villages, and it says that Abbot Kinney is historic and a cultural regional niche market. And my concern about a lot of this is that it's going to stop being historic if we allow new building, especially up to five stories. The thing that makes Abbot Kinney so charming is all of the original architecture that's still standing, and I think that it would be great to try and put in there somewhere that we'd like to retain that whenever possible, and that maybe there's a certain percentage that has to stay that way. Or we might even want to have some of these buildings get distinctions where they cannot be changed or they cannot be torn down. Otherwise, we're going to look like everybody else. Same for the Boardwalk.

[00:54:03] **Brian Averill:** Hey, guys. I just want to remind the board members here that we cannot participate in meetings. That's okay. Naomi makes an allowance if you live in the neighborhood, but otherwise... Thanks.

[00:54:21] **Alix Gucovsky:** Deborah, you live in the neighborhood, yes? [Yes, I do.] Can we note that, Robin for the... [Sure.] Yeah, thanks.

[00:54:31] **Fran Solomon:** So, I don't know if any anybody here attended a couple of nights ago, the Venice Heritage Museum opened up, and it's a wowser. It's unbelievable. I've lived on Navy Street and Speedway for 48 years, and my husband Jeffrey ran Venice Beach Walking Tours. Many of you know him. So, when you look at all the photographs, and there are a lot of them at the museum, so little has changed. Except for the clothing that people were wearing at the time, very, very little has changed. And that's what makes it, as Jeffrey would say, "The People's Beach." The people of L.A. all come to Venice, every shape and size and age and political ideology and religion and everything else. And we run a terrible risk of losing that charm that brings the 10 million people a year to Venice. And I don't want to be Malibu. I'm sorry if there's any of you that love Malibu. I don't want to be Malibu. I don't want it to look like it, to feel like it. So, I encourage everybody to get behind these efforts to say what we want and what we need and what we deserve. So many of us have lived here for so long and want to keep the wonderful character and its characters.

[00:56:45] **Dave:** We don't want national chains. We don't want McDonalds. We don't want Ben and Jerry's. They're gone. We don't want national chains on the boardwalk. That changes the character right there. Of course I'm with that group that doesn't want that. We don't want McDonald's on the boardwalk. We don't...you know what I mean. I know people get the idea. We don't want that on our boardwalk. Thank you.

[00:57:15] **Richard Stanger:** Yeah, I don't think anyone in this room probably wants that.

[00:57:18] **Frank Murphy:** I got a question for him. Is that Mac place, that's a McDonald's, isn't it? The Mac burgers. The red one?

[00:57:34] **Dave:** The only one we have is Starbucks, but there's no McDonald's or anything. We're trying to prevent that; we don't want that.

[00:57:42] **Steve Williams:** Are you talking about a vegan place or something by the paddle tennis courts. That place?

[00:57:47] **Frank Murphy:** No, the red place with the lettering, McDonald's new vegetarian.

[00:57:53] **Steve Williams:** I think it was a spoof on their graphic. Yeah, it was a joke.

Committee Comments

[00:58:22] **Mark Mack:** Well, last time I couldn't make a comment because it was cut off. Venice Beach is some of the most valuable real estate in the world according to a financial report I read. It's more valuable than Rio de Janeiro or Cannes in France in terms of real estate and potential. So, there's a lot of pressure to make Venice Beach one of those kinds of places. I think I'm personally a little bit conflicted because there is a side to Venice Beach, which is the public side, which is such a resource for everybody in Los Angeles. It's the only public place we really have in terms of large public space, comparable to Central Park in New York, in terms of people using the space. Los Angeles has a minus in terms of public parks. Yes. Sometimes people count Griffith Park and all of those spaces, but those are not really urban parks, those are hiking trails and things like that. So, on one hand, I see that need. On the other hand, I see a very sometimes derelict situation on the beach. And there is sort of a midway of finding a good balance between what can be developed. There should be housing, but should it be low-income housing, should it be mid-range houses, should it be condominiums for the rich? All of these things should be considered. So, I think it can improve. Maybe five stories, maybe it's too much. I think there could be a very interesting mixed-use development on the beach that's mixing in. Not only the vendors, but also real stores, real restaurants, good restaurants, and so forth. I mean, that's just my opinion.

