



January 11, 2009

The Honorable Mayor Bill Bogaard  
The Honorable Members of the City Council  
City Hall  
100 N. Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena CA 91109

**RE: General Plan Update Process and Planning Update Policy Committee**

Dear Mayor Bogaard:

I am writing to support wholeheartedly the sound comments and suggestions you received from Marsha Rood, FAICP, whose letter of January 7, is attached to your Staff Report (Agenda Item 7.A.1). Unfortunately, I cannot attend the Council meeting on January 12, as I am chairing the public hearing on revisions to the City's Tree Ordinance on that same evening. The following are my comments and suggestions to supplement Marsha's and ensure a fair and effective General Plan update process.

As Marsha Rood aptly observes, a cohesive vision for our City depends on the internal consistency of its General Plan, its blueprint for future growth and development. Physically, the city is a human invention, a complex habitat whose structure rests on two interrelated systems--land use and transportation (how we transform and use the natural environment to meet human needs; and how we travel between those uses). Both systems significantly impact the natural environment, including our own human health. As you know, California State law mandates that each jurisdiction disclose through seven required, interrelated chapters, or *elements*, the goals and objectives for growth of the human-built environment in a manner that will ensure intra- and inter-generational *sustainability*: the ability to stay within the Earth's carrying capacity by balancing environmental concerns with economic prosperity and social equity. Compliance with SB375 and AB32 further mandates this requirement in light of climate change and dwindling resources. The story of Pasadena's future in terms of land use, transportation, open space and conservation, which will cumulatively contribute to global concerns, cannot be built one disconnected chapter at a time. The whole, the integrated entirety is vital and, thus, Marsha rightly calls for *One City, One Plan*.

To achieve a cohesive and meaningful Plan, it is imperative to ensure citywide representation via a transparent process. It is tempting to relegate to a small group of politically-appointed City commissioners the charge to develop a story representative of our entire community. The method, however, sends out the wrong message to the thousands of City residents and workers who have a stake in Pasadena's future but will remain disenfranchised and silent. Instead the process must be from the bottom up, not

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the top down. It should invite a wide range of viewpoints from diverse, new voices to lead the process, develop the best resolutions, foster widespread participation and consensus-building, and encourage buy-in to the goals and objectives once adopted. Furthermore, all of the affected Commissions will have the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed elements in their official capacities. Stepping back and hearing from others may give them a fresh perspective. Thus, the most effective and efficient method, as Marsha suggests, is to form a Citizen's Advisory Task Force. As an alternative to Staff's less desirable approach, the Council could also consider a revision recommendation.

#### ***A. Forming a Citizen's General Plan Advisory Task Force***

Instead of Commissions self-appointing a representative, a possible method for forming a citizen-based group to encourage wider participation might be based on the following:

1. An application process should be established that is open to anyone who lives, works, or owns property or a business in the City of Pasadena, which would not preclude those residents appointed to City advisory bodies.
  - The application should include a simple form to indicate stakeholder group, interest affiliations, and expertise (see more below).
  - The applicant should provide a statement of intent and background.
  - The applicant should indicate availability during the week/weekends and commitment to participating in the process over a minimum of three years: through the certification of the EIR and adoption of the General Plan Update.
  
2. To ensure diversity, applications should be evaluated according to the following:
  - Affiliation with one or more stakeholder groups based on the following: age (senior; student representative), disability, ethnicity, residency (homeowner, renter), length of residency, property ownership (residential, commercial), business ownership, employer/employment (works or provides work in Pasadena); etc.;
  - Affiliation with one or more areas of interest, such as: environmental protection, natural resource use/energy conservation, transportation (e.g. bike-riding, walking, accessibility), recreation, economic development, housing, open space, education (primary, secondary and/or post secondary), social equity and social/environmental justice, etc.; and
  - Professional expertise in any one or more of the following: planning, urban design/architecture, transportation planning and development, natural resource conservation, ecology (botany/biology), real estate and housing development, property management, housing advocacy, legal (planning, real estate, or administrative law), business management/development, economics, tourism.

