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CITY CLERK
CITY OF PASADENA

February 19, 2021

Pasadena City Council
City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101

RE: General Plan Overview and Implementation Update

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

Pasadena Heritage is pleased to see a few General Plan Amendments being considered for the first time, which indicates that the City is listening carefully to comments submitted during the Specific Plan process. We applaud the City staff for taking these suggestions seriously.

After reviewing each of the eight Specific Plans, it has become clear to us that some changes do need to be made to the General Plan. Though the 2015 General Plan is still a strong guide today, there are some realities that could not have been conceived of even five years ago: COVID-19 accelerating the work-from-home transition, housing costs that have continued to rise significantly, and Amazon and other delivery services changing the retail landscape significantly. The markets for office and retail were already struggling pre-pandemic and have only become weaker since then. There is simply much less need for commercial-only space than we could have predicted in 2015. Additionally, we are forced by the state to plan for a much larger RHNA allocation than expected and housing is in high demand across the State of California. In order to plan for this residential growth, we either need to allow for much denser development in residential neighborhoods or allow some residential development in what was previously reserved for commercial use.

We believe that a few targeted General Plan Amendments can relieve development pressure elsewhere. As preservation advocates, we are particularly concerned about new development adjacent to historic resources. Initially proposed heights along Colorado Boulevard and Green Street seem excessive and out-of-scale. With height averaging and density bonuses, buildings could rise over 100'. Because of this, we asked for that density to be pushed to less sensitive areas. Like the Playhouse Village Association, Pasadena Heritage asked for the North Lake subarea be rezoned for mixed-use, but our main rationale was to allow for some relief elsewhere. It also opens up another powerful tool, the possible adaptive reuse of underutilized office towers to residential units, which has already been proven to be successful in Pasadena. This is one of the most sustainable and practical methods of creating additional housing. We support the Playhouse Village Association's request for Area 2, remain neutral on Areas 3 & 4, and skeptical on Area 1, but believe

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they all deserve scrutiny. It is important to remember that even if a few of these General Plan Amendments are selected to move forward, that heights and densities can and should be lowered elsewhere to achieve a better, more sensible and preservation sensitive balance.

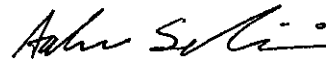
These issues are extremely complex and require further study. We have already written to the Planning Commission asking them to be open to General Plan Amendments if necessary. Because they will be doing deep dives into each Specific Plan area, we believe the Planning Commission is best suited to study these potential amendments in more detail, and they can forward their recommendations to the City Council for a final decision. There are a few more potential amendments that may make sense on top of these four, which may be identified through Planning Commission review. We also think it will be helpful to do a safe, socially-distanced walkthrough of each area with City Councilmembers, City Staff, Planning Commissioners, and some community stakeholders. It is important to physically visit each site before a decision can be made. We volunteer our time to be present and share our viewpoints if it would be helpful to the City Council.

We thank you for your time and deliberation in this topic. Making such changes will be a lengthy process, but it can lead to a win-win in terms of historic preservation and housing production.

Sincerely yours,



Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director



Andrew Salimian
Preservation Director

cc: Steve Mermell, City Manager
David Reyes, Director of Planning
Anita Cerna, Senior Planner
David Sanchez, Principle Planner

Martinez, Ruben

From: Wayne Hunt < >
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2021 4:47 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Cc: Wilson, Andy; John J. Kennedy
Subject: General Plan Amendment -- Lake & Corson Area

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City Council:

I enthusiastically support this proposed general plan change to allow housing/mixed use in these few blocks. As both a Playhouse Village Association board member and commercial property owner on nearby Mentor, I have long wondered why housing is excluded from development this close to public transit. If there is anywhere in the city where new housing should be allowed, and even promoted, it is here.

Thank you,
— Wayne Hunt

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Martinez, Ruben

From: Phil Hawkey
Sent: Sunday, February 21, 2021 3:14 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Cc: Reyes, David; Mermell, Steve
Subject: Item 20: General Plan: Housing on North Lake south of freeway

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Mayor and Members of City Council,

The portion of North Lake Avenue between Colorado Blvd and the 210 Freeway is a missed opportunity to create a vibrant residential transit oriented corridor that could become a beautiful major entry portal to Pasadena. Currently the General Plan in this part of North Lake Avenue does not allow residential development. Allowing multifamily residential on North Lake Avenue, integrated with the office development, could create a new energy along a street that now doesn't have much life expect for vehicle traffic.

By allowing residential development on North Lake Avenue, and if combined with extending the landscaped South Lake Avenue landscaped median strip up to the freeway, along with pedestrian amenities and landscaping on the sidewalks, could transform North Lake Avenue (South of the freeway) into a dynamic, walkable, attractive location for office, retail, entertainment and restaurants.

I urge you to support changing the General Plan to allow residential multifamily development on North Lake Avenue south of the 210 freeway.

Phil Hawkey
Room 501
Pasadena, Ca 91101

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Martinez, Ruben

From: Colleen Carey <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, February 21, 2021 7:18 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Item 20 on City Council Agenda for this week

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I strongly encourage the City Council to consider re-zoning the North Lake area from Colorado Boulevard to Corson as mixed use allowing multi family residential as a component of mixed use. As a commercial broker that has worked the area for over 20 years and who offices in this area, it just makes sense. This is an area where no uses seem to prosper currently. The Class A office buildings here have suffered from a higher than normal vacancy over the past 20 years and the area cannot attract retail due to low pedestrian traffic and vagrant issues that reside here due to lack of activity that normally occurs in vibrant mixed use neighborhoods. I have personally experienced officing in this area and I do not often leave my office on foot as there simply is no reason to do that—no attractive restaurants and no retail mitigates desire to visit the street on foot. Because this is the gateway to Pasadena from the Lake Avenue Light Rail station, it should be more inviting. Allowing property owners to develop mixed use that includes residential will eventually result in increased investment to provide much needed new retail to serve the new residents and office occupants as mixed use development that includes multi family begin to populate this corridor.

I encourage you to commission the Planning Department to work toward a revised zoning code that allows for mixed use including multi family residential in the North Lake Corridor.

Thanks.

Colleen Carey
Founding Principal
Lee & Associates | Pasadena

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Corporate ID 02059558
155 N Lake Ave, | Suite 430
Pasadena, CA 91101

Martinez, Ruben

From: Jeanette Mann <.....>
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2021 7:37 AM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Item 20: General Plan Overview and Implementation Update: East Pasadena Update

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Good afternoon,

I think the recommendation to squeeze even more housing onto existing commercial and office space north of Foothill Boulevard in East Pasadena is very ill advised. The retail and restaurants north of Foothill are some of the most crowded and popular in the city. In general, East Pasadena is underserved by the city and through commercial establishments. We need more services for Pasadena residents – not fewer. Foothill Boulevard is already at capacity. All of the housing going in south of Foothill will only exacerbate the situation. We can't jam more cars into the area by bringing in even more housing. People do not give up their cars just because they live close to a transit station. Many still drive to work and virtually all of them drive to grocery stores, restaurants, school, medical appointments, the cleaners, and the plethora of businesses and services that fill up our days.

Please do not approve this East Pasadena section of this plan. There needs to be more time for meaningful consultation with the neighbors in East Pasadena.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Jeanette Mann

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Playhouse Village

In the heart of Pasadena

16 December 2020

David Reyes
Director of Planning and Community Development
City of Pasadena
175 N Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101

Dear David:

The Playhouse Village Association (PVA) Board of Directors offers this set of comments in response to the recent release of the Draft Central District Specific Plan.

Overall Comments

We appreciate the planning team's efforts to improve various components of the CDSP and are supportive of the following changes in particular:

- 35' required minimum depth for ground-floor commercial spaces, creating greater flexibility for changing retail space trends
- Reductions in minimum parking requirements, making for a more competitive regional market for new commercial and other uses
- Allowance for residential common space