[01:01:03] **Alix Gucovsky:** You all know I always have a lot to say. Thank you, guys all for coming. One, I've said this at many, many meetings, and I'm going to keep saying it, which is: is this a community plan or a commodity plan? And every time I look at these plans, in all nine meetings we've had, this is a commodity plan, not a community plan. And that's a real disappointment. And we are the community, not the commodity. And if we destroy our community, we will no longer be a commodity. I have deep concerns. Mark Ryavec's comments--every community in all the districts has been asking for this information--what can be built with the current zoning? So, this is a regular question. I have deep concerns about five stories on both Ocean Front Walk and on Abbot Kinney. To build five stories on Ocean Front Walk you would need to de-water because of sea level rise. Lots of environmental concerns and infrastructure concerns. Our Hyperion plant is barely covering us as we are. I'm a surfer, a lot of you know that. So, I'm at the beach pretty regularly. I see the flooding. I see what's going on there. We have bird species migrating through. We need to think about our ocean. I don't know what to say about five stories there.

[01:02:23] **Alix Gucovsky:** And then, drive down Abbot Kinney. I drove there with my husband the other night. And I said to him, five stories--that would be the top of those palm trees. You guys should all take a look at that and think if you want buildings going up to the top of the palm trees. Up zoning.

Up zoning is not about creating affordable housing. It is about increasing the costs of the land with a bare minimum giveaway on affordable housing. And so you understand the economics when we talk about these density bonuses, when you put in the density, you put in more market rate housing. And as a result, you raise the area median income. And as a result, your rents go up as well too. This happened in Koreatown. You guys can read about it. Density was increased there. The density came in. So, you'd have four affordable units, and you get 20 or 15 or however many market rate with four. And now your median income is up, which means the new rents coming in are higher. So, what was maybe \$800 affordability is now \$1,200. Do you think the people who are paying \$800 can now afford to pay \$1,200 a month? No. So important reality. That's it. Thank you, guys.

[01:03:58] **Frank Murphy:** Okay, for those that don't know me, I'm Frank Murphy. A couple things that were coming up from Mr. Tong and Miss Sullivan. I think it was Sullivan. I'm sorry. We're talking about diversity and Tong was talking about the many facets. When I first moved out here, I lived in one of his father's buildings on Ocean Front Walk right across from the paddle tennis courts. So, anyhow, that was back in 75 or 76 or something. I wanted to talk about the concept of zoning. Zoning allows development, it doesn't dictate development. So, when Mark says, what's the zoning allow? You have to go from the allowance to the reasonable expectation of that development. So, bonuses are a specific tool that they can use to have a carrot to incentivize specific results. So, they're using that tool to incentivize specific results which would be low-income housing. Now, it gets overused and bastardized. And we all know that. We've seen it. We've been a part of it. We've seen it. It's happened in Venice all too often. That needs to be streamlined and taken care of.

[01:05:38] **Frank Murphy:** That being the case, I understand that people might believe that more and more scarcity in housing is going to reduce the price of the housing. That is not what happens. It actually accelerates. And that is something that we really need to dispel because we have such a huge housing issue citywide. It's big time. Everything that we deal with on a day-to-day basis, that is homelessness, displacement, lack of diversity, so forth and so on. All of those issues are related to, in no small amount, to housing. And we need to take care of this. And as a community, we need to take care of it. Doesn't mean that Venice is the sole supplier of housing. That is not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is, we need to be cognizant of that. When we approach the housing, the zoning and the Planning Department, we need to tell them, hey look, we have oversupply, which I believe we do in certain sectors, and they need to have others step up to the plate too if we're going to be supplying housing. Thank you.

[01:07:17] **Sean O'Brian:** The meeting is going to end early. I think you guys should talk over your time.

