Twitter Thread by sahra



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@sahrasulaiman

the very first public comment was a #notallwhitepeople statement from Steve Sann who wanted credit for white people helping elect Tom Bradley to mayor back in the day.

> Starting now until 2 pm: City Planning Commission Equity Day. https://t.co/1TggvayYU4. If you care about structural racism in land use and planning, and want LA City to be taking actions to fix it, listen in and comment!
>
> — Faizah Malik (@faizahmalik) January 21, 2021

folks have *1 minute* to offer comment on how their communities are being impacted by complex historical processes. which meant that Tim Watkins was cut off while talking abt Watts' challenges while white westsiders are calling in to complain about being gentrified by tall bldgs.

a woman calling from Crenshaw was trying to explain some of the ways which folks are being pushed out of the area and was cut off midway through.

it takes me 3000-5000 words to explain how the legacy of redlining impacts a specific project. the story about Nipsey, which digs into how that history impacted his life, was 10K words. one minute doesn't even begin to allow for that conversation. https://t.co/fdhEuCkfso

What the Crenshaw woman was trying to get across is that Crenshaw is currently being flooded with market rate developments eager to take advantage of the arrival of the Crenshaw Line. https://t.co/muO9iDjayB

Some of what is in store in a community where the area media income (AMI) is ~$30,000

> The CBG project at 4242 S. Crenshaw will join the 111-unit shipping container project (with 13 affordable units) next door at 4252, the 64-unit project slated to go in across the street at the Liquor Bank, and others at both ends of the corridor, including the 400-unit Crenshaw Crossing project at Exposition that is still making its way through the approvals process (and which may see up to half of the units reserved as affordable), the recently completed 75-unit project (with just 9 affordable units) at 61st and Crenshaw, the planned 65-unit project (with 10 affordable units) at 59th and Crenshaw, and the razing of Dorset Village's 200-plus rent-controlled units at Crenshaw and Slauson to make way for 782 units of largely market-rate housing (and not nearly enough affordable housing to replace the lost rent-controlled units).
>
> The Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, just one block up, is also expected to see big changes, should the sale of the site to LIVWRK co-founder Asher Abehsera be finalized [developer CIM abandoned its bid for the project this spring]. But it does not appear that any future plans will include the housing that the previous developer, Capri, had planned to build.

With the area AMI being less than half of the L.A. AMI (the figure against which min-max incomes are set for access to the affordable units included in these TOD projects), even the affordable units are out of reach of many of the area's residents...helping drive gentrification.

What I'd really like to see the CPC grapple with/establish is some kind of human-centered CEQA.

At present, we have no way to formally incorporate consideration of the costs of disinvestment and disenfranchisement into the conversation and decision-making around a project.

CEQA will help us protect the fossils underneath a site, and an EIR will dedicate pages to discussion of said fossils, but we have no mechanism by which to contemplate the fate of the folks who live next door to it.

In communities where folks have consistently bn denied ownership over their streets and public spaces & denied loans that would help them get ownership of their homes and businesses, we need to be able to ask if a project makes those folks' footholds in the area more precarious.

And not just their physical foothold. Gentrification is a process - a culmination of visual, cultural, economic, and social forms of erasure and displacement that may (or may not) result in physical displacement at some point down the line.

