



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: May 5, 2020
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Aaron Kunz, Deputy Director of Transportation
Jessie Holzer, Transportation Planner
Subject: Wilshire Boulevard – La Cienega Boulevard Streetscape Plan and Design Standards
Attachments: 1. Citywide Mailer for Virtual Walk Audits

INTRODUCTION

The intent of the Wilshire Boulevard – La Cienega Boulevard Streetscape Plan and Design Standards project is to create attractive, welcoming, and walkable corridors that future Metro Purple Line subway riders will immediately recognize as Beverly Hills when they emerge from the two underground stations. Staff and consulting firm *Toole Design Group* are preparing to launch the first phase of community outreach for the project in May/June 2020 using virtual outreach methods in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost to perform consulting services for the Wilshire Boulevard – La Cienega Boulevard Streetscape Plan and Design Standards will not exceed \$872,600 and is included in the fiscal year 2019-2020 *Capital Improvement Project No. 00720: Wilshire Blvd Subway Streetscape* fully funded utilizing the City's Measure R Local Return Funds.

BACKGROUND

Construction is underway for the Metro Purple Line Extension, which will bring two subway stations to Beverly Hills: Wilshire/La Cienega (2023) and Wilshire/Rodeo (2025). When the subway opens, there is expected to be a dramatic increase in pedestrian activity along Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards through Beverly Hills.

On November 19, 2019, City Council approved an agreement with consulting firm *Toole Design Group* to complete the placemaking project, which will enhance the pedestrian environment by identifying conceptual locations for amenities like sidewalk furniture, bus shelters, landscaping, wayfinding, and public art. The project will help create distinctive,

consistent boulevards, while allowing for the customization of branded “districts” in various sections.

The intent is to incorporate installation of plan recommendations around station areas into Metro street restoration work to achieve cost savings and minimize impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods. The Streetscape Plan is scheduled to be completed in early 2021 in order to incorporate these design standards into Metro’s construction drawings.

As there are currently limited opportunities for passenger loading at the stations due to the presence of peak hour travel lanes on both Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards, and Metro has just recently started development of a First/Last Mile Plan for Section 1 of the Purple Line Extension to encourage multi-modal access to the station, the Streetscape Plan will also explore options for a three-story Mobility Hub at the Gale Staging Yard property, to be coordinated with Metro’s plan. Potential uses could include passenger drop-off and pick-up, autonomous vehicle staging, and long-term bicycle parking.

As part of their contract *Toole Design Group* will produce the following:

- An existing conditions analysis for Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards (in progress), which will include a review of existing City, State, and Federal design guidance; and preparation of base maps
- A community engagement strategy for in-person and online feedback throughout the approximately one-year project lifetime (described below)
- Development of Streetscape and Signage Design Standards
- Development of a Draft and Final Streetscape Plan, including visual concepts and implementation process guidance
- Programming concepts for the Gale Mobility Hub

DISCUSSION

Since the project started, *Toole Design Group* has completed a number of items to prepare for the first round of community engagement scheduled for late spring 2020 that will inform the direction of the recommendations.

Community Engagement Process

Toole Design Group has produced a community engagement strategy that outlines the many ways stakeholders can participate. The first round of engagement opportunities will launch in May to introduce the project to the community and collect feedback on the existing streetscape conditions on Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards, including both elements that make the streets unique and attractive, as well as areas that could be improved to enhance the corridors.

To collect this information, the community is invited to attend a virtual “walk audit” along the Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevard corridors to allow for a deep dive into these iconic streets. The virtual walk audit replaces planned in-person events scheduled to occur prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and safer-at-home orders.

During the virtual walk audit, *Toole Design Group* will lead stakeholders along portions of Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards to explore current uses of public space and the

streetscape. The audit includes 30 questions which ask participants to observe how people move along the boulevards (walking, driving, bicycling, etc.) and to discuss key landmarks, destinations, amenities, opportunities, and challenges on both corridors. Participants will also have the option of adding comments directly into a map and commenting on others' comments.

Community members interested in participating in the virtual walk audits can find the activity on the project website at www.connect.beverlyhills.org (discussed further below). In addition, the City will collect community input through typical channels, including phone calls (310-285-1128) and emails (transportation@beverlyhills.org).

After the existing conditions and initial outreach phases of the project are completed and *Toole Design Group* moves into developing draft recommendations, community input opportunities will continue. Future community engagement events and promotional activities will include:

- Up to six community project advisory committee meetings throughout the project lifetime (committee will be determined with City Council input after the initial outreach phase)
- A four-day, potentially virtual design charrette with a series of scheduled programs for the community to participate in to confirm the project vision, goals, and objectives, and develop initial design ideas (anticipated to occur in June)
- A four-day, potentially virtual charrette to refine streetscape plan concepts developed since the first charrette (anticipated to occur in late summer/fall)
- Two pop-up community feedback sessions tied to existing events to review design recommendations (anticipated to occur in summer and fall//winter, pending safer-at-home orders)
- Sidewalk decals along the project corridors to notify the community about project milestones (pending safer-at-home-orders)

Marketing and Communications Campaign

Toole Design Group has produced a project identity for community engagement activities to give a consistent look and feel to its documents/materials so they are easily recognizable to the public. This identity will carry through an immersive, targeted, multi-platform marketing and communications campaign that will capture the imagination of Beverly Hills neighborhoods and inspire stakeholders to get involved in the shaping of their public realm. The project identity will be used for items such as reports, fact sheets, webpages, and community outreach materials, including citywide mailers and comment forms.

