



Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”)
Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, November 28, 2023
Approved January 23, 2024

Document copies were available at www.greaterwilshire.org/LUCdocs.

I. WELCOMING REMARKS

A. Call to order (Brian Curran)

A duly noticed Meeting of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”) Land Use Committee was held at Marlborough School, Room C115, 250 S. Rossmore Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90004. Chair Brian Curran called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

B. Roll Call (Mark Alpers)

The Secretary called the roll. Six of the nine Committee Members were present at the Roll Call: Mark Alpers (Secretary), Rory Cunningham, Brian Curran (Chair), Karen Gilman, Daniela Prowizor-Lacayo and Jane Usher. Patricia Carroll arrived later. John Gresham and Dick Herman were absent. The Land Use Committee quorum (the minimum number of Committee Members needing to be present to take binding votes on Agendized Items) is 51% of the nine filled Committee Seats, or five Members, so the Committee could take such votes (see the Bylaws link at <https://greaterwilshire.org/bylaws-board-rules>). To apply to become a Member, see www.GreaterWilshire.org. Also attended: seven Stakeholders and guests.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS.

Resident Sam Uretsky commented about 300 N. Plymouth Blvd. that “they’ve been cited civilly” by the City Attorney and “the case against them has been referred to various organizations . . . The LAPD did cite them . . . and they [property management] have done nothing.”

Committee Member Patti Carroll arrived at this time (6:33), making seven Committee Members present online (the Committee quorum was five).

Mr. Uretsky wrote to authorities about the property; GWNC President Conrad Starr had confirmed the facts. Mr. Uretsky requested that the GWNC send its own letter.

Mr. Alpers reported, regarding the 200-202 S. Orange Dr. property being used as a synagogue and school, that there’s been no change in that practice; a letter was sent from the GWNC Board.

III. CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

A. GWNC Monthly Land Use Update.

Mr. Curran reported that there're two new California Registered Historic Districts within the GWNC area: the Ridgewood Place National Historic District, and the St. Andrews Square National Historic District. There was encouragement to submit more Historic places ideas for a GWNC "angel."

IV ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS (Discussion and Possible Action)

A. Review and adoption of October 24, 2023 Minutes.

No corrections or amendments were made.

MOTION (by Ms. Usher, seconded by Mr. Cunningham): The Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee accepts the Minutes of its October 24, 2023 Meeting.

MOTION PASSED by a roll call vote of the seven eligible voters present with five in favor ("Yes" or "Aye") (Alpers, Carrroll, Cunningham, Curran and Usher); zero opposed; two abstained (the GWNC counts abstentions as neither "yes" votes nor "no" votes) (Gilman and Prowizor-Lacayo).

B. Review of Early Planning Report for possible future action items.

The "New Cases Filed with Los Angeles City Planning . . . 10/22/2023 to 11/24/2023" were reviewed. It was agreed to invite a representative(s) of the 3411 W. Olympic Blvd. project ["A full-line of alcoholic beverages for on-site in conjunction with a restaurant and mini bar service in each guest room for 50 guest rooms in total."], who are seeking a Categorical Exemption, to present to the Committee. It was clarified that the applicant wants to provide in-room, not bar, service. Photos were shown.

V Old Business (Discussion and Possible Action)

A. None at this time.

VI New Business (Discussion and Possible Action).

A. 5901 Melrose Ave: (Diego Torres-Palma) The Pawn Shop Sports Bar and Restaurant. A CUB to allow the on-site sale and consumption of a full-line of alcoholic beverages in conjunction with a 7,808 sq. ft. restaurant with limited live entertainment operating from 6am-2am, daily. Filing date: 8/22/23. Case no: ZA-2023-5732-CUB. Zoning: C4-1XL-SN.

Mr. Torres-Palma (Diego@VentanaVentures.io) presented and showed slides of renderings, floor plans and more. He said "it used to be a pawn shop . . . We acquired it back in February [2023] . . . We suspect the Hearing will be in February" 2024. It's at the northwest corner of Melrose and Cahuenga. He said "it's basically two acquisitions in one"; the back lot would be parking for "30 to 40 stacked cars using valet . . . We still are looking for additional parking." They are asking for operating hours of Mondays-Thursdays 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. midnight, and Saturdays and Sundays 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 a.m. He said about the two-story structure that "there will be no entrance on Melrose . . . these windows will not even open"; there would be a single entrance.

Second-floor suites “are not bottle service . . . I’m not in the bar business, I’m in the hospitality business.” He stated that “so far, we have 70 letters of support . . . The majority of our letters are coming from nearby residents . . . Because it’s a renovation . . . inside the building . . . we have an exemption” for transportation. Ms. Usher explained why it appears that no exemption would apply and that an EIR [Environmental Impact Report] would apply to both lots. Mr. Torres-Palma replied, “if that’s something we need, I would be more than happy to get that.” He said “the City has floor plans . . . they’re being updated now.”

Ms. Prowizor-Lacayo was very concerned about the number of private suites; she suggested having a smaller number of larger suites, possibly making less demands on security. Mr. Torres-Palma replied that “we do not intend to do DJs or have music . . . per my discussion with the LAPD . . . today.” He indicated that live entertainment may be limited to occasional live interviews with celebrities. Regarding windows, “for the most part they’ll be tented . . . We’ll probably have shades also.” Ms. Usher reminded that “the permissions you’re seeking run with the land . . . It’s an adaptive re-use project” because residential units are involved. She read aloud the City’s definition of an adaptive re-use project. Mr. Torres-Palma explained why they are requesting such hours. There was discussion about when many sports events occur. Mr. Torres-Palma believed that it was too early to commit to certain hours of operation. Heather, who “work[s] with Diego” and has worked with many restaurants, noted that operating hours may be adjusted. She believed that there was lots of community interest in and concerns about the project. Mr. Torres-Palma indicated that they may restore the parapet. The first floor would have 218 suites; the second floor, 57 suites; resident Cindy Chvatal believed there would be a lot more.