3. Final selection should be made by the Mayor and City Manager, confirmed by the Council, and respond to the following additional criteria (to the greatest extent possible):
  - Broad representation of stakeholder and interest groups, with special attention to ethnic, economic, and gender diversity;
  - Equal representation among Council Districts (each Councilmember could recommend two (2) representatives among his/her constituents and two (2) alternates; the Mayor could recommend additional representatives 'at large' from select stakeholder/interest groups or with particular expertise); and
  - Commitment to participating in the process to its completion.

The PUSD recently used a similar approach to develop a plan for the disposition of its surplus property. Members were selected that would represent different stakeholder groups (parents, teachers, students, administrators, developers, adjacent property owners, etc.) and/or had relevant professional expertise (planners, land use/real estate lawyers, realtors, school administrators, etc.). Each Supervisor nominated several members and alternates were identified so there was equitable representation across the District. Ethnic, economic, and gender diversity was also considered in the final recommendation.

#### ***B. Forming More Equitably a Planning Update Policy Committee (PUPC)***

In lieu of a Citizens Advisory Task Force, Staff is recommending forming a Planning Update Policy Committee (PUPC) consisting of eight commissioners and a representative of the Chamber of Commerce to provide policy leadership development. A far more equitable and effective committee based mostly on Commission representation would be one more in line with the Planning Commission's initial recommendation (although still inferior to a Citizens Advisory Task Force). The Planning Commission recommended including a broader base with more members who are not public officials. As proposed, Staff's recommendation also includes two members from closely-related bodies that have little expertise in development issues—the Recreation and Parks Commission and the Open Space and Conservation Committee—yet overlooks representatives from three Commissions with experience and expertise critical to the development process. Representation from the following discounted commissions is invaluable and should be included in a revised recommendation for a PUPC:

1. Design Commission. If the purpose of the PUPC is to "actively participate in the assessment of the progress made in achieving the existing principles..." (Staff Report, p. 3), then no other body is more capable than the Design Commission. The Design Commission reviews and takes discretionary action on all major city development projects, most of which are not reviewed by any other Commission or the City Council. The Design Commission regularly makes findings based on "existing principles" in its discretionary actions on development projects and is thus particularly sensitive to the goals and objectives related to land use, mobility, and open space, including tree removal. Furthermore, it is also in an excellent

position to recommend changes in the area of urban design, which deals with the physical relationship between land use and transportation that is critical to ensuring sustainability and has become a controversial topic. The Design Commission also serves a dual role as the Historic Preservation Commission for the Central District, the most highly sensitive area of the City in terms of protection of historic resources.

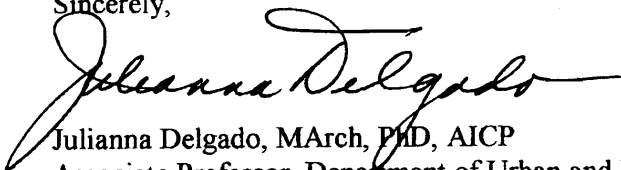
2. Accessibility and Disability Commission. It is critical that issues related to equal access opportunities be considered in the General Plan Update, especially in the Mobility Element. As the population ages, issues of accessibility are becoming critical to independent living of a larger demographic group. Thus, a representative of the Accessibility and Disability Commission should be included.
3. Senior Commission. The fastest growing demographic group is seniors. “Baby Boomers”—the post WWII population bulge—is beginning to retire and many will age in place. Thus, the needs of senior citizens to maintain a high quality of life must weigh into revisions of land use and transportation policies. A representative of the Senior Commission is a much-needed addition to the PUPC.

In lieu of representatives from these three additional City commissions, members at large with active interest and/or expertise in these areas could be appointed. Additionally, should the Council decide to adopt Staff’s or a similar, revised recommendation in lieu of a Citizens Advisory Task Force, the Council should ensure ethnic, economic, and gender diversity as well as equal representation among Council districts so that all areas of Pasadena are represented and no single neighborhood dominates the process.

In closing, this is an exceptional time in the City’s history. We are in the position to “green” our General Plan to help heal our planet while improving our economic prospects by engaging all those who are concerned about the quality of life in our community through an open and equitable City-wide process. In light of limited financial resources, I urge the Council to take the time to reflect upon the wisest course of action to arrive at a vision that is meaningful to the broadest cross-section of Pasadena.

Your consideration is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Julianna Delgado, MArch, PhD, AICP  
Associate Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Chair, City of Pasadena Transportation Advisory Commission  
Chair, City of Pasadena Design Commission