

The largest number of comments, nearly half of those recorded, stated 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. However, it is important to note that in the Central District, where most of the development has occurred, residents may have been underrepresented during the outreach process.

A large number of comments was 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.

It appeared that business participants were supportive of more growth. They believed that growth is necessary for a healthy economy and with it comes amenities that benefit the entire community.

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

Concerns about density and growth are closely tied to concerns about urban design and architecture. In some cases, further discussion revealed that participants might not always feel so strongly about high-density development if it were designed differently. 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 as 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, projecting a lack of 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. However, others were not opposed to modern design; instead, they believed architecture should be of high quality and respectful of its time and historic context. It was often noted that new buildings should have greater street setbacks and include more landscaped 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 at 265 South Arroyo Parkway also raised concern that it was too big and 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, on the southeast corner of Los Robles Avenue and East Orange Grove Boulevard, and Cinema Lofts at 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), as well as 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 in the 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, such as West Los Angeles, and that a reasonable level of traffic volume in the City's business districts is necessary for economic success, many participants expressed frustration with the increase in traffic congestion.

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 brought significant traffic impacts, 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 in some places 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 to make it less difficult to travel on smaller streets be reconsidered. 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 developments and the methods 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 Avenue 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, reporting 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 the 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 speeding traffic make streets dangerous and less inviting for bicycling and walking, particularly when crossing the street. Despite the potential negatives, some participants also pointed out that a certain amount of traffic is necessary to support local businesses and a healthy economy.

Transit

In reviewing the seven Guiding Principles of the General Plan, there was broad support for the principle that states, “Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without a car.” People often commented that one of Pasadena’s greatest qualities is that it is “walkable” and has many options for getting around, including the Gold Line and accommodations for bicycling.

Participants recognized that as the region’s population grows and the price of oil increases, the need for public transportation will intensify and the challenges to meet this need will deepen. People also conveyed that as the City’s population ages, this segment would heavily rely on public transit and services like Dial-a-Ride. There was a strong consensus that transit needs to be better coordinated at the regional level, “improved,” “expanded,” and made more “accessible” and “affordable.”

Improving the transit network system means adding more bus routes servicing educational institutions, places of recreation, and commercial and entertainment centers. Furthermore, residents expressed the need for connectivity outside the City’s boundaries using the ARTS bus system for seamless collaboration with other transit providers and services.

Frequency and reliability were emphasized as challenges that minimize the usage of the existing transit system. People commented that using the ARTS bus system is impractical for running errands or fulfilling day-to-day activities. Specific comments included, “arrival times at the bus stops are not dependable,” “buses take a long time” and “there are too many bus stops that prolong arrival times.” Other issues included the limited capacity of the existing buses and the aesthetics of the buses. During peak hours, buses may reach their capacity preventing the bus from stopping to pick up patrons waiting at a bus stop. Others commented that the ARTS buses “do not look welcoming enough.” Buses with dark windows that “you can hardly see inside” make the ARTS buses look uninviting.

Another identified challenge was the user cost for transit. Many people stated that the cost to ride is too high for the low levels of service. Youths were strong proponents of decreasing the ARTS bus fare. Fare increases were seen as disproportionately affecting seniors, students and people with disabilities, since they are frequent transit users.

There was strong support for a streetcar/trolley system in the Central District. Various routes were suggested that could potentially service Pasadena's commercial centers. The suggested routes identified included Lake Avenue, Paseo Colorado and Old Pasadena, with possible links to the Metro Gold Line light rail stations. Moreover, it was suggested that the streetcar/trolley services should be free with extended hours.

The Gold Line was identified as a key community resource. Accessibility to light rail and the transit support system built around the Gold Line stations encourage Pasadena residents and visitors to consider alternative modes of transportation. Installing signage leading pedestrians to the Gold Line stations was identified as important to encouraging walking to Gold Line Stations. People said that the Gold Line stations need parking. There was also support for the Gold Line Foothill Extension, which will extend the light rail system to Azusa and, ultimately, Montclair.

Other comments addressed the need for secure bicycle parking, safety and noise improvements. A challenge that surfaced repeatedly was the congestion caused by the at-grade rail crossings at California Boulevard and Del Mar Boulevard. One of the suggestions made to alleviate this problem was synchronizing the traffic signals.