Resident David Trainer said “there’s only one issue . . . It’s hours of operation and beverage service.” He cited many area projects that have less hours of operation. He added that “it should not be adjacent to a residential neighborhood . . . It’s the hours and the alcohol.” Cindy Chvatal, Hancock Park Homeowner Association (HPHOA) President, “representing all of the neighbors that would be on the south side of this project . . . over 40 neighbors . . . People are vehemently opposed to the hours . . . going on until 2:00 in the morning . . . [and about] the alcohol.” She reported that The Wagon Wheel owner said she “absolutely [did] not” write a letter of support for this project. Ms. Chvatal noted that staff would be leaving at late hours. She believed that many of the letters of support didn’t consider the hours of operation. She reported that “as presented, we are opposing” the project. Romi Cortier, an LVNA [Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association] Board Member, believed that the project would not have enough fire exits. Mr. Uretsky, another LVNA Board Member, said “we see no reason to break the pattern” of 11:00 p.m. closings along that part of Melrose. He noted that there could be 275-500 people leaving late at night; “the later it gets, the worse it gets . . . it cannot be mitigated.” He and Mr. Trainer believed that the project belongs at a place like LA Live. They didn’t believe that “all this community support exists . . . It’s the same amount of noise and disruption” late at night “as a party house.” It was believed that valets would be “door-slamming” and that supporting the project would help “destroy the habitability” of the area.

Ms. Usher believed that a precedent would be set “for every other location on Melrose.” Mr. Torres-Palma agreed to present again to the Committee. He promised to find out if the City knows of the second lot. Ms. Usher reported that “applicants are constantly” submitting applications “identifying each effective lot . . . A required finding” by the City is that a project “not be to the detriment of the neighborhood.”

MOTION (by Ms. Usher, seconded by Mr. Alpers): The Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee recommends that the GWNC Board oppose the project at 5901 Melrose Ave. described as The Pawn Shop Sports Bar and Restaurant, a CUB to allow the on-site sale and consumption of a full-line of alcoholic beverages in conjunction with a 7,808 sq. ft. restaurant with limited live entertainment operating from 6am-2am, daily, filing date: 8/22/23, Case no: ZA-2023-5732-CUB, Zoning: C4-1XL-SN, as presented to the Committee on November 28, 2023, because the applicant was unable to address the concerns of the Committee regarding hours of operation, security, public safety, traffic, parking, historic preservation, noise and CEQA compliance, and further, the Committee recommends that the applicant return to the Committee for further discussion, consideration and answers to those issues.

MOTION PASSED unanimously by a roll call vote of the seven eligible voters present with all seven in favor (“Yes” or “Aye”) (Alpers, Carrroll, Cunningham, Curran, Gilman, Prowizor-Lacayo and Usher); zero opposed; zero abstained.

Mr. Trainer said “I’ll be here as often as you guys want me to.” There was extensive discussion about the project and what uses could be there. Mr. Cunningham noted that it’s a C-4 zone.

B. December Meeting

MOTION (by Mr. Curran, seconded by Mr. Cunningham): The Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee cancels its December meeting and will reconvene in January.

MOTION PASSED unanimously by a hand vote; zero opposed; zero abstained.

C. Return to Virtual Meetings

Different options were discussed, such as having the January meeting in-person, then having the February and March meetings virtual, and continuing that pattern. There was discussion of meeting logistics. Resident Liz Fuller said “it’s easier if most” meetings are virtual.

MOTION (by Mr. Curran, seconded by Ms. Prowizor-Lacayo): The Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee will have live meetings quarterly and other meetings virtually.

MOTION PASSED unanimously by a hand vote; zero opposed; zero abstained.

D. Central City Association (CCA): Proposed Reform to the City of LA Land Use and Development Process.

Mr. Alpers explained that the “Reform” would have the City Planning Department Head also head the Planning Commission. He indicated that part of the “Reform . . . would be [by] Charter amendment and part would be how the Planning Department is structured.”

VII. REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (Discussion and Possible Action)

A. Rite Aid (959 S. Crenshaw Blvd): Pocket Park

Ms. Usher requested agendaizing discussion of the City’s ED 1 (Executive Directive #1) [<https://housing2.lacity.org/highlights/new-ed-1-guidelines-for-affordable-housing-streamlining>]. She explained a possible interpretation and that she had requested clarification from the City. There was discussion of ED1’s meaning and implications. GWNC Administrator Julia Christiansen showed it on screen. Ms. Carroll was concerned about Prop 19 regarding inheritance law. Mr. Curran reported that the Rite-Aid closed.

VIII. PROJECTS COVERED BY OTHER BOARDS (for information only)

A. None at this time

IX. REVIEW OF PENDING LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION

(Discussion and Possible Action)

A. None at this time

X. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS (Discussion and Possible Action)

A. Next GWNC Land Use Committee Meeting (TBD).

Mr. Curran noted that the next Meeting will be in January [Tuesday the 23rd].

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to ADJOURN (by Ms. Prowizor-Lacayo, seconded by Mr. Curran).

MOTION to ADJOURN PASSED unanimously by consent; zero opposed; zero abstained.

The Meeting **ADJOURNED** at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
David Levin
Minutes Writer

The first paragraph of some Items, Motions/Resolutions and other wording may have been copied from the Agenda. Possibly edited by the GWNC. The Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes page is <http://greaterwilshire.org/land-use-committee-agendas-minutes>.