

DRAFT

OUTREACH SUMMARY REPORT

CITY OF PASADENA

**LAND USE, MOBILITY,
OPEN SPACE & CONSERVATION
GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS UPDATE**

MARCH 5, 2010

DRAFT

OUTREACH SUMMARY REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After nine months of community outreach, 3,000 residents, business owners and community leaders provided thousands of comments on issues related to land use, mobility, open space and conservation. This Outreach Summary Report organizes these comments into main topic areas, or themes. Moving forward, this report will provide the necessary foundation, direction and framework for the updated General Plan elements. This process will begin by comparing the current General Plan elements against the outreach report to identify topics out of alignment, in conflict or not addressed. The community will then re-engage to consider land use and mobility alternatives that attempt to reflect community comments, recent environmental mandates, and other government requirements.

In 2009, the City began the process of updating four elements of the General Plan – Land Use, Mobility, and Open Space and Conservation. For the Land Use and Mobility Elements, it marks the beginning of the first significant update since the controversial growth management initiative and resulting landmark General Plan update of 1994. Facing many of the same questions about growth and density, public participation was set forth as the first priority of the update.

In the spring of 2009, the City Council appointed the General Plan Update Advisory Committee (GPUAC) to guide community outreach and participate in the update process. Staff and the GPUAC will work closely with the Planning Commission and Transportation Advisory Commission to address the comments received by the community. With a goal of reaching as many people as possible, and specifically to reach segments of the community that generally do not participate, a nine-month outreach program was designed to last through November 2009.

The program included numerous opportunities for staff and GPUAC members to hear firsthand from the community about their vision and concerns for the future. By the end of the program, more than 3,000 people had participated in outreach activities and thousands of comments had been documented. These comments represent a broad range of ideas, concerns and interests.

Many participants did not have difficulty describing what they loved about the City: beautiful neighborhoods, historic architecture, great people, cultural and entertainment amenities, and the notion that despite the fact that the City has a small town feel they can still find everything they need right here. This love for the City also leads to concern about change and loss of the character they cherish. People expressed worry that future high-density development, traffic, and poor design of new buildings could cause a decline in the City's quality of life. They also noted challenges to the City's future such as the public school system, geographic and economic disparities, and the economy.

Comments related to density, design and traffic presented some of the more significant tensions. While people were very concerned about overdevelopment, many expressed an understanding that growth is needed to maintain economic vitality. People felt strongly about the need for newer buildings that would better reflect the City's historic character. However, some argued Pasadena needs a balance of modern and traditional architectural

styles. Finally, an overwhelming number of participants identified traffic as a major issue. At the same time, some expressed that traffic was not a significant issue and is necessary for business growth.

The Outreach Summary Report attempts to organize these comments into a manageable format that accurately reflects the thoughts of the community, including the agreements and disagreements among different perspectives. Part I of the report outlines the community outreach process. Parts II and III outline the dominant and complementary themes (see Exhibit A). Part IV outlines other recurring issues and concerns raised by the community that do not necessarily fit within the scope of the General Plan update. The appendix to the Outreach Summary Report includes documentation of each outreach program and the comments as recorded in each session.

Dominant Themes

These themes were consistently heard more frequently and more passionately than others. These items came up at nearly every meeting and workshop throughout the City.

Community Character

Community members spoke at length and with great passion about the characteristics that make Pasadena a special place. This is one area where there was little disagreement. When asked to rank several characteristics in priority, most participants argued that it is a combination of inseparable factors that make Pasadena unique. The characteristics most cited as the contributing factors include: small town feel; great neighborhoods; historic architecture; trees and the beautiful natural setting; the prevalence of arts, culture, and entertainment; and the diverse shopping, dining, recreation and entertainment opportunities available .

Growth and Density

One of the greatest concerns for the community is about growth and density of future development and the potential impacts it could have on existing community character. Opinions on how to approach the issue, however, were diverse. For purposes of summary, comments were divided in three camps: those that want to see density decreased, those that want to see limited future density that is appropriately managed, and those that generally support increased density. The largest number of comments expressed a desire for less density and growth in the future.

Design and Architecture

The design and architecture of the City is a highly valued characteristic and another significant source of concern for the future. The vast majority of comments in this category were concerns about how new commercial, mixed-use and multi-family buildings fit within the existing architectural context. Some expressed concern that the City lacks a common design vision and that some projects lacked imagination.