[01:07:23] **Robin Rudisill:** First of all, I'd like to say there's been a lot of really good comments tonight. And I appreciate all of you who spoke. Thank you, Mark Rago, for coming and bringing up the chain store issue. I'm really glad you did. The person who came from Marina Peninsula to talk about the impact of increasing density on the Ocean Front Walk on that neighborhood. Very important concept. Regarding the density bonus law, I just want to say that the explanation we gave here tonight in the slide presentation is very simple and general. The state and city density bonus laws are very, very detailed, very complex. It takes weeks of study to even get through reading them and then to try to understand them. So, it's not as simple as we discussed here tonight. And the other important thing for you to know is the way the law works now is that the Density Bonus law and the Coastal Act law, both state laws, must be harmonized. It says that specifically in the law. And that means that in the Coastal

Zone, when there are density bonus projects, you have to consider protection of coastal resources. And it's a very subjective review. And coastal hazards also need to be considered — sea level rise, flood zones, etc. So, it's not a slam dunk that a project would get five stories or whatever because they added an affordable unit. There're other factors that will be considered in the Coastal Zone. And then lastly, I just wanted to make the point that along Ocean Front Walk I'm not sure it's going to be acceptable to increase density/living units and bring in a lot of new building to the extent that City Planning is proposing right now, because in light of sea level rise, increased flooding--we're seeing it in the paper--our coast is eroding and there're flood hazard zones. FEMA updates the flood hazard zone maps all the time, quite frequently. And I'm not sure City Planning has considered that. I'm kind of thinking they didn't consider that yet. I know the Coastal Commission will consider it when they review for the LCP, and so the Community Plan will need to match that. So, it remains to be seen if that's going to continue in the plan at that level.

[01:09:49] **Steve Williams:** Thanks, everybody, for coming tonight, a lot of good input here. Some of the things Robin said I also noted as being really significant. What comes back to me is the infrastructure upgrades. You're talking about creating all this new housing and height and it's a lot of new units, and we've already got some sewage overflows down at the breakwater I've witnessed. There're problems. Old infrastructure has not been upgraded. We've got some things to deal with, I think, before we start adding significant units to this area. And kind of another thing that fits into that in a sense is, as someone mentioned earlier, the increase in density usually results in a decrease in green space, things like trees and plants and things like that that could actually infiltrate, capture and infiltrate rain and runoff that goes down the gutters to the ocean. So being a coastal town, we should be concerned with that and think about how all that additional hardscape is going to affect our water quality. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that, for various reasons, because that's kind of what I'm involved with. Another thing that I wanted to mention was Venice being a special coastal resource for the Coastal Commission and how we're one of, I think, 13. And I kind of feel like maybe being one of 13 special coastal resource towns, we should get a decrease in the density bonus, a density deduction, a density reduction bonus for being special. Call it what you will. That's my point. All right. Thank you.

[01:11:50] **No name given:** You don't want five story buildings in Mendocino.

[01:12:02] **Ed Ferrer:** So, I was fortunate to show up in Venice when the hippies replaced the beatniks. So that's how far back I go in Venice. I can definitely say that I thought it was totally unique. Although then it wasn't a tourist trap, it was just a place to be yourself. Venice became part of LA because supposedly LA was going to take care of the canals. And of course, they filled them in. We had somebody from the canals talk about watching two houses burn to the ground because the fire department could not find a fire hydrant. And of course, that situation has existed for how long? A long time. And whenever they talk about increasing densities, I think of being at Washington and Lincoln when they said that for Playa Vista, the people would use their cars less. Right. And of course, you have people who want to turn the 90 into a parkway, which is nice, but what are we going to do with the traffic. So, getting on to affordability, I can't imagine...there's so many friends of mine that have left Venice because they can't afford it. So many families have moved out of Venice because they can't afford it. And as Alix has pointed out, as we allow development, it actually increases the rent for low-income people. So anyway, I'm here because Naomi talked me into it. She thinks that we can actually talk to the city. I mean, if you look at the city, what have they done? Not much. So that's it.

