OVERVIEW
On Tuesday, November 29, 2011 a Community Workshop was held at Virginia Avenue Park in the City of Santa Monica to provide an update on the EXPO Maintenance Facility Buffer Zone and gather further feedback from the Pico Neighborhood on the preferred use for the Buffer Zone. The primary purpose of this workshop was to confirm the vision for the Buffer Zone, discuss the characteristics of potential uses that would be amenable to members of the neighborhood, and discuss the timing and phasing of implementation. At this meeting, an update was also provided by the City of Santa Monica on progress made up to this point and the continued commitment by the City to ensure an inclusive and transparent process. The Maintenance Design Group (MDG), the design consultant for EXPO’s Maintenance Facility, also gave a brief update on facility design and indicated that the next community workshop would occur in January.

Following the brief introductions and update from the City of Santa Monica, the Pico Neighborhood Association and the Expo team, meeting facilitator Esmeralda Garcia reviewed highlights from the April 28, 2011 Community Workshop. She summarized themes that emerged from the meeting including shared community goals for the use of the buffer and that there seemed to be a common theme to use the buffer for park/open space. Ms. García explained that attendees would break out into smaller groups to discuss open space characteristics of the buffer zone. She then asked Kate Vernez, Deputy City Manager for Santa Monica, to review parameters for the site so that each group could discuss characteristics appropriate to the size of the buffer and the resources available. Ms. García directed attendees to join one of three tables lead by a City staff facilitator. Site plans were provided at each table and a note-taker captured comments on flipcharts.

BREAKOUT GROUPS
The breakout groups addressed three different questions. The following summarizes their comments:
Part 1: Confirm Possible Uses and Prioritize

All groups reached consensus that the buffer zone should be used for Park/Open Space. The following were identified as priorities for the buffer zone and its characteristics:

- The sound wall should be built as soon as possible.
- There should be a temporary wall built during construction
- Adding vegetation to the buffer zone is a great priority. This should be done as soon as possible.

Part 2: Open Space Characteristics

All of the breakout groups had similar recommendations for characteristics of the open space uses in the Buffer Zone. The following summarizes their comments:

Walls

- The sound wall should be large/tall enough to shield two-story homes nearby.
- Any walls should have vegetation to screen them.

Landscaping and Lighting

- Large trees along the sound wall.
- Tree Banking.
- Pedestrian Lighting.
- “natural feel” for landscaping.
- Participants expressed their thought that trees with big leaves could alleviate noise.
- Native shrubs and flowers - choose plantings that will attract butterflies and bees.

Other Uses

A community garden was an idea that was repeated in all breakout groups. The following comments were specific to this particular use:

- Area should be large enough for many plots.
- There is a long waiting list for garden plots in the city. Participants expressed their recommendation that the City allow local residents to have priority over any available garden plots in the Buffer.
• Garden plots shouldn't take up the whole park.
• Community garden should be in an area of limited visibility.
• Activities such as gardening class could be part of the Garden.

Activity Specific Uses

There were several activity specific uses that were recommended, many of which were repeated at several breakout group tables. They included:

• Jogging/Walking Path.
• Lawn Bowling, Pickle Ball court
• Skatepark
• Bike and/or Rollerblading lane
• Dog walking (not an off-leash Dog Park)
• Dog Run
• BBQ/picnic area
• Free-cycle area
• Exercise stations
• Children’s play area (specifically for toddlers)

Part 3: Phasing and Timing

• A shorter construction time frame is preferred.
• There should be careful consideration in the placement of uses in the Buffer Zone to make them accessible and ensure that they serve the local neighborhood.
• Participants expressed their concern that they did not want to have to wait for the completion of the maintenance yard for the Buffer Zone to be turned into Open Space.
• MDG indicated that the Maintenance Facility construction timeframe could be reduced from approximately 36 to 24 months is EXPO is able to use the Buffer site during construction.

Other Comments

• As mitigation for the impacts of the maintenance facility and new buffer zone use, medians should be constructed on Exposition Blvd. to impede through traffic. In addition, other traffic calming strategies should be considered.
- Residents were concerned about cut through traffic problems.
- Parking was an issue that they would like the City to address based on the final characteristics of the Buffer Zone.
- There should be no day care at the Buffer.
- Design of any seating is very important. Many participants noted they did not want any benches.
- No bathrooms.

Meeting Facilitator Esmeralda Garcia asked each of the groups to briefly summarize their comments and present them to the group. Each table presented their summarized comments and presented their marked up site plans to the group. Each map is presented below.
NEXT STEPS
At the conclusion of the meeting, Kate Vernez of the City of Santa Monica thanked all attendees for continuing to participate in this process. She noted that the City would continue to hold Community meetings as this project continued. She also asked the group if they could provide any feedback on outreach to the community to ensure attendance at meetings. The following were suggested strategies:

- Postcards, two weeks in advance of a meeting.
- Door knocking, at least several days before a meeting.
- Neighbor to Neighbor outreach.

COMMENT CARDS
Comment cards were provided to all attendees for any additional comments they might have. Only one comment card was received, the following is a transcription of the comment card:

“I would most like greenery – trees, shrubs, lawn, plants – for beautification and quiet enjoyment of neighborhood. A Green Belt, I also like the idea of a walking path east/west along the buffer zone. I like the idea of exercise stations also.”