Traffic

Traffic congestion was identified as one of the most challenging issues facing the city. Although some pointed out that local traffic was not nearly as bad as other areas in the region and that traffic can be a sign of economic success, many participants expressed frustration with an increase in traffic congestion. Higher density residential and office

developments in the City's Central District were repeatedly cited as a main cause for the increased traffic congestion experienced throughout town. Pass-through trips, travelers whose trips do not begin or end in Pasadena, were also identified as a significant cause of traffic congestion.

Transit

Participants recognized that the need for public transportation will intensify in the future and that the challenges to meet those needs will deepen. There was a consensus that transit needs to be improved, expanded, better coordinated, and made more accessible and affordable. Comments on transportation included focus on local efforts such as the ARTS Bus system and Dial-a-Ride, as well as support for regional efforts such as the Gold Line Foothill Extension.

Open Space and Parks

Pasadena's parks and natural open spaces are loved and appreciated – participants said they wanted more of both. Community members from all neighborhoods identified parks as a major contributor to the quality of life in Pasadena. They appreciated the uniqueness of Pasadena's natural environment and the proximity to wild areas in the foothills and mountains. Some were concerned that open space may be lost for new development and that parks are needed in the Central District where most of the new growth has occurred.

Economic Development

The economy was on many peoples' minds during the outreach program. In general, participants thought that Pasadena has a healthy economy and a secure position as a business and retail center for the region. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about an increase in empty storefronts in commercial districts and about a possible imbalance between new multi-family housing and commercial development.

Complementary Themes

These themes include other categories that were also heard throughout the outreach process, although not as frequently or at the same level of intensity as the dominant themes.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability, water and energy conservation and solid waste reduction were all identified as concerns during the outreach process. Participants supported Pasadena's current efforts in environmental sustainability and felt the City should make stronger efforts towards that goal. People wanted Pasadena to play a leadership role in sustainability, providing comments such as "We will be a model of a sustainable city."

Historic Preservation

In addition to concerns that new development be respectful of historic architecture, some community members felt that there could be more emphasis on historic preservation to continue to protect and maintain the character, heritage, and "feeling of living in Pasadena." Suggestions were made to strengthen the preservation policies in the General Plan and specifically to reword the Guiding Principle related to historic preservation.

Trees

Many participants conveyed an appreciation for the mature trees that provide the urban forest canopy that is a hallmark of the City and its neighborhoods. Participants described trees and the urban forest as iconic attributes of Pasadena, providing a unique sense of place, enhanced pedestrian experience and superior quality of life. However, there was also a sense by some participants that trees are threatened and needed to be protected from new development and poor care.

Parking

Three major challenges were highlighted regarding the City's current parking conditions: the shortage of parking, the high cost of parking, and the difficulty to locate structures and surface lots. Community outreach participants acknowledged that the combination of the three challenges affects the vitality of Pasadena's businesses as it deters visitors and/or residents from shopping at certain parts of the City.

Walking and Biking

In addition to transit, walking and biking are important alternative methods of transportation that are valued by the community. Participants referenced the proximity of businesses, tree-lined streets, storefronts and cafes lining the sidewalk, and historic architecture as things that make walking inviting. People remarked that they were deterred from walking when parking lots were located at the street, when architecture was poorly done, when street trees were lacking and when traffic moved fast.

A handful of people said that the City was bike friendly and a safe place to cycle. However, those comments were overwhelmingly contradicted by others who believed the City is not safe for bicycles and that Pasadena could do much more to make cycling safer and more enjoyable.

Disparities

In the community character category, people praised Pasadena for its diversity of people, neighborhoods, housing types and income levels. However, there were a number of comments that articulated Pasadena as having disparities – both geographically and economically. Some parts of the City believe they were fragmented by the 210 freeway and others found disparities regarding the allocation of City resources and attention from City Council.

Places for Youth

Youth and other outreach participants expressed a need for more places for youth activities including locations and safe places for recreation, shopping and social interaction. Although Pasadena and its youth organizations provide numerous services within community centers and parks, people believe that more can and should be accomplished. Young people expressed a desire for more youth oriented shopping opportunities and youth activities and venues as well as less expensive transit opportunities.