[01:14:13] **Richard Stanger:** Okay. I have a couple of points to make. One, if this is the second most visited tourist destination in Southern California, can you imagine Main Street in Disneyland changing out to five story mixed use development? It doesn't make any sense, nor really does it make much sense for number two to do the same thing. If you read the 2004 Community Plan, it states there that the zoning allows for density for a population of 46,000 by 2010. And that was one of the features of the Community Plan in 2004. Venice population is now 38,000. So, the zoning as it exists apparently would allow for a population of 46,000 according to the 2004 Community Plan. But we're nowhere near that at this point. And I don't know how many decades it'll be before we get there. So that's an interesting point to keep in mind. Let's see. I think that's it. I'd just like to thank you people here and all of those before you that came to these meetings. We have learned a great deal. We will all put it together in an understandable form as we can make it, review it with you, review it with the Venice Neighborhood Council, and then take the steps necessary to get what you want, as much as we can, included in the actual plans that the city is putting together. So, thank you very much. And I adjourn the meeting now.

[01:16:45] **Steve Williams:** If you completed your survey, you could leave them on the table and I'll come grab them. Thank you.

Mark Rago (in writing): I am currently on the Ocean Front Walk Committee, and I would like to pursue an ordinance to be incorporated in the Community Plan Update that would limit, prohibit or manage national chain stores on Ocean Front Walk. Cities all over the country, including San Francisco, have enacted laws and ordinances to protect the uniqueness of certain areas, protect independent stores from not being able to compete economically with large corporations, and protect creative communities from becoming homogenized and losing their appeal. They also drive up commercial rents and make it unaffordable for new businesses, displace neighborhood serving businesses that have been viable for decades, and erode the individual feel of the area. As I'm sure you are aware, Starbucks had illegal truck deliveries during the am hours waking up many residents for over a year, and those problems only happen with National Chain stores. Ben and Jerry's opened directly next to a family-owned ice cream store putting them out of business, and now they're both gone. The Freakshow was forced to leave, while getting threatened with litigation if they stayed 1 minute after their lease ended, and that space has been kept empty for 7 years because the owners are looking for "a new type of tenant."

Attached is the motion that Mike Bonin put forth in 2018 that was later approved by the City's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee. This directly relates to the Planning process we are going through now, as PLUM requested City Planning to study the impacts of independent retail uses on the social fabric of a community and report on the levels of economic, social, and cultural activity such uses support, including the number of jobs per square foot and the diversity of residents; and PLUM also instructed City Planning, in consultation with the City Attorney, to report on the feasibility of using zoning and other land use planning tools to encourage the siting of independent retail uses on Ocean Front Walk in the Venice community. The Venice Community Plan update is the perfect time to accomplish a restriction on these kinds of companies that, left unfettered, would eventually take over and homogenize our famous walkway that is best known for being unique, creative and different.

MOTION PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

The Venice community in the City of Los Angeles is experiencing a significant amount of investment and redevelopment due to a strong local economy and robust housing market. This has resulted in economic pressure on commercial properties such as rising rents and the displacement of locally-owned independent retail businesses. Ocean Front Walk, in particular, is experiencing these impacts.

Locally-owned independent businesses are a hallmark of a healthy community and help to safeguard the public welfare. Neighborhood-based businesses are important contributors to the identity of Venice and help to sustain the social fabric of the community by providing local services to residents in a walkable environment.

Other cities such as San Francisco, CA and Jersey City, NJ have enacted land use planning and zoning rules to preserve the "sense of place" and unique neighborhood character in their communities by supporting small businesses and independent retail uses. These so-called "formula retail ordinances" allow a local government to shape the mix of businesses in their city. Some ban all chain stores from certain neighborhoods; some cap the number of retail chain stores allowed within a neighborhood; and others require a case-by-case approval of proposed retail use projects.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Department of City Planning study the impacts of independent retail uses on the social fabric of a community and to report back on the levels of economic, social, and cultural activity such uses support, including the number of jobs per square foot and the diversity of residents.

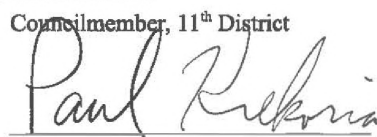
I FURTHER MOVE that the Department of City Planning, in consultation with the City Attorney, report of the feasibility of using zoning and other land use planning tools to encourage the siting of independent retail uses on Ocean Front Walk in the Venice community.

PRESENTED BY:



MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL

NOV 27 2018