As part of the identity, the Streetscape Plan will be referred to as "Connect Beverly Hills" with the taglines "Meet me on Wilshire Boulevard" and "Meet me on La Cienega Boulevard". The names were identified to:

- Promote both Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards as unique and regionally significant destinations
- Communicate that each street will receive a context-sensitive streetscape plan
- Highlight the important role these streets have in connecting with the future Metro Purple Line stations

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- Convey the main goal of the project as placemaking to enhance the existing streetscapes with additional amenities that will make them even more walkable
- Allow for the project name to be transferable to other streets in Beverly Hills as additional streetscape plans are created

To get the word out about the upcoming engagement activities, the City will be sending out a citywide mailer (**Attachment 1**), posting in newspapers and on social media, sending email notices to City and Metro stakeholder lists, publishing in e-newsletters, providing information on the City website, and making announcements at other Metro community and stakeholder meetings.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for City Council information.

Susan Healy Keene

Approved By

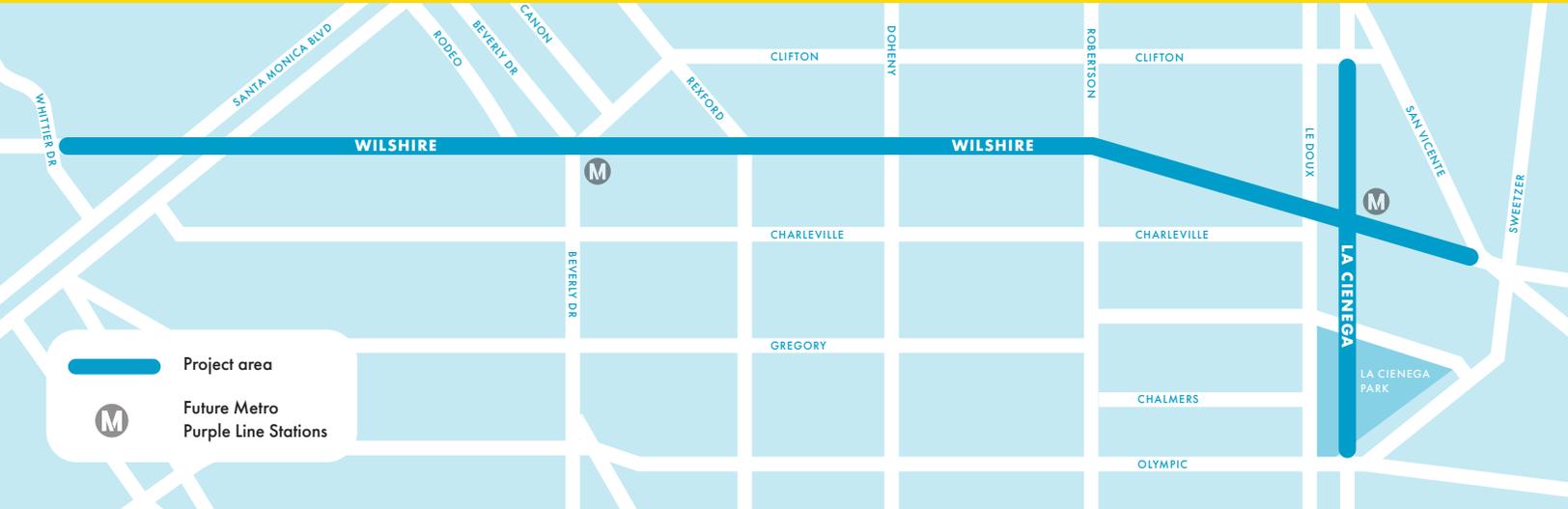
ATTACHMENT 1

Connect BEVERLY HILLS

MEET ME ON WILSHIRE & LA CIENEGA

The City of Beverly Hills is undertaking a streetscape plan for Wilshire and La Cienega Boulevards!

This project will develop a vision for new sidewalk designs and pedestrian amenities that better connect our community and prepare for the opening of the subway.





Community Development Department
City of Beverly Hills
455 N Rexford Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90210



In Spring and Summer of 2020, visit us online at connect.beverlyhills.org to learn more about ways to participate in the streetscape plan.

- **May – June:** Tour the project area online in a virtual walk audit and help us answer important questions about current street conditions.
- **May – September:** Visit the online project map to share the places you visit along the boulevards and what makes them special.

This online engagement takes the place of in-person events and activities during this time of social distancing. Your participation will help create a shared vision for public space that is safe, vibrant, and accessible to all residents and visitors.

For more information and to stay involved, check out our website at connect.beverlyhills.org, contact transportation@beverlyhills.org or call us at 310-285-1128.

We look forward to working with you!