Other Recurring Issues and Concerns

Some important concerns that were raised during the outreach process cannot be adequately addressed through the land use, mobility, and open space and conservation elements. While these topics overlap with the elements being updated, this General Plan update is not necessarily the appropriate vehicle to address these concerns. These topics are included in Part IV of this report as a means to transmit concerns to the City Council to ensure that they are heard and addressed through other appropriate channels.

Government Responsiveness

The community shared both praise and criticism regarding accessibility and responsiveness of public officials and government in general.

Education and Schools

Prevailing public opinion points to the need to improve public schools coupled with the recognition that good public schools are key to the livability and vitality of the City.

Programming for Youth

Youth and other outreach participants expressed a need for more youth activities.

City Services

Many people had positive comments about the services the City provides. Nonetheless, some believed there could be further improvement to a range of city services from police, fire, street maintenance, water, power, parks, library, and planning.

Financial Support for Arts and Culture

While most comments celebrated the arts and culture in Pasadena, some commented that more could be done to financially support arts and culture.

Homeless Services

Concerning homelessness, people noted that Pasadena and non-profit organizations offered better services than other cities, but expressed a desire for more services. Most of this topic would be addressed in the City's Housing Element of the General Plan.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Pasadena is currently updating four elements of its General Plan – Land Use, Mobility, Open Space and Conservation. A General Plan is the blueprint or “road map” to guide a city’s future for the next ten years and beyond.

The update process began with an extensive outreach program beginning in spring 2009. This is consistent with one of the seven guiding principles of Pasadena’s General Plan, which is to make community participation a permanent part of achieving a greater city. As part of the update, the City Council appointed a 22-member citizen’s committee, the “General Plan Update Advisory Committee” or “GPUAC”, to oversee the outreach process and the update of the elements. The GPUAC – which is made up of four mayoral representatives and two representatives from each Council District, the Chamber of Commerce, and Pasadena School District – represents a host of community interests and ideals.

The GPUAC worked with staff and a consultant team to create a multi-faceted outreach process. The goal was to reach as many people as possible and specifically to reach segments of the population that do not generally engage in civic dialogue. Participants included people of all backgrounds, ages and interests.

Outreach efforts included staff and GPUAC participation at hundreds of different meetings, workshops, special events, interviews, presentations and programs with the community. At the same time, the GPUAC had over two dozen regular and special committee meetings, and created several subcommittees to meet on specific topics. Specific outreach activities included dozens of community meetings and workshops, interactive *Move>About* tours, a speaker series, a special youth outreach program and a community open house. At the end of the community outreach phase, more than 3,000 people participated and thousands of comments had been documented. All of the comments collected are summarized in this Outreach Summary Report.

The Open Space and Conservation Element update has a separate City Council appointed advisory committee. That committee, along with staff, completed their own outreach program as well as participated in this outreach program.

The appendix of this report includes all the comments collected into one format and organized by source. To make sense of the thousands of comments, they were divided into dominant themes and complementary themes with a summary of each category. In reviewing and summarizing the multitude of comments, tensions and links were flagged. The report also outlines concerns raised by the community that do not fit within the context of the General Plan update.

The GPUAC and staff will use the Outreach Summary Report to identify the community’s shared values and concerns, to set a framework for a vision and then to create goals, objectives, and policies for the updated General Plan elements. The process will begin with a comparison of the current General Plan elements against the comments identified in the

outreach report to identify areas of alignment, areas of conflict and areas that are not currently addressed.

Staff will work with the GPUAC to develop and refine alternatives for the areas of major conflict, complete a technical analysis of each alternative, and develop outreach programs that will describe the pros and cons of each alternative. The outreach report will provide direction throughout the update process, but must also be balanced by new environmental regulations (e.g. State Senate Bill 375), existing state requirements, and consideration of economic and fiscal impacts.

After weighing the tradeoffs of the many alternatives, preferred alternatives will be translated into specific policies and strategies that will be incorporated into the updated General Plan. A new draft General Plan will be circulated widely to the City's advisory commissions—and throughout the community—before it is presented to the City Council.