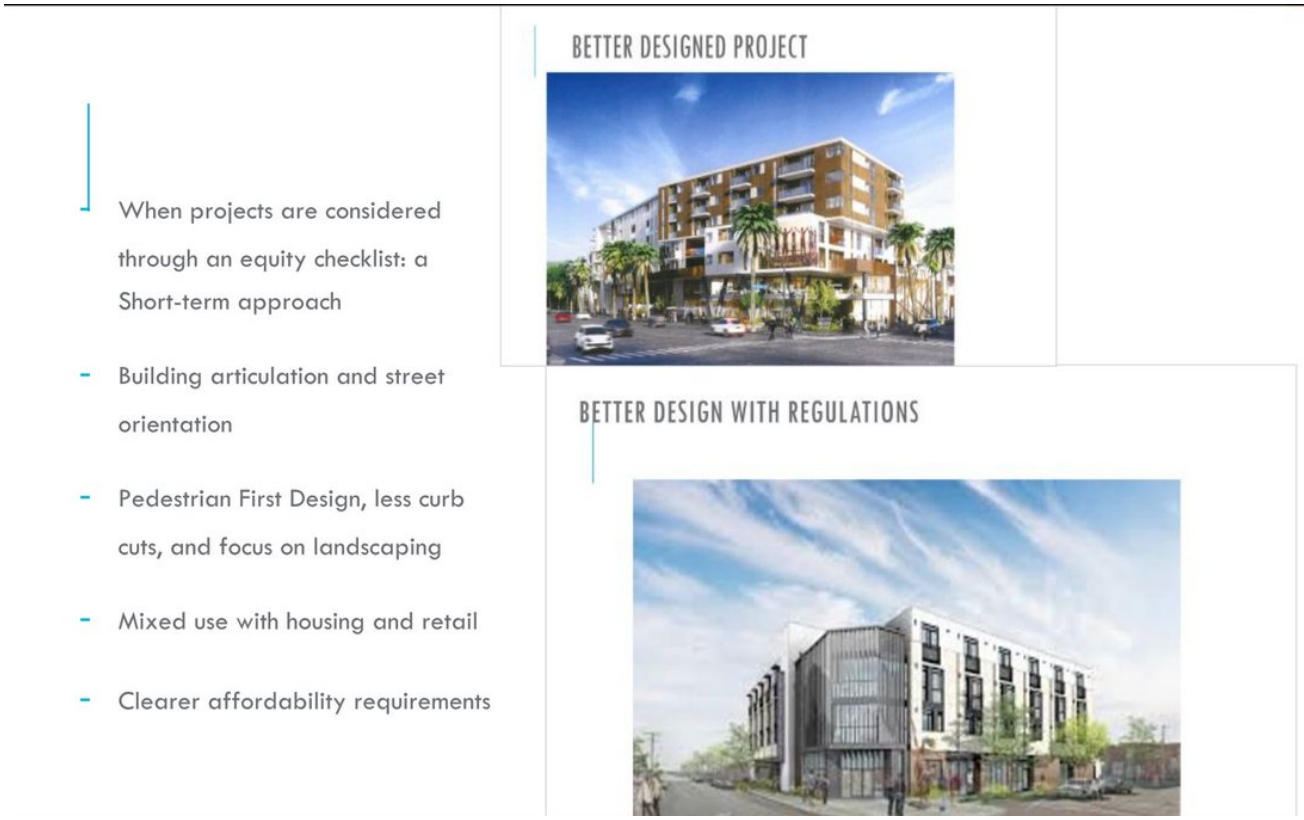
When the Reef project first went before the CPC and folks tried to make those kinds of points, they were promptly smacked down by city planning staff, who scoffed that b/c there was no direct displacement, the community had no reason to be concerned. https://t.co/q9ekZ21OCK

Re: erasure. Reps for the "creative habitat" opened their presentation to 600+ residents at a town hall by saying the #1 thing they'd learned from engaging residents was that Historic South Central was “lacking a sense of place.” It went ■■hill from there.
https://t.co/TlTuHAPeaO

None of this is to shade the CPC for their equity day effort. This is a huge step forward and a welcome one.
https://t.co/y5XWook7Ib

And while I was typing all this out, Commissioner Samantha Millman broke in to say she understood that folks were struggling to get complex points across in such a brief comment window and they would possibly hold a future forum to solicit more feedback.

But it was deeply disheartening to hear Faisal Roble (Chief Equity Officer for L.A. City Planning) give a solid presentation looking at deeper structural roots of inequity and then immediately follow it up with these slides, implying these were ways to address those inequities...



This last slide followed those two and does speak to those deeper issues, but really needed to be the starting point of the conversation, not an end note. Find his and other presentations here: https://t.co/QX70sOUCHC



Case in point, Richelle Callies called to say that at a recent community mtg on the Rail-to-River project she'd asked how the project would be sure to hire local Black folks from the community to ensure they benefited from it (instead of it being an amenity that pushed them out).

She says she was told by the meeting ldrs that the Black folks in the area did not have the skills. She was upset both by anti-Blackness of that and the seeming lack of any explicit effort to make a project an investment in both the environment *and* the people, which it must be.

