

Agenda Report

October 21, 2013

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF THE LINCOLN AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Adopt a resolution certifying the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan (SCH #2011091041) (Attachment 1), Adopting Findings Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Adopting a Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program; and
2. Adopt a Resolution Setting Forth the Statement of Overriding Considerations; and
3. Adopt a resolution approving the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan (Attachment 2) including recommended changes in Attachment 3; and
4. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination; and
5. Recommend that the City Council direct the City Attorney to prepare an implementation ordinance within 90 days.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On August 14, 2013, the Planning Commission concurred with the staff recommendation and further recommended that the Draft Specific Plan be amended to remove references to redevelopment as a potential implementation tool. Staff concurs with this recommendation and Attachment 3 outlines the recommended changes to the Draft Specific Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Pasadena has prepared the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan, which provides a detailed program to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan Land Use Element for the Specific Plan Area. The project area is both sides of Lincoln Avenue from the Lincoln Avenue undercrossing under Interstate 210 (I-210) on the south to the

north City boundary. The 50.16-acre Specific Plan area is mostly one parcel wide on both sides of Lincoln Avenue.

Implementation of the Specific Plan will result in changes to the underlying zoning designations to reflect that the area is governed by the approved Specific Plan. The plan would result in changes to the allowed uses as well as establish new development standards for this specific plan area. The specific plan proposes to gradually encourage the conversion of existing industrial and auto-related land uses to a neighborhood-serving retail and commercial district.

Build out of the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan would allow up to an additional 500,000 square feet of commercial/office/retail uses and 91 additional residential units. Mixed-use opportunities (commercial/residential) would also be introduced along the corridor. The portion of Lincoln Avenue within the Specific Plan area and south of Washington Avenue would be narrowed from four lanes to two lanes, with a painted median, as part of a pilot program; if successful, the median would be improved.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for this project. The EIR analysis determined that the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts related to Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise and Transportation/Traffic. All other impacts were found to be less than significant with mitigation measures incorporated.

BACKGROUND:

In August 2009, the City Council directed staff to prepare a Specific Plan for Lincoln Avenue between Forest Avenue on the south and the northern City Boundary, just north of Montana Street. The objective of the Specific Plan is to define a land use pattern (zoning) and capital improvement projects that support and encourage reinvestment in the Lincoln Avenue corridor.

Project Vision and Objectives

The vision for the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan that was developed through the public participation process is:

To recreate the Lincoln Avenue corridor from an industrial and limited commercial area into a vibrant neighborhood-oriented district, with new housing options and a complement of local-serving retail and service businesses, office spaces, and community uses, tied together with public improvements that create a vibrant and enjoyable pedestrian environment.

The objectives for the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan are:

- Create a neighborhood “main street” that will serve as the focal point for the neighborhoods surrounding Lincoln Avenue.

- Preserve and enhance existing residential areas.
- Provide new opportunities for all types of housing along the corridor.
- Facilitate opportunities for catalytic developments that provide desired neighborhood-oriented retail and service businesses, local employment opportunities, and a link to the community.
- Provide for the gradual phasing out of industrial uses that create conflicts with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Support design that contributes to the enhanced character of the City and Northwest Pasadena in particular.
- Enrich the pedestrian environment along Lincoln Avenue through well-designed and appropriately scaled projects and pleasing streetscapes.
- Invite pedestrian activity through a cohesive and improved streetscape corridor.
- Encourage investment, maintenance, and pride in the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan area.
- Enhance public safety.

Project Description

<i>Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan Land Use Summary</i>						
Land Use	Existing Uses		Proposed Uses (Buildout)		Proposed Project (Net New)	
	SF	Units	SF	Units	SF	Units
Retail	115,000		595,000		480,000	
Office	23,000		343,000		320,000	
Education/Religious/ Institutional	41,000		0		-41,000	
General/Light Industrial	259,000		0		-259,000	
Multi-family residential		133		205		72
Single family residential		77		96		19
Total	438,000	210	938,000	301	500,000	91

The Specific Plan recommends a total of 301 housing units as total build-out for the entire Specific Plan Area, adding a total of 91 net new units. The Plan would allow an additional 500,000 square feet of commercial uses, largely as more intensely developed commercial uses (either as mixed-use projects or stand-alone commercial) replace aging uses, primarily industrial. The total square footage of non-residential uses in the Specific Plan area would comprise 938,000 square feet. The portion of Lincoln Avenue south of Washington Boulevard would be narrowed from four lanes to two lanes, with a painted median, as part of a pilot program. If successful, the median would be improved as a permanent physical median.

Community Participation

The Specific Plan originates from direct community stakeholders' input within the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan Area. More than 80 Lincoln Avenue residents, youth,

business people, faith leaders, City Commissioners, and Lincoln Avenue Project Area Committee members participated in a series of five public workshops. Workshop participants identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and concerns, regarding the Lincoln Avenue corridor now and into the future. At those workshops, members of the community expressed interest in recreating Lincoln Avenue as a neighborhood-serving corridor.

An advisory committee was formed to provide feedback and comment to City staff and the consultant team. The advisory committee was comprised of residents, business operators, commercial property owners, non-profit organizations, faith leaders, and representatives from the Lincoln Avenue Project Area Committee. The advisory committee met on several occasions beginning with a tour of adjacent cities, followed by discussions of land use and design, plan and policy issues, and review of the draft Specific Plan.

The Lincoln Avenue Project Area Committee, together with the Northwest Commission, held a joint community meeting to review the draft Specific Plan and to introduce the document to community stakeholders. The draft document was well received by the community. Discussions included provisions for off-street parking, timing of streetscape improvements, façade improvement program, non-conforming uses and allowance of alcohol sales for sit-down restaurants.

Commission Reviews

The draft Specific Plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission, Northwest Commission, Lincoln Project Area Committee, Community Development Committee, Transportation Advisory Commission, and Design Commission. Questions and concerns raised by the Commissions included:

- Concern about economics of the proposed uses - does the plan do enough to encourage private redevelopment and reinvestment?
- Is the Specific Plan adding more requirements that will drive up the cost to develop or discourage development?
- Questions about where the industrial and building material businesses would go if they left Lincoln Avenue.

As part of the Specific Plan preparation process, an economic study was prepared to identify the demand for neighborhood-serving retail, office and residential uses on Lincoln Avenue. The study concluded that there is demand for these uses and recommended some changes to the multi-family development standards to facilitate residential development in portions of the corridor. Because Lincoln Avenue currently has relatively limited streetscape improvements, the enhanced streetscape envisioned by the Specific Plan will also encourage private reinvestment in the corridor. The Specific Plan studied two catalytic sites and developed alternative site layouts that can be used by private developers to revitalize these sites which in turn will spur reinvestment on other sites.

Industrial and building materials businesses are permitted in General Commercial and Industrial areas in Pasadena, including east Walnut Street, and parts of the East Colorado Boulevard and East Pasadena Specific Plan areas.

Summary of Plan Components

To achieve the vision and objectives of the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan, the Plan establishes new zoning districts; determines allowed and prohibited land uses; establishes heights, setbacks and FARs; proposes traffic calming measures; recommends streetscape improvements and establishes design guidelines.

Land Uses: To transform the corridor from primarily industrial to a vibrant neighborhood-serving district, the Specific Plan encourages mixed-use development in areas where previously housing was not allowed. Also, a variety of land uses that are allowed in some commercial areas are not allowed in the specific plan area. These include liquor stores, building materials sales, motels, drive-through businesses and commercial nurseries.

Development Standards: The Specific Plan proposes a maximum height limit of 36 feet and two stories in height. In some areas, projects are allowed to be up to three stories if the third story is used for housing. Front setback limits range from 18 inches to a maximum of five feet in order to reinforce the commercial building street edge. On the east side of Lincoln Avenue between Howard and Hammond Streets, open trellises or arcades are required to provide shade for pedestrians.

Traffic Calming: Traffic volumes are substantially lower on Lincoln Avenue south of Washington Boulevard. The Specific Plan recommends the implementation of a pilot program to reduce the traffic to two lanes south of Washington Boulevard. At key mid-block locations, the Specific Plan recommends landscaped medians to increase pedestrian safety and improve the aesthetics of the streetscape.

Streetscape Improvements: The Specific Plan recommends a variety of public improvements to enhance walk-ability. These include traffic calming treatments such as curb extensions and landscaped medians, supplemental street trees and proposed gateways at Montana and Mountain Streets.

Design Guidelines: The Specific Plan includes many architectural design features into development standards, rather than design guidelines. In doing this, the Specific Plan incorporates many of the elements of a "Form-Based Zoning Code." The location of building entrances, incorporation of trellises or arcades, required modulation of the building mass, and required storefront elements are all regulated by the Specific Plan.

Recommended Changes to the Draft Specific Plan

Based on community input and further analysis of the draft Specific Plan, staff recommends several changes to the draft Specific Plan document. (See Attachment 3)

The section of Anderson Place behind the frontage parcels on Lincoln Avenue is all single-family homes. The Specific Plan recommends rezoning this area to multi-family (RM-16). To preserve this small neighborhood, staff recommends retaining the existing single-family (RS-6) zoning for all the parcels that face Anderson Place.

The parcel containing the parking for Chan's Market at the southwest corner of Lincoln Avenue and Zanja Street is currently zoned RS-6, although it has been used for the market for several decades. This parcel was not included in the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan because it was not fronting onto Lincoln Avenue. Staff recommends that this parcel be changed to LASP-RM-16 to be consistent with the proposed zoning for the Chan's Market.

To keep the commercial districts of Lincoln Avenue aligned with the other commercial districts in the City, staff is recommending some changes to the allowed land uses - making some uses require a Conditional Use Permit and other uses allowed by right.

The Lincoln Avenue Advisory Committee met and concurred with these changes.

Because the Specific Plan was prepared in March 2011 and then an EIR was prepared, the draft Plan includes some dated references to Redevelopment Areas and the Enterprise Zone that are no longer accurate. The Planning Commission recommended that these references be corrected in the Final Specific Plan and these changes are also outlined in Attachment 3.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

A Notice of Preparation was released on April 25, 2012 to announce that the City was preparing an EIR for the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan and to solicit comments and input on what topics the EIR should analyze. The comment period was from April 25 to May 25, 2012. During this time, two scoping meetings were held. The first, on May 9, 2012 was held by the Planning Commission. The second scoping meeting, held by the Northwest Commission, was on May 24, 2012.

Based on analysis in the Initial Study and input received during the scoping period, the Draft EIR specifically analyzed the topic areas of Aesthetics, Air Quality, Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards & Hazardous Materials, Hydrology & Water Quality, Land Use & Planning, Noise, Population & Housing, Public Services, Transportation & Traffic and Utilities & Service Systems. Of these areas, the Draft EIR determined there would be significant impacts related to Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise and Transportation & Traffic. Impacts to the other study areas were

found to be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation measures incorporated.

The Draft EIR analyzed four project alternatives that would avoid or lessen significant environmental impacts, while still meeting the basic objectives of the project. Although some alternatives reduced some of the impacts of the project they did not reduce impacts below a level of significance and did not meet the project goals and objectives.

Statement of Overriding Considerations

The Final EIR for the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan will require the adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations in order to certify the Final EIR because the remaining impacts to Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise, and Transportation & Traffic cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level.

CEQA allows a decision-making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the project against its unavoidable environmental impacts when determining whether to approve a project. If these benefits are deemed to outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, those effects may be considered "acceptable" per Section 15093 (Statement of Overriding Considerations) of the CEQA Guidelines.

In such a case, CEQA requires the agency to support, in writing, the specific reasons for considering a project acceptable when significant impacts are not avoided or substantially lessened. Those reasons must be based on substantial evidence in the Final EIR or elsewhere in the administrative record.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

A General Plan Land Use Diagram amendment will be required to change the designations of the property within the Specific Plan area to "Specific Plan." This will be an interim change because the new Land Use Element will eliminate the designation of "Specific Plan" citywide and replace it with a designation that matches the intent for the areas. The proposed Land Use Diagram proposes residential, commercial and mixed-use designations that are consistent with the proposed vision in the Specific Plan.

The City Council approved development levels for each Specific Plan to use in the General Plan EIR to assess the impacts of the proposed General Plan. For Lincoln Avenue these development levels are 180 new residential units and 300,000 square feet of non-residential development. These levels differ from the levels in the Specific Plan, which are 91 units and 500,000 square feet. During the General Plan EIR process, an alternative could be considered that matches the proposed development levels of the Specific Plan. At that time, it can be determined if additional housing and less non-residential development is appropriate for Lincoln Avenue.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan furthers the City Council Strategic planning goal to “Support and promote the quality of life and the local economy” by improving the business environment on Lincoln Avenue and supporting the removal of industrial businesses that are incompatible with the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Specific Plan also furthers the following General Plan Land Use Element policies:

- Policy 1.6 - Neighborhood Commercial: Encourage the provision of businesses that serve residents within walking distance of homes.
- Policy 14.1 - Human Values: Pasadena development and growth policies should reflect concern for the well-being of citizens, should respect the City’s social, cultural and economic diversity, and should emphasize human scale and pedestrian orientation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

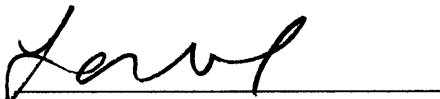
Implementation of the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan will require future Capital Improvement expenditures to realize the roadway diet and streetscape improvements. As properties change from the existing industrial uses to mixed use and commercial uses, additional property taxes will be collected from the Lincoln corridor which will partially defray these costs.

Respectfully submitted,



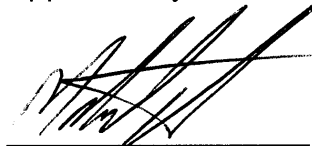
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Attachments: (3)

- Attachment 1 – Final Environmental Impact Report
- Attachment 2 – Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan
- Attachment 3 – Recommended Changes to the Draft Specific Plan