Pasadena's General Plan

The State of California requires all cities to have a General Plan. Pasadena's General Plan is made up of 15 "elements," or chapters. As previously stated, four elements are being updated: Land Use, Mobility, Open Space and Conservation. The Land Use Element is a set of objectives and policies that guide the future of Pasadena. It specifies how much and where various types of development will be allowed, as well as standards for building intensity and population density. This element was updated in 1994 with minor updates in 2004.

Pasadena's Mobility Element contains specific strategies for promoting safe, accessible, and convenient transportation options for everyone living and working in the city. This element also includes strategies to protect neighborhoods from traffic, and for public transit, parking, bicycles and pedestrians. This element was adopted in 2004.

The Open Space and Conservation Elements are being combined as one element. It will set goals and priorities for preserving and enhancing Pasadena's open space and for conserving energy, water, our urban forest and other natural resources. The elements were last updated in 1977. This update will complement the new Green Space, Recreation and Parks Element, which was adopted in 2007.

The Housing Element is being updated separately, and is expected to be adopted by the City Council in 2010. Other elements, such as Scenic Highways, Noise, Safety, and Economic Development are not being updated at this time.

PART I: OUTREACH PROCESS

Staff worked with the GPUAC and the consultant firms of Gensler and Hogle-Ireland to create a multi-faceted outreach process with the goal of reaching as many people as possible and specifically to reach segments of the population that do not generally engage in civic dialogue.

Participants included Pasadena residents, business people, property owners, non-profits, civic leaders, students and others representing a variety of backgrounds, ages and interests. The meeting locations were also evenly distributed throughout the community. Spanish translation was provided at many of the meetings and in printed materials. Child-care services were also provided at several events.

The format of activities and the way information was gathered was modified during the process. The first step of the outreach process consisted of interviews with individual people to get an initial sense of the major issues in the community. At the community organization meetings, staff and the GPUAC used similar versions of a comment form which included more specific questions on Pasadena's issues and the existing General Plan's guiding principles.

During the community-wide and district workshops, comments were gathered using open ended questions with facilitators asking for examples and seeking specific details, definitions and explanations. Such discussions focused on the factors that make Pasadena unique and the challenges and issues facing the City in the future. Staff and the GPUAC chose to focus on open-ended questions for a majority of the outreach because they would generate a wider range of opinions and comments. The GPUAC recognized a downside of this approach is that it does not allow for statistical analysis. However, having a broader conversation with the community was identified as being more important.

At the Open House, a combination of focused questions and open-ended discussions were used. Interactive exhibits asked participants to mark which guiding principle means the most to them and whether new principles should be added. Some preliminary findings from the outreach activities completed to date were also shared. Throughout the outreach process, the public was also given an opportunity to share their own thoughts in writing through the website or regular mail.

GPUAC members participated in every community meeting as group facilitators and scribes. These different tools used resulted in comments that reflect the breadth of land use, mobility, and open space and conservation concerns in Pasadena.

Outreach activities in 2009 included the following:

- Stakeholder Interviews – During the spring, staff and a consultant interviewed more than 75 stakeholders representing a cross section of the City to gain a broad understanding of how people view the City. Those interviewed represented various

business owners, non-profit groups, residential groups and property owners. In addition, members of the GPUAC were interviewed.

- Community Organizations – During July and August, staff and GPUAC members met with more than three dozen neighborhood associations, business groups and non-profit organizations to discuss priorities and concerns. Nearly 500 people attended these meetings, with nearly equal participation from residential, business and non-profit sectors. Below is a list of the community organizations visited (see Exhibit B for a map of their locations):

- Neighborhood Associations:

- 99 N. Raymond (condominium complex)
- Asociación de Vecinos Unidos
- Banbury Oaks Neighborhood Association
- Bridgen-Ranch Neighborhood Association
- Bungalow Heaven Neighborhood Association
- Central District residents
- Coalition for a Common Vision
- Cypress-Lincoln-Village Neighborhood Association
- East Orange Grove Neighborhood Association
- Eaton Blanch Park Neighborhood Association
- Garfield Heights Neighborhood Association
- Granada Court (condominium complex)
- Historic Highlands Neighborhood Association
- Holly Street Village (apartment complex)
- Hudson Condominiums
- Linda Vista/Annandale Association (LVAA)
- Lower Hastings Ranch Association
- Madison Heights Neighborhood Association
- Oak Knoll Neighborhood Association
- Pasadena Place (condominium complex)
- Sierra Madre Villa Neighborhood Association
- South Allen Neighborhood Association
- Upper Hastings Ranch Association
- Washington Square Neighborhood Association
- West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA)

