



East Hollywood Business Improvement District strategy report

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Overview

On 2/13/17, Lee Wochner facilitated a messaging and positioning session with board members and key stakeholders of the East Hollywood Business Improvement District (BID). The takeaways in this report are drawn from that session.

Takeaways

1. Successes to date, and notable impacts

Participants agreed that the BID has already made visible, and notable, impact, through neighborhood improvements. These neighborhood improvements have helped to make the area more desirable, and as a result, the business climate in the district has improved.

Several participants attributed the success of the BID thus far to connection and partnership; i.e., because the BID is a cooperative venture, and the cooperative is stronger than individuals or individual organizations could be, the BID has succeeded because it has unified stakeholders around common objectives.

Finally, there was consensus that the BID is efficient, making good use of a rather limited budget, and is effective in helping people navigate local politics.

Successes discussed:

1. Improvements
 - a. Medians and trees
 - b. Cleaning up the neighborhood
 - c. Painting light bulbs
 - d. Street furniture
 - e. Trash cans
2. Efficiency
 - a. Good use of budget
 - b. Ability to leverage resources
 - c. Ability to apply for grants
3. Effectiveness / partnership / identity
 - a. Helping constituents navigate local politics
 - b. Building relationships between and among stakeholders
 - c. Creating partnerships
 - d. Forming the BID
 - e. Creating an identity for East Hollywood

2. Purpose of East Hollywood Business Improvement District

Participants were asked what the BID does, i.e., what its purpose is. Responses fell into two buckets: connecting and coordinating property owners and businesses; and through the work of that connection, improving the area so as to bring about economic benefit.

Specific responses to the question “What does the BID do? / What is its purpose?”

Connecting/coordinating:

- “Represents the business within its district as a collective”
- “Promotes cooperation and local improvements”
- “Connects”
- Community identity
- “Organizes property owners around common needs”
- “Improve the unique image of the district”

Economic benefit:

- “Draws people to the area to spend \$\$”
- “Attract business to EH through beautification”
- Fulfill services (supplementing) that the City of LA is not doing enough

In this discussion, one participant (Jeff) said re the work of the BID, “We know this, but not necessarily everyone else knows this.” This represents a marketing challenge – that while the BID is performing this work, its work and its success is relatively unknown. Because the BID has succeeded precisely because it is a partnership organization, or collective, and because it would gain more capability if it were more widely perceived to be successful, it therefore behooves the BID to increase its focus on marketing and awareness.

3. Identity

Participants were asked to describe the East Hollywood Business Improvement District in three separate adjectives. Once these responses were grouped, and after participants were asked to vote on which responses were more accurately characteristic, a clear pattern emerged. The District is clearly three things, which should serve as the baseline of future marketing and positioning:

1. “Unfranchised”
 - a. Responses:

- i. Unfranchised / Funky / Vibrant / Diverse / Ethnic / Creative / part of Hollywood / classy (beautiful / clean)

As America becomes more and more a sea of franchises, and every city grows less distinguishable, East Hollywood remains apart. East Hollywood is a place of individual restaurants and shops and movie theatres – a place where because every place is unique, it cannot be found elsewhere. East Hollywood, in this way, is like the Village in New York City, or Portland, or South Street in Philadelphia – an area where one comes for a fun, funky, creative, unique experience in food, entertainment, shopping, and more.

2. “A destination”

Currently, participants said, East Hollywood is “unrecognizable” and “forgettable – not a destination” – but it should be a recognizable destination. Given the group sense that it is uniquely unfranchised, diverse and creative, if East Hollywood were marketed more as a district with those qualities, it would serve more as a destination.

Along those lines, once the discussion about destination arose, it turned out that many people visit East Hollywood – and regularly – for precisely the sort of unique businesses that were mentioned, but these visitors have no idea that it is East Hollywood they are visiting. (The area is frequently confused with Silver Lake or Los Feliz.) Helping people recognize – through signage – that these shops are in East Hollywood would cement the identity of this village as a destination.

3. “Crossroads”

a. Responses:

- i. Crossroads / Convenient (to get to) / Accessible / Active

Finally, participants noted that because of its proximity to so many other desirable districts, East Hollywood is a crossroads – someplace that is both easily accessed, and also convenient to other places. If that is the case, East Hollywood could serve as both a destination and as an adjunct; people can make the day of East Hollywood, or an easily append an East Hollywood experience onto a day spent nearby. (As opposed to other attractions and areas that succeed partly because they are apart, and which require a full-day commitment, such as major museums, Exposition Park, Disneyland, the beach, etc.)

4. Potential marketing initiatives

Participants submitted a long list of potential marketing initiatives that would help to spread the name and cement the identity of East Hollywood. (Notably, they did not say that

spreading the name of the BID was important; rather, they were more interested in creating awareness of the district itself.)

This list included:

- Banners
- Light poles
- Bench seats
- Decals
- Brochure
- Letterhead
- Magazine/Newsletter
- Community day
- Farmers' market presence
- Funny bumper sticker
- Logos on local collateral
- Coupon booklet
- Gateways
- Website
- E-blast
- Social Media – FB, Twitter, Instagram
- Trash cans
- Median monument
- Street signs
- Member plaques
- Signs outside members
- A village look/feel
- Street corner clocks(s)

5. Names

There was a spirited discussion about the name of the district. One participant, Jacques, expressed concern that “East Hollywood” conjures a negative connotation; there was some support for this viewpoint.

The facilitator pointed out that the BID could adopt a marketing name for the district that is apart from the legal name.

The group proposed these potential marketing names:

- EAHO
- EHO

- eHO
- Hollywood East
- EHO Village

The facilitator threw out an immediate tagline for Hollywood East: “Hollywood East. You’re HEre.”

6. Logos

Finally, the group was asked to comment on the organizations (three) pre-existing logos, and to submit ideas for a logo. The purpose of this exercise was to open up thinking about a logo (after previous work in the session intended to reveal just how important a logo is to the future marketing of the district). Everyone in the group expressed agreement that a new logo is important.

7. Recommendations

Brand development

Given the discussions about the name, and also the desire for a logo and coordinated brand look, we recommend that the board begin a brand development phase ASAP. Successful brand development will result in:

- Marketing name for the district
- Brand look / colors / font
- Brand voice that matches the district
- A logo that unifies the district

Marketing strategy

Given the success they’ve already helped to generate, board members of the BID are keen to pursue further marketing. A marketing strategy will include:

- Objectives
- Deliverables
- Timelines and costs