Related Topics:

Public transit, alternative modes of transportation and walking are key factors to improving air quality, reducing greenhouse gases and improving environmental sustainability. Making improvements to the public transportation system was also seen as important to the economic vitality of Pasadena's commercial corridors. Transit can also be linked to traffic, as many believe an increase in transit use can help reduce traffic on major arterials. Support for the streetcar/trolley system can be linked to economic development, as it can be seen as a tool to make the Central District more competitive as a commercial hub and center for tourism. In addition, walking and biking can be linked to transit, since many people walk or ride to transit stops.

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 of all kinds 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. They were concerned that open spaces are being lost to new development and that parks are needed in the Central District where most of the new growth has occurred.

Parks and open spaces are two of the key qualities that people love about Pasadena. People appreciated the role that parks play in community-building and recognized that it is essential to have a "human connection to the natural environment." Some open spaces often mentioned include Eaton Canyon, the Arroyo Seco and the dog park at Viña Vieja Park.

Many valued the diversity of active recreational uses from “soccer to horseback to archery to lawn bowling to fly-fishing.” People also valued the views of the mountains and liked Pasadena’s adjacency to other open spaces.

While all participants agreed that existing parks and open spaces should be protected, there was tension between active recreational or “programmed” uses and passive or “un-programmed” uses. Some were strongly opposed to soccer fields in Hahamongna and the ice rink in the Edison right-of-way. Others, especially the youth participants, supported active recreation uses, such as expanding the boxing program at Villa Park. Other commenters supported additional events in parks, such as jazz festivals or farmer’s markets, to encourage more people to use the parks.

Preserving and expanding natural open space areas was seen as important to a number of people. People stated that natural open space has value as wildlife habitat and to the watershed. Also expressed was the need to look at natural open space at a more regional level, referring to the Emerald Horseshoe concept which seeks to create a continuous open space corridor from East Los Angeles, across Pasadena, to El Monte.

One of the challenges that came up at all events was a concern that open spaces are being lost due to development and that they are not being added in pace with population growth, especially in the Central District. “Once it is lost, open space is virtually impossible to get back.” A variety of creative ways to increase parks and open spaces were proposed including building pocket parks; requiring open spaces in new developments including plazas, gardens and paseos; decking over parts of the 210 Freeway to create a “freeway” park; partnering with Pasadena Unified School District to use school facilities; and creating roof-top parks. A number of people specifically stated that Arlington Gardens along the 710 right-of-way should be designated as open space.

People were also concerned with maintenance at existing parks and recommended additional benches, playground and sports equipment, clean bathrooms and improved lighting.

Participants on the *Move>About* tours visited natural open spaces, such as Eaton Canyon, the Lower Arroyo and Hahamongna, as well as Arlington Gardens and the City parks Viña Vieja Park and McDonald Park. Participants were asked how often they visited the various open spaces. The majority of participants visited the Lower Arroyo, Hahamongna and Eaton Canyon once or twice per year. Some of the participants were seeing Hahamongna or the Lower Arroyo for the first time.

On the *Move>About* tours, people also visited Viña Vieja Park and were asked if they supported parks under power transmission lines. All supported using this area for additional parks, and most participants indicated strong support. In addition, *Move>About* tour participants strongly supported the creation of community gardens wherever there was available space.

Related Topics

Open space and parks are closely linked with community character. Trees were often mentioned at the same time as parks and open space as components of great neighborhoods. To some participants, open space also means landscaped front yards in single-family

neighborhoods and mature street trees. Parks and open space were also linked to sustainability because of all their environmental benefits.

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. They were proud of the fact that the City is the national or regional headquarters for many large corporations. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about an increase in empty storefronts in primary commercial districts as well as a possible surplus of new multi-family housing.

People also had positive comments regarding the diversity of Pasadena's economy (medical, retail, office, industrial, education, large businesses, small mom-and-pop businesses, etc.).

A significant number of people identified the heart of the City's economy as Old Pasadena. People believed that the changes in economic growth and revitalization in Old Pasadena were good and must continue. However, some people were concerned Old Pasadena's success was causing it to lose some of its appeal – the area is no longer for locals, is too crowded and has too many restaurants and not enough of a variety of other uses. A smaller number of people were concerned that increased competition from other cities would negatively impact Pasadena.

People were very concerned about preserving Pasadena's job base and remaining an attractive location for large corporations. They listed creating new jobs as a major issue, especially jobs for Pasadena residents. Job training was also identified as being important for residents and business owners. Some participants in the *Move>About* tours supported prioritizing industrial uses to support quality jobs on Eloise Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and Walnut Street.