- Business Groups:

- East Washington business group
- Foothill Pasadena American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- Hastings Ranch business and property owners group
- North Lake Business Village Business Association
- Old Pasadena Management District
- Pasadena Chamber of Commerce
- Pasadena Foothills Association of Realtors

- Playhouse District Association
 - South Lake Avenue Business Association
- Non-Profit Organizations:
 - Cultural Leaders Group
 - Group of affordable housing advocates
 - Executive Roundtable of non-profit leaders
 - Pasadena Heritage
- Do-It-Yourself Workshops – During August and September, staff provided training for local groups to conduct their own General Plan meetings to discuss priorities and concerns. These workshops provided another unique way to gather information.
- *Move>About* Tours – In September and October, Pasadenans turned out by car, bus, bike, the Gold Line and on foot for six *Move>About* tours across the City. The self-guided tours included a booklet where participants wrote their comments on a variety of topics including design, transit, bicycling and open space. Sixty-six people returned their booklets, completing approximately 135 individual tours.
- Community-Wide Workshops – In September, residents were invited to five community-wide workshops to discuss Pasadena’s unique characteristics and challenges. Meetings were held on weeknights in the Northwest, Southwest, East and Northeast. In addition, a meeting was held on a Saturday afternoon in the Central District. Spanish translation and child-care services were provided at all of the workshops. These workshops were not highly attended, with only 50 people participating (see Exhibit C for a map of their locations).
- Council District Workshops – In September and October, each City Council member hosted a General Plan workshop to discuss with their constituents the unique qualities and challenges that face Pasadena and their districts. These workshops were very well attended, with a total of 300 people participating. Each meeting began with an introduction by the respective council member. Then staff and the GPUAC led group discussions on the qualities that make Pasadena special and the challenges facing the City. At the end of the workshop, groups shared their comments with each other. Spanish and Mandarin translation and child-care services were provided at some of the workshops. For a full list of the workshops and to see a map of their locations see Exhibit X.
- Commissioners Workshop – In October, a special workshop was held for all City Commissioners and Committee members. Nearly 40 members participated.
- Speaker Series – From September to November, more than a dozen local professionals sparked conversations on key land use and mobility issues through an informative speaker series program. Topics included housing and density, design, traffic, water resources and economic development. A total of 200 people attended the speaker series. The series was also videotaped and shown on the local cable station 55-KPAS, and placed on the City’s website.

- Youth Outreach – Throughout the summer and fall, staff and the GPUAC met with the City’s Youth Council and youth participants from public schools, private schools, youth service groups and religious institutions citywide. A total of 300 youth participated in activities which included an art exhibit, a customized *Move>About* tour on the Gold Line and city model building. Staff also visited several schools and youth groups and facilitated discussions where the students created binders, or “slam books,” to express their ideas on Pasadena’s future. Many of the activities were special events with participation from youth throughout the community. Below is a list of specific community youth organizations and schools visited:
 - Pasadena Youth Council
 - Day One
 - El Centro
 - Marshall High School
 - Blair High School
 - Muir High School

- Open House Extravaganza – On November 14, the community celebrated the completion of the outreach phase with a community open house held in the South Lake business district. The event provided visitors an opportunity to hear some of the community feedback gathered to date, learn about the issues and share additional thoughts. Over 700 people attended the Open House, which included interactive exhibits on land use, mobility and open space, mini-speaker sessions, a youth exhibit, food vendors, a city model building exercise, children’s activities, a community mural project and live entertainment. Child-care services were provided.

- Other Community Outreach – A variety of other opportunities were taken to get the word out about the General Plan update. Staff and the GPUAC attended community events including National Night Out, Art Night, the Latino Heritage Festival, the Green Fair, Back-to-School nights and much more.

Outreach Communications

Many traditional and new forms of media were used to publicize the outreach events. Posters, flyers, handouts and postcards were distributed to residents, businesses and students. The campaign included press releases and articles in local newspapers and City newsletters, online advertisements, and public service announcements and programming on the local cable station 55-KPAS.