[FWIW hers is not a new concern. I've been asking that and similar questions about how local folks will benefit for years now and getting no answers, either. The project was supposed to break ground 3yrs ago.] https://t.co/TDLefE98nZ

Next up are some of the folks from the community who have been in the mix on these issues for a long time. Joe Donlin from @SAJE_ShiftPower says to the city in brief: THE HARM IS IMMENSE. COMMIT TO FIXNG IT. Other points made:

Lessons Learned #2

Challenge: Displacement is one of the greatest harms to communities of color that have been facilitated through racist planning and land use policy and practice.

Solution: Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Citywide Plan to stop Displacement.

One of the things Grant Sunoo from Little Tokyo Community Council pointed to was the need to protect legacy businesses - ones that are culturally relevant, serve the community, and actively work to serve lower-income residents in particular.

The disappearance of Chinese grocery stores from Chinatown, he said, as an example, has forced transit-dependent elderly Chinese residents to travel farther to get goods they need or go without.

When community-serving businesses like that are replaced by artisanal yoga etc spots, it isn't just about the loss of a familiar space/foods. Having to travel farther to get needs met can strain the budget of folks whose incomes are already stretched too thin, for ex.

Even more so if those businesses once extended credit to families because they had such a long history in the community. Or the place in question was a health clinic or resource that enhanced community well-being.

When that spot is replaced by a place like Sqirl, and the owner has the kind of disdain that owner Jessica Koslow did for the neighborhood, that also translates to the environment around the place, and the community knows they aren't welcome or valued. https://t.co/xguD1MMXo3



Honestly someone needs to tell Steve Sann this day isn't about him. He was the very first caller of the day, wanting to make sure wypipo were thanked for their contributions. Now he's pretending to care about equity in order to keep TOC out of rich nbhds. https://t.co/rbCThmUPOF

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>
> — sahra (@sahrasulaiman) January 21, 2021

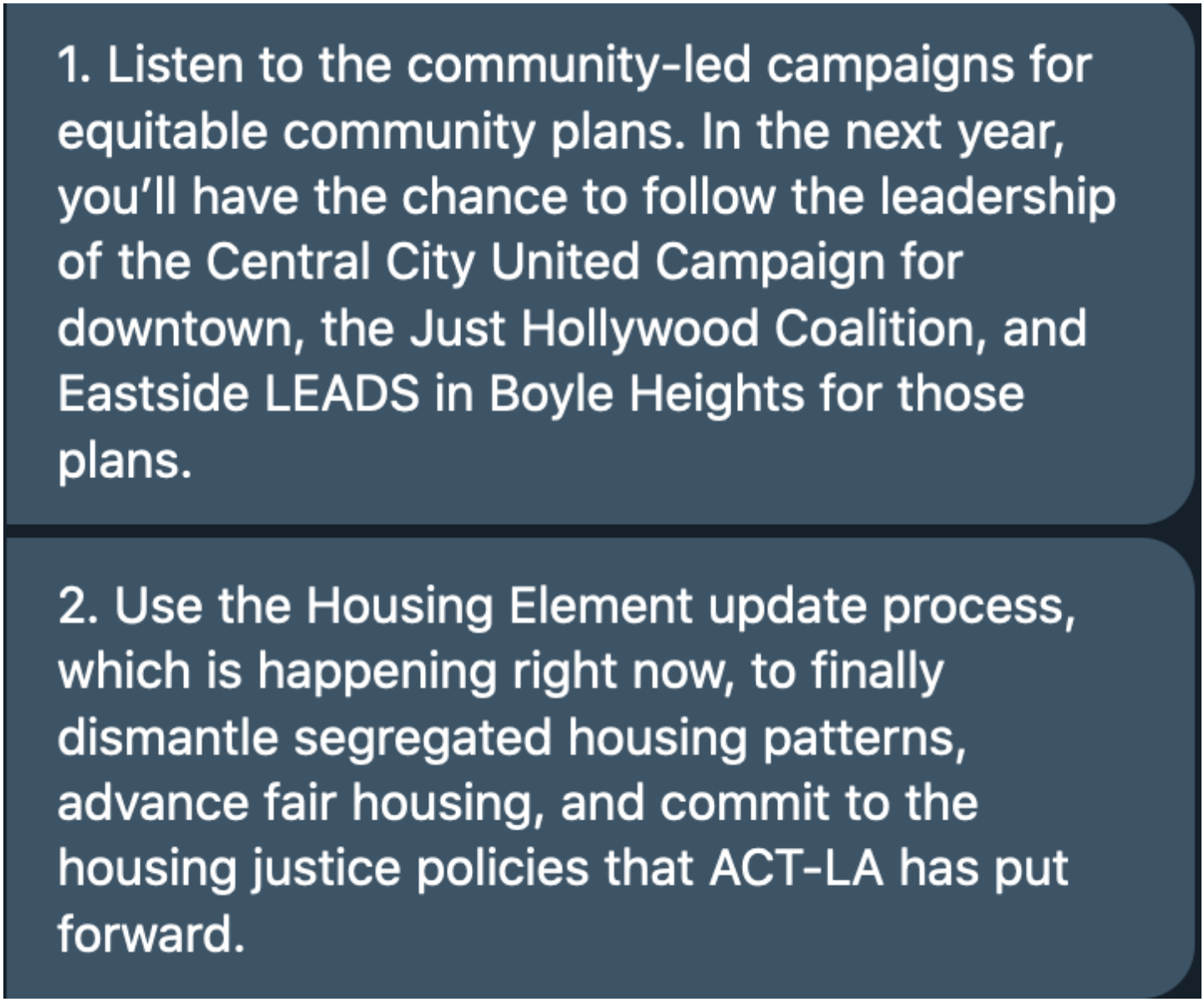
It's frustrating to hear the always brilliant @DougSmth getting cut off during his comment, but I believe I heard his new baby cooing in the background. So that was nice.