Several people had negative opinions regarding national chains. They believed Pasadena's small mom-and-pop businesses made the community unique. Overall, they stated Pasadena should have fewer chain businesses and more specialty shops and local businesses. Some people felt the City had become over-commercialized with recent development projects. Other people were concerned with an increase in the number of less desirable uses, such as massage uses, group homes, check cashing businesses and liquor stores.

People felt very strongly that the City should support business growth and job training, especially for smaller locally owned businesses. They thought that local businesses have a more positive impact on the community by providing jobs for local residents and keeping revenues in the community. The City should also partner with property owners in finding businesses to lease empty storefronts. On the *Move>About* tours, people were also asked whether the City should continue to utilize publicly owned vacant lots for temporary uses, such as public art or community gardens. Participants strongly supported these temporary uses. Those comments opposed to this use, and even those in favor, mentioned that the site could look more appealing.

People were concerned about an increase in empty storefronts found within the City's main commercial districts. A large number of people felt that more attention related to economic development needed to be placed on areas outside the Central District such as the Lincoln Corridor, North Lake Avenue, East Colorado Boulevard and East Pasadena. Businesses from these areas stated that they felt ignored by the City.

Comments on North Lake Avenue called out a need for neighborhood-serving businesses and services and concern over an over-concentration of undesirable uses, such as liquor stores and check cashing businesses. Comments on East Colorado Boulevard and East Pasadena focused on the need for more commercial development and expressed concern over the number of vacant lots and lower-budget motels.

On the *Move>About* tours, participants were asked to look at a number of development projects outside of the Central District. For example, people supported the recent retail development northeast of Pasadena City College at the 1600 block of Colorado Boulevard, approving of both its design and its focus on providing retail for nearby students. While some were strongly opposed to it, nearly 75 percent of respondents supported additional transit oriented development in the area around Halstead Street and East Foothill Boulevard. In addition, people somewhat supported adjusting parking requirements along Washington Boulevard in order to encourage economic development.

Business groups consistently ranked the importance of business vitality as a top priority of the city. They mentioned that businesses bring in revenues that help maintain Pasadena's character and help pay for city services. Some members of the business community expressed concerns that the development process in the city is slow and inconsistent, which can deter new businesses from locating in the city and existing businesses from expanding. Other members were concerned over the high costs of permit fees and utilities.

Related Topics

Economic Development is closely linked to many other categories. Old Pasadena and the City's diverse businesses were often listed as qualities in the community character category. The idea that more economic development is needed in areas outside the Central District links this category with the disparity category. Finally, a strong economy is needed to provide revenues for city services, public transit and community programs.

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PART III: OTHER FREQUENTLY HEARD 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 those discussed in Part II.

Environmental Sustainability

Respondents at the community organization meetings and at the Open House said that they would like to see an eighth guiding principle supporting environmental sustainability. Supporting comments included, “Use no natural resource faster than it can be replaced” and “We will be a model of a sustainable city.”

Environmental sustainability, water and energy conservation and solid waste reduction were all identified as concerns during the outreach process. Many participants supported Pasadena’s current efforts in environmental sustainability and felt the City should make stronger efforts toward that goal. People appreciated the City’s “environmental ethic,” liked that the City is “clean and green” and “eco-friendly” and suggested that “green is the future way to distinguish us.” Others felt that sustainability was inevitable, not optional, and “whether we like it or not we have to conserve.”

Participants identified the existing water shortage as a particular concern. This topic was also in the news frequently during the outreach period as the region continued to face water shortage. Many recommended incentives and requirements to have drought tolerant landscaping, although others expressed concern that Pasadena’s image is tied to lush landscaping and that drought tolerant landscaping will change the City’s character. One commenter noted that “one day a week watering will ruin our gardens and kill street trees.” There was discussion of and support for the use of reclaimed water, gray water and storm water as ways to increase water supply.

Some participants believed growth and development should be stopped or significantly slowed to keep pace with the availability of natural resources such as water. “We can’t keep adding more people assuming there will be enough water.”

Energy conservation comments were not as prevalent as water comments, but there was support of Pasadena’s efforts to conserve energy. Many comments supported moving toward alternative or renewable sources of energy and away from coal. Several comments supported the increased use of solar energy.

Participants on the *Move>About* tours were asked to rate the relative importance of aesthetics versus the alternative energy value of the solar panels on the Caltech parking garage on Holliston Avenue. Most of the respondents believed both were of equal value or that the alternative energy value was more important than the appearance of the panels.

There was strong support for increased recycling efforts especially in multi-family developments and commercial businesses. There was also support for recycling bins on the street. Support for recycling was especially strong from the youth commenters, including

support of stores charging for plastic grocery bags. Composting was also supported, including food waste composting as a means to becoming a zero-waste city.

Related Topics

Environmental sustainability and resource conservation comments were often tied to preservation of open space areas and walkable environments. Also, some comments linked rehabilitation and recycling of older buildings with sustainability because it requires fewer raw materials to restore a building, and does not produce demolished building materials as solid waste. Many people were concerned about growth and density, especially as it affects environmental sustainability and specifically the shortage of water and other resources.

Parking

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

Participants indicated that finding parking is burdensome and the lack of off-street parking creates a high demand for on-street parking. It was expressed that the City has too many parking meters, which makes it inconvenient for shoppers and discourages visitors from frequenting Pasadena. Participants were also discontent with the high price of parking, stating that five to ten dollars for parking is too expensive.

A number of comments suggested examining existing resources and identifying shared parking opportunities or lowering the parking requirements imposed by the Zoning Code. Others commented that there is a shortage of parking and that it is necessary to build more parking structures near major retail centers.

Tied into the shortage of parking are the policies in place to encourage Transit Oriented Developments (TODs). There was concurrence that the existing reduced parking requirements for TODs were not working. Participants believed newer developments in TODs did not always include adequate on-site parking. Some people thought that the lack of parking creates a spillover of parked vehicles in the surrounding areas. A secondary challenge is that offices, retail spaces and residential units may be difficult to rent because of the lack of parking.

Comments from business groups related to parking echoed that of neighborhood associations. Concerns were expressed about the TOD restrictions and the need for additional parking in the Central District and other business districts. People expressed difficulty in finding the existing parking structures and surface lots. East Pasadena commercial interests strongly supported removing parking restrictions in the TOD area around the Sierra Madre Villa Gold Line Station to allow for more parking to be incorporated in projects.

Very few comments were heard regarding parking issues in residential neighborhoods. In general, people supported the City's restrictions on overnight parking in residential zones.

Related Topics

Parking was closely associated with economic development. There was a consensus that parking affects economic development opportunities because it limits the types of business in the City due to the limitations of parking. In addition, the shortage of parking was linked to traffic. Often, people seeking on-street parking generate cruising traffic. Lastly, participants link parking challenges to development. As previously mentioned, development projects within the City are either building excessive parking or not enough parking. It was suggested that the parking ratios need to be reevaluated or existing parking needs to be better managed.

Walking and Biking

In addition to transit, walking and biking are important alternative methods of transportation that are valued by the community.

Walking

The ability to walk in a pleasant atmosphere that serves their specific needs (walkability) is a quality people loved about Pasadena. Participants referenced the proximity of businesses, tree-lined streets, historic architecture and storefronts and cafes lining the sidewalk as things that made walking inviting. People remarked that they were deterred from walking when parking lots were located at the street, when architecture was pedestrian unfriendly (buildings with no windows on the ground floor, blank walls, poor lighting, deserted plazas, etc.), when street trees were lacking and when traffic moved fast.

Participants offered suggestions for improving walkability throughout the City. Ideas included more crosswalks, making freeway underpasses and bridges more comfortable, fixing sidewalks, adding streetlights, improving pedestrian signage (especially around Gold Line stations), and providing pedestrians with a safer way to cross the street at intersections (such as needed pedestrian improvements at Arroyo Parkway and Del Mar Boulevard).

People in the Central District were especially concerned about making improvements to the walking environment, including more trees, level sidewalks, more pedestrian signage, more pedestrian-related use (such as retail shops and restaurants), narrower streets to slow traffic down, and other traffic calming improvements.

Areas that people specifically noted as being pedestrian unfriendly and needing improvements included streets such as Cordova Street, Del Mar Boulevard, Washington Boulevard, crosswalks at Marengo Avenue and Bellevue Drive, sidewalks along Marengo Avenue and Los Robles Avenue, and a lighted crosswalk at Orange Grove Boulevard and Sierra Bonita Avenue. Some also noted that crossing over and under the 210 Freeway is pedestrian unfriendly and contributes to the city being physically divided. In addition, a suggestion that was heard a number of times was closing Colorado Boulevard in Old Pasadena to vehicles.

Access and mobility for people with disabilities was also identified as an important issue by members of the community. While people noted that Pasadena is more user friendly for people with disabilities than other cities in the area, improvements can still be made with regards to crosswalks, curb ramps, uneven sidewalks, lighting and signage.

Biking:

A handful of people said that the City was bike friendly and a safe place to cycle. However, those comments were outnumbered by others who believed the City could do much more to make cycling safer and more enjoyable. People focused on three sources of cyclist problems: conflicts with moving vehicles, conflicts with parked vehicles and conflicts with pedestrians on sidewalks.

The discussion of bicycling was aided by questions from the *Move>About* booklets. The most common improvements people suggested were related to bike lanes. People wanted more dedicated bike lanes, wider lanes, better-maintained striping, cleaner gutters and lanes that had less conflict with parked cars. For example, people found the bike lane on Wilson Avenue to be too narrow and wanted to extend no-parking hours on Del Mar Boulevard to allow bike commuters more safety. On the other hand, riders along Paloma Street found that the biking experience was very comfortable.

Beyond bicycle lanes, people suggested that vehicle-cyclist and pedestrian-cyclist conflicts could be improved through better education. In addition, they suggested installing traffic signal activators that recognize bicycles and adding bicycle racks throughout the City.

Two challenging areas for both bikers and walkers are freeway underpasses and bridges (such as Colorado Boulevard and the 710 Freeway and Orange Grove Boulevard and the 134 and 210 Freeways). These places were described derisively because they create an uninviting environment. These places and other large intersections, such as Colorado Boulevard and Orange Grove Boulevard, were designed for cars, not bicyclists or pedestrians. Congestion in the Central District and especially around Gold Line crossings made cyclists feel particularly unsafe.

Related Topics

The topic of walking and biking overlaps with several other topic areas. Community character – the shade of mature street trees, the maintenance of neighborhoods and the quality of architecture – leads to feelings of comfort, interest and safety, all important aspects of walking or biking. There is a tension between this category and the traffic and parking categories. When moving too fast, traffic makes walkers and bikers feel unsafe and vulnerable. Parking lots along the street leave walkers with little interest, while on-street parking can raise safety concerns with cyclists. This tension between traffic and biking is heightened by the desire of bicyclists to have dedicated bike lanes that could reduce traffic lanes or on-street parking. Finally, there is a strong link with transit, since people often walk or bike to transit stops.

Affordable Housing

Comments related to affordable housing focused on three main areas: the lack of affordable housing, location of affordable housing and the need for affordable housing to incorporate quality design. Another concern raised was whom the affordable units should serve. While there was strong support for more affordable housing, people also raised concerns over its impacts, the expense of building affordable housing, what the units look like and where they are located.

People were overwhelmingly supportive of additional affordable housing; they thought more needed to be constructed and called for affordable units to be preserved. There was a concern that too many affordable units were being demolished and replaced with high-end housing units. People were concerned that Pasadena residents are being priced out of Northwest Pasadena and other parts of the City.

Although housing prices in the region have declined recently, there was still strong concern that Pasadena is still too expensive and the cost for housing is too high. At the same time, people who were concerned with the creation of affordable housing noted that they valued the diversity of housing options (renter and ownership, condominiums and single-family residences, etc.) because it creates a diverse population.

Many people also discussed the need to preserve the city's existing inventory of affordable housing. This included bungalow courts and smaller apartment complexes constructed from the 1920s through the 1970s. There was concern that these units were being replaced with more expensive housing. Some commenters believe there is a tension between affordable housing and historic preservation goals.

Many people focused on the need for affordable housing projects to incorporate quality design. Generally, people expressed that affordable housing projects were not well designed, used poor quality materials, required too much density and were not well maintained. However, a small number of people were concerned that costs would increase if certain concessions were not made.

Some people noted that Northwest Pasadena seemed to have a disproportionate share of affordable housing. In the future it should be evenly distributed, not only within the City but also throughout the region. People also suggested that affordable housing should be located near transit, parks and schools, and close to businesses and services.

People not only expressed concern about where affordable housing should be, but who should occupy the units. More than any other group, people wanted housing services to focus on people in the workforce category (generally, this is housing that is affordable to police officers, firefighters, nurses and teachers) and seniors. Other groups that people mentioned included families, young people, existing residents, people with disabilities, emancipated minors and those leaving the foster care system.

Other items raised by the community included the need to liberalize the City's codes regarding second units in single-family zoned areas, strengthening the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and establishing rent control.

The most often-mentioned example of affordable housing was the project at North Fair Oaks Avenue and Peoria Street. People commented favorably on the project's design – the historic architecture, scale and height. Another project that was specifically mentioned for its good design was the one at North Lake Avenue and Rio Grande Street.

Related Topics

People identified quality architectural design as very important when proposing new projects. There was also concern that affordable housing was not being adequately distributed throughout the City and region, reinforcing disparities. Affordable housing can also be linked to development density.

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. People in some parts of the City believed the 210 Freeway fragmented them, and others found disparities regarding the allocation of City resources.

Some people expressed that the freeway is a physical barrier that creates a north and south split of the community and inhibits its integration. With a “we don't feel connected” remark, a number of people described the sense of separation of north and south areas.

Comments also conveyed the notion that parts of the City are not treated equally when prioritizing resources. People noted disparities among the neighborhoods in the North, Central, South and East Pasadena but, for some, the greatest divide is between the Northwest and the rest of the City. The vast majority of comments and issues were to that effect. The range of issues brought out by the perceived lack of parity, particularly in the Northwest, included the lack of amenities (e.g. movie/entertainment centers, places for families/youth to hang out, etc.) and neighborhood-serving business (mom-and-pop stores, banks, gas stations, etc.); limitations on transportation services (ARTS); disparate access to government services, decision makers and staff; concentration of institutional uses and low-income housing and unsafe neighborhood conditions, among others.

Overall, people mentioned the continued need for economic development in the Northwest and called for the City to invest and focus more resources there. For some people the disparity between the Northwest and the rest of the City is evidence that there are “two Pasadenas - the haves and the have-nots,” and that the gap between them is widening due to economic disparity. The Northwest Commission formally requested that Northwest Pasadena's specific issues be addressed in a special sub-section of the General Plan.

Several commenters also remarked that areas along East Colorado Boulevard and in East Pasadena are in equal need of attention and economic development and that the City should focus priorities from the west side of town to the east. Participants were concerned with the number of lower-budget motels and increased number of vacant lots in East Pasadena.

Related Topics

The concerns people expressed about the need for economic development in the Northwest relate to community discussions on having a healthy economy that will contribute to safer neighborhoods and provide opportunities for jobs and revenues for community programs. The concerns raised by residents in the Northwest and East Pasadena that City resources are not being evenly distributed links with the city services category. Concerns about the concentration of low-income housing in the Northwest link this category with the considerations about the need for affordable housing to be evenly distributed within the City and among other cities within the region.

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 already provide numerous services with community centers, parks and activities, people believe that more can be accomplished.

The youth discussed the need for integrating students from public and private schools. They cited a need for events or social locations where students can interface with one another, and thereby create a friendship.

It was also communicated that Pasadena's shops are too upscale which force youth to shop in adjacent cities that have shops that appeal to them. The community as a whole would like to see more businesses that are willing to hire youth and provide job-training skills.

A growing interest among the youth is seeing good quality commercial uses for their neighborhoods. For example, they would like to see a decrease in the amount of liquor stores that are located in the Northwest. Aesthetically they would like the City to rehabilitate or redevelop abandoned buildings. In addition, Pasadena's youth understand the housing need. Since the housing market has declined and there appears to be condominiums that are not occupied, some asked, can the City provide affordable housing for teens or families in need?

Related Topics

Themes brought up in relation to youth mostly linked with economic development and open space and parks. In terms of economic development, people noted that young people need places to shop and work in their own communities. In relation to open space and parks people also commented that young people need places to gather and recreate in safety.

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PART IV: OTHER RECURRING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Some of the comments collected during the outreach process cannot be adequately addressed through the framework of the General Plan's land use, mobility, open space or 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.

However, other General Plan elements such as the Housing Element, City departments such as Pasadena Water and Power, or outside agencies such as the Pasadena Unified School District can better address many of the other recurring issues and challenges raised. These topics are being transmitted for further attention through the appropriate channels:

Government Responsiveness

This broad topic area includes comments about the accessibility and responsiveness of public officials, how the City operates, the roles and priorities of public officials, and communication between the City and residents. While these topics are not specifically addressed by an element of the General Plan, they are directly related to the outreach process and the continued involvement of the community in drafting the plan.

Peoples' love and dedication to the City and to their neighborhoods can be seen in their involvement and participation. "Activism," "involvement" and "participation" were qualities that people often mentioned they valued about this community.

People especially value the accessibility and responsiveness of local government, commenting on the "listening ears of our leaders." One person stated, "The accessibility of our leaders is impressive." They cited the entire General Plan outreach process as a good example of how the City is interested in what people have to say. They appreciated that they know the council and the police. Several people also recognized the potential for the City to become a progressive leader in the region. One person commented that Pasadena is in an "era of good feeling" with less polarized politics.

Some participants thought that City staff and City Council needed to do a better job of sharing information and communicating with the community about how decisions are made in order to promote public confidence. A few people stated that the entitlement processes and the appointment of commission members needed to be more clear and fair.

There appeared to be some tension between groups that participate in the political process. Some business owners complained that while they have a voice in the process, they have no influence without a vote. Others expressed concern that renters do not participate in the process because they do not receive public notices on proposed projects and other land use decisions. A few expressed concern that the City focuses on the "elite," that some organizations are heard differently than others, and that the City Council is too responsive to a few dominant voices.

Education and Schools

While the community acknowledges the high quality of life that Pasadena offers, 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. Specifically, some maintain that the attraction and retention of young families in Pasadena “hangs in the balance,” unless quality public education is accessible and available to all.

People had strong opinions regarding the area’s public school system. A majority of people believed that public schools have significant problems and need to improve. This included the need for more resources, poor quality of education provided, low attendance by students and lack of community support. However, some people believed that the public schools have improved in recent years and deserved more recognition for their accomplishments.

Fostering a stronger partnership between the City and the Pasadena Unified School District was identified by many as a major factor to help improve the reputation, perception and impact of the public school system. One resident called for more public support of the school district if it is to effectively serve the entire community. Another resident added that “a passionate commitment to public education is missing, when you consider the City’s long standing commitment to great neighborhoods, architecture, transportation choices, arts and culture.” However, a few residents stand by their belief that the school district should be recognized for its steady improvement.

There was continued interest in enhancing opportunities and places to learn for all ages, especially the youth for “they are our future.” This discussion sparked interest from some residents to encourage diversity through “opportunities to learn from each other,” with the goal of fostering appreciation of the cultural and racial differences in the community.

The ongoing public debate between private schools and public schools raise concerns about the impacts on the community. Some feel that when parents make “preferred choices” to send their children to private schools, public schools will ultimately suffer the consequences of these choices. Further, there is expressed concern that some feel forced to send their children to private schools because there is a feeling that public schools are not up to par. Other residents expressed frustration that sending their child to a private school is not an option due to affordability concerns.

Institutes of higher education, such as Caltech and the Art Center, were hailed as intellectual and cultural resources that enrich Pasadena residents and serve as a major regional draw to surrounding communities. In fact, one resident was prompted to tout Pasadena as a “world class city, with a variety of great educational institutions.”

Programming 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. These comments were included in the places for youth category. However, participants also expressed other youth concerns that are outside the scope of this update.

Both youth and other outreach participants communicated that existing recreational activities are not fulfilling the interest of youth. Youth specifically requested music equipment rental and lessons, graffiti walls (centralize graffiti), advanced skate parks, culinary classes, and a roller skating rink. The necessity for teen centers with high quality amenities was emphasized. These recreational activities and/or facilities should be available after school and free of charge.

The curfew policy is perceived as “too strict” by the youth and they would like to alter it from 10:00 PM to midnight.

A growing concern for them and other outreach participants is the question of “Are the youth comments being heard?” and “Are we asking what they need?”

City Services

While there is some overlap with city services and all elements of the General Plan, many of the comments received on city services could be better addressed through other departments such as the City Manager’s Office, and the Police, Fire and the Recreation and Parks departments. Concerns regarding the City’s use and availability of water were related to environmental sustainability and were included in the environmental sustainability section of this report.

Many people had positive comments about the services the City provides. In particular, they thought the City has quality police and fire departments, good libraries and well-maintained streets. There was also a sense of pride that the City provides the majority of its own services.

People also commented on how the City has done a good job in providing information to the public. Specific tools mentioned included the City’s website and the “Pasadena In Focus” newsletter. Some people also commented on how accessible and responsive the City was when there were problems or when services were needed. This was often accompanied by a comment similar to “Pasadena has a small-town feel.” As a result, residents and the business community feel they can call City Hall and talk to a person and get questions answered and problems fixed. There were also comments that such access and response was not as common in larger cities.

At the same time, people believed there could be further improvement of services. A large number of people were still concerned about crime and the need for better police protection. There was also a lot of discussion on the need to better enforce existing ordinances related to property maintenance, particularly in Northwest Pasadena. Noise was also mentioned as an enforcement problem including noise from vehicles, residents and businesses.

A few people expressed a need for more social programs and community centers, such as senior activities, adult daycare, recycling programs, gang prevention programs and youth activities. There was much concern regarding the City’s infrastructure and ability to provide resources such as water and power. Typical questions asked included, “What is the condition of the City’s infrastructure?” and “Has the recent growth in the Central District

strained its capacity?” Others mentioned the need to improve street tree maintenance and increase the frequency of street cleaning.

A large number of residents and business community members expressed concerns with the planning and permitting process. People believed that too many larger development projects were being approved without thorough review of the impacts (e.g. traffic, noise, views, etc.). They believed many projects were not adhering to the Zoning Code or approved plans and that too many variances and exceptions to the rules were being approved. People felt many of the planning rules for large and small projects were unclear and the overall permitting process was slow. There was also concern that the different pieces of government (various City departments and outside agencies) were not communicating with one another effectively.

Some people felt the cost for services was becoming too high and burdensome for residents and businesses. Others felt the high costs were needed to maintain the City’s extensive array of services. People also expressed concern about how budget issues or deficits could result in reduced staffing levels and/or services. Some people also believed some city services were not provided evenly throughout the City. Specifically, residents in Northwest Pasadena and East Pasadena felt they did not receive the same level of city services and support as the Central District and West Pasadena.

Many people felt that the existing codes and specific plans needed to be reviewed and updated because they were outdated and did not reflect changes in the community’s values. Others felt that the existing plans were of high quality, but had not been implemented consistently. In addition, some called for the City to separate the planning and economic development functions of the Planning and Development Department.

Business groups expressed concern about the increasing cost of city services and the need to provide these services efficiently. People cited the cost of water and the time it takes to get permits as specific examples.

Financial Support for the Arts and Culture

Pasadenans appreciate the high quality of arts, culture, cultural institutions and other cultural amenities found within the City. Also highlighted were the benefits arts and culture have on the economy and tourism. While most comments celebrated the arts and culture in Pasadena, a few residents commented that more could be done to support arts and culture. Many of those comments focused on financial support for the arts and the need for specific programs, which would be outside the scope of this update.

Respondents noted the accessibility of arts and culture, the prevalence of world-class, high-quality institutions and the diverse cultural mix and range of institutions found within the City. People specifically mentioned several cultural institutions and events that they valued: museums such as the Norton Simon Museum and Pacific Asia Museum, Art Night, the Huntington Library and the Rose Bowl. People treasured the various groups and venues that call Pasadena home such as the Pasadena Symphony, the Pasadena Playhouse and the Civic Auditorium. Residents also appreciated the prevalence of free concerts and opportunities to hear live music.

Other residents mentioned the educational opportunities that were available in Pasadena, such as Caltech and Pasadena City College, as well as research centers like the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

While people agreed arts and culture were important and supported by the community, some felt more could be done. For example, a few residents suggested that the City should spend more money on the arts. Others cited the need for more spaces for art, such as more affordable space for artists and parks that were more usable for cultural events.

Finally, there were a few comments about public art in Pasadena, most of referenced specific examples. Projects that respondents included the Gold Line light rail stations and Robinson Brothers statues at City Hall. Those they did not like included the Convention Center and the Trio public art. Opinions were divided on the public art at Huntington Hospital.

Homeless Services

Concerning homelessness, people noted that Pasadena offered better services than other cities in the region, but expressed a desire for more services. One specific desire was for a year-round shelter. People also expressed the need for some homeless people to receive proper healthcare, the need to create a feeling of safety among Pasadenans and that homelessness seems to be growing.

Homelessness is a multi-faceted issue to which the Land Use Element will have some limited ties. However, the Housing Element, which is currently being updated, covers this topic in more depth.

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