An update article was featured in seven issues of the City’s newsletter “Pasadena-In-Focus” (from March 2009 to March/April 2010), which is mailed to 54,000 households. A special issue dedicated to the General Plan was distributed in August. Staff also distributed weekly email blasts to a list of more than 700 subscribers (both individuals and groups) and multiple letters to faith-based and non-profit organizations to publicize events. Emails and articles were distributed through other groups and organizations such as the City’s Neighborhood Connection’s program, the West Pasadena Residents’ Association newsletter and the South Lake Avenue Business Association website. Banners were also placed on ARTS busses and displayed at community centers.

Significant outreach efforts were made to reach the students and their parents at area schools. Over 20,000 flyers highlighting outreach activities were distributed to every student of the Pasadena Unified School District. Flyers were also distributed to many private schools. In addition, City staff participated at back-to-school nights for eight middle and high schools.

The program also incorporated an interactive website at www.cityofpasadena.net/generalplan and a Facebook page at www.facebook.com (type Pasadena General Plan).

Every attempt was made to reach as much of the community as possible. However, not all segments of the community participated equally, and it is unclear whether or not participation fully represents the community.

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PART II: DOMINANT THEMES

These themes were consistently heard more frequently and more passionately than others. These items came up at nearly every meeting and workshop throughout the City.

Community Character

Community members spoke at length and with great passion about the characteristics that make Pasadena a special place. This is one area where there was little disagreement. When asked to rank several characteristics in priority, most participants agreed that it is a combination of inseparable factors that make Pasadena unique.

The characteristics most cited as the contributing factors include: small town feel, great neighborhoods, historic architecture, trees and the beautiful natural setting, the prevalence of arts, culture, and entertainment, and diversity of people, businesses and neighborhoods.

The phrase “small town feel” was the single most prevalent comment heard throughout the outreach process. When asked to explain this sentiment it was described as accessible, neighborly, manageable, having a strong sense of place, having a strong community spirit, family oriented, and interactive. Other definitions included the importance that businesses, services and other amenities were close to each other and close to home.

The fact that Pasadena has a broad variety of shopping, dining, arts, culture and entertainment was also important in defining the City’s character. Community members appreciated that a great variety of amenities were available within the City. They highlighted the City’s location as the hub of the San Gabriel Valley, and many enjoyed the fact that they rarely have to leave the City because so much is available here. Comments included “There are excellent shopping opportunities and variety,” “There is so much to do here,” and “The City has all the amenities most cities wished they had - having it all here is a convenience for its residents.”

Community members commented about the strong presence and preservation of single-family housing and neighborhoods; yet, an appreciation for the variety of multi-family housing types available within the City was also expressed. Great neighborhoods were defined as “walkable” with libraries, trees, and gardens. Specifically, “Neighborhoods are identifiable” and “Everyone has a porch.” Great neighborhoods were further described as being protected from the impacts of industry and commerce (such as traffic and noise), yet having connectivity to the broader community.

Historic architecture is a prominent part of Pasadena’s character. Participants expressed appreciation for preservation of historic buildings both because they value the City’s heritage and because of the architectural quality they bring to the City. Specifically, mentioned were buildings by the architects Greene & Greene, the Rose Bowl, City Hall, Main Library and Civic Auditorium, the Colorado Street Bridge and many other historic buildings and landmark districts.

In addition to the built environment, participants also expressed appreciation for preservation of the natural environment. Tree-lined streets and open space within the urban

environment were important, as were specific settings such as Eaton Canyon, the Arroyo Seco, and views of the San Gabriel Mountain's ridgeline. Green space and nature are highly valued by the community.

Participants continuously referred to the diversity of the City as a positive and special characteristic. Diversity was defined in many ways including cultural, ethnic, age and economic. Essentially, the community values a diversity of people, businesses and neighborhoods. Comments included appreciation for the great range of people in the City and a need to support diverse housing – multi-family, single-family, affordable, etc. – throughout the City and job opportunities to maintain ongoing diversity in the future.

Because these are the characteristics the community sees as defining Pasadena, community members expressed concern regarding the potential loss of any of them. Many suggestions were offered to preserve and enhance the City's character such as programs to maintain single-family neighborhoods, support for local business districts, and landscape beautification programs along major transportation corridors. The preservation and enhancement of existing community character is paramount in plans for the future.

Members of business groups also highly valued the City's positive character. It was important to these groups that districts maintain variety, uniqueness, and "mom and pop" businesses.

Related Topics:

Many of the factors within the definition of community character overlap with other categories and are more fully developed in those discussions. The focus on history, iconic buildings that have stood the test of time, and treasured single-family neighborhoods overlaps with comments about historic preservation and architecture of new buildings. Likewise, concerns about negative impacts on existing neighborhoods are related to questions about the potential impacts of additional density and growth. Underpinning the stability of the community as a whole are concerns with economic development and support for business and the arts. Finally, while diversity is valued many also believe that diversity is also linked with disparities within the City.

Growth and Density

Clearly, one of the greatest concerns for the community is centered around growth and density of future development and the potential impacts it could have on existing community character. Opinions on how to approach the issue, however, were diverse. For purposes of summary, comments were divided in three areas: (a) those that want to see density decreased; (b) those that want to see limited future density that is appropriately managed; and (c) those that generally support increased density. Comments related to development density were primarily focused on high-density multi-family and mixed-use residential projects. However, some comments were heard on commercial projects and larger office developments in general.

The largest number of comments, nearly half of those recorded, felt that the City was too dense already and was suffering from negative impacts such as traffic congestion, loss of open space and views, loss of small-town character, and problems with air quality and noise.

Participants frequently used the term “over developed” and often said they thought there were too many condominium and apartment buildings. Some went so far as to say there should be a moratorium on new development.

A large number of comments were also received from those who believe that future growth needs to be better managed. In this group concerns focused on more carefully aligning growth with infrastructure capacity, balancing residential growth with appropriate business and job growth, concentrating growth along transportation corridors and transit lines, and redirecting growth to other areas of the City to relieve pressure on the Central District. For example, suggestions were made to focus new growth in East Pasadena, in the Playhouse District, along North Lake Avenue and in the northwest portion of the City.

In the *Move>About* tours, people generally supported additional high-density developments near the Lake Avenue and Sierra Madre Villa Gold Line light rail stations.

In the last category, and by far the smallest, people made several arguments in support of growth and high-density, noting it as critical to the success of the community. Specifically, participants stated that density is better for the environment, allows for greater diversity, and supports a healthy lifestyle. High-density development creates more walkable communities and supports transit, both of which will reduce traffic and improve air quality. Mixed-use development also creates a vibrant urban core that supports business, encourages walking through convenience, and allows for affordable housing where residents do not need a car. Some in this group believe that strict limits on growth will result in economic stagnation and long-term negative impacts.

Community members have strong opinions on this topic, and the discussion was frequently emotional as people expressed fear over the consequences of divergent strategies. This topic received a very diverse range of responses and will likely require a large amount of attention moving forward.

Related Topics:

Concern about density and growth is closely tied to concerns about urban design and architecture. In some cases, further discussion revealed that if it were designed differently, participants might not always feel so strongly about high-density development. It is also closely linked with concerns with traffic congestion and transit use as these are seen as significant by-products of growth. Growth and density can also be linked to sustainability through impacts on natural resources and land uses. Economic development also plays a role in this discussion as limits on growth are seen as having potential negative impacts on economic growth that underlies the success of business and entertainment districts. Finally, parks and open space are also linked to growth and density since people were concerned that inadequate open space is being provided for high-density development.

Design and Architecture

The design and architecture of the City is a highly valued characteristic and a source of concern for the future. The vast majority of comments in this category were concerns about how new commercial, mixed-use and multi-family buildings fit within the existing architectural context. Some expressed concern that the City lacks a common design vision and that projects lacked imagination and quality.

Participants highlighted the importance of historic architecture and described the City's buildings as "unique," "iconic," having "quality" and "richness," with a "blend" of "diverse architectural styles." However, when discussing more recent buildings, participants described them as out of scale, over-sized, too tall, of poor quality materials, and simply "ugly". Further, while some unilaterally support a broad range of architectural styles, many believe that context should be the driving factor in determining appropriate architectural style. Much dissatisfaction was expressed with recent "modern" or post-modern style buildings that participants felt were not appropriate for the context of the neighborhood. In addition, it was often noted that new buildings should have greater street setbacks and include more landscape areas. However, others noted that maintaining the building "street wall" is important to encourage a walkable environment.

A commonly referenced example of this concern is the Westgate project (the three city blocks between West Del Mar Boulevard, South Pasadena Avenue, West Green Street and South De Lacey Avenue). Participants expressed concerns about the project's scale, height, massiveness and use of poor quality materials. The Del Mar Station (265 South Arroyo Parkway) also raised concern that it was too big, too modern and did not reflect Pasadena's architectural heritage (although positive comments were received on the restoration of the Santa Fe Depot and the design of the interior pedestrian plaza). Other projects that drew negative response include 444 East Orange Grove Boulevard (southeast corner of Los Robles Avenue and East Orange Grove Boulevard) and Cinema Lofts (221 South Marengo Avenue).

Buildings cited as good examples of design included multi-family buildings at 596 North Fair Oaks Avenue, and 700 East Union Street (Granada Court); and the new Convention Center. These buildings were praised for being a good fit within the context of the neighborhood and having good articulation that breaks down scale and mass. The Convention Center was highlighted for appropriately playing a background role to the more prominent historic buildings in the Civic Center district.

On the *Move/About* tours, people were asked to look at the architectural designs of a number of developments. People strongly supported the design of the affordable housing development at North Fair Oaks Avenue and Peoria Street. People also supported the design of the affordable housing developments on Cypress Avenue, as well as the design of the recent retail development northeast of Pasadena City College (1600 block of East Colorado Boulevard).

Related Topics:

Architectural design is a cornerstone of the characteristics valued by the community. The concerns expressed about the design of new buildings often coincided with calls to reduce the amount of development allowed in the future. Design is also closely linked to historic preservation, since many people believed that the design of new buildings should be sensitive to the City's historic context. In addition, some comments linked the poor design of new buildings to problems with the City's development review process.

Traffic

Traffic congestion was identified as one of the most challenging issues facing the City. Although some pointed out that local traffic was not nearly as bad as other areas in the region and that traffic can be a sign of economic success, many participants expressed frustration with the increase in traffic congestion. A few others did not feel traffic congestion was a problem in Pasadena.

Higher density residential developments in the City's Central District were repeatedly cited as the main cause for the increased traffic congestion throughout town. Also cited was the growing number of office buildings that have significant traffic impact, particularly at peak time. Pass-through trips, travelers whose trips do not begin or end in Pasadena, were also identified as a significant cause of traffic congestion. Congestion on the 210 freeway (especially the number of heavy trucks) and the lack of a direct link to the 710 freeway were seen by some as causing increased pass-through trips on local streets.

Participants listed significant negative impacts of increased traffic including near gridlock at certain times of day, increased cut-through traffic on residential streets, higher speeds especially on residential streets, increased travel times to get across town, reduced air quality, and infringement on comfortable bicycle travel.

The subject of better traffic management was raised frequently. While some called for additional measures to protect neighborhoods from increased traffic volume, others criticized current protection measures and asked that systems to de-emphasize streets be reconsidered to make it less difficult to travel on smaller streets. Better traffic signal timing and coordination were suggested as were more on and off-ramps for the freeway. Also criticized by a few were traffic studies for new development and the methodology used to evaluate future traffic impacts.

The traffic impacts of the Gold Line at-grade crossings were called out as causing significant travel delays especially at California Boulevard. It was suggested that improvements were needed at the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and California Boulevard. Several streets including Lake Avenue, Hill Avenue, Orange Grove Boulevard, California Boulevard and El Molino Street were specifically identified by participants as being congested. People also called for improved traffic management, including better traffic signal timing and coordination.

Business groups, in general, did not consider traffic to be a significant issue compared to participants from the neighborhood organizations. Members of some of the business groups noted the importance that the Gold Line, ARTS Buses, walking, and bicycling play in reducing traffic and that they are used by their employees. These groups also tended to remark more often about the need to complete the Gold Line Foothill Extension to Azusa and benefits of a streetcar/trolley system in the Central District.

Related Topics:

Traffic is intertwined with almost every other category. Cut-through traffic and high speeds have negative impacts on neighborhoods and community character. Growth and development could be the source of additional traffic and potential impacts. Increased traffic has impacts on air quality and environmental sustainability. Heavy traffic and