The first 2 pts he got out were that the revamping of the planning process must be comprehensive: e.g. listening to communities during the community plan processes & using the Housing Element update process to dismantle drivers of inequity embedded there. https://t.co/uPSdrHcyhf

"We are up for grabs...and we need you to hear us," says a woman from Crenshaw who is alarmed by the developments she's seeing along the corridor which are clearly not meant to serve the existing community.

Assata asks about racism within the department and how folks that have worked against them all these years can be trusted to understand equity or have the capacity to ID the community's real needs and interests and formulate an approach that puts them front and center.

Just jumping back up in the thread to points made by Doug Smith and added to by @faizahmalik, both of Public Counsel:



Doug put together a thread on how/why the community plan process is important tool: https://t.co/tMPd9afrnd

> There's a lot going on right now. Seriously, A LOT. But amidst it all, LA is moving forward with several new community plans (CPs). These plans are enormously important - literally setting the rules for development in a neighborhood for decades. Here's some more info (\U0001f9f5)
>
> — Doug Smith (@DougSmth) December 9, 2020

They're wrapping up the meeting now. Public comment has ended. Samantha Millman (CPC President) said this was important day in terms of just how much information they were given to work with, but also impossible to respond to without digesting it.

Millman thanks the community for tuning in and acknowledges that too often they are limited both in time and in the tools at their disposal to make the change communities would like to say, but that they will continue to listen. [~200 ppl were still tuned in til the end.]

I didn't get to tweet about all the presentations. Zerita Jones, for ex., spoke about the land grabbing along Crenshaw, the way it's squeezing folks, and ways to push back.



Find the full set of presentations here: https://t.co/QX70sOUCHC; Below is what today's plan was: https://t.co/TokSFsMOxQ

City Planning Commission
Equity Day January 21, 2021 9 am - 2 pm
One Pager and Agenda

"Our city is in pain, and we are hungry for change. The demonstrations for racial justice in recent weeks have not exposed something new -- they've laid bare the urgent and overdue demand to end structural racism."

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Executive Order 27
June 19, 2020

In recognition of the Mayor's Executive Directive 27 focused on achieving racial equity in city government, the City Planning Commission (CPC) is hosting a special meeting on January 21, 2021 from 9 am - 2 pm to listen to the citizens of Los Angeles and learn firsthand about the gaps in equity that bias the City's planning and land use process. The CPC believes that equity is not only giving everyone what they need to be successful, but also recognizing that the varying degrees of support provided should depend upon the need to achieve greater fairness of outcomes. The desire is to hear from residents from all parts of the city, and in particular, those whose voices have been muted due to exclusionary practices in the past. The focus is on discovering the challenges, as well as the opportunities, to refine an approach as a decision-making body that contributes to the achievement of more equitable outcomes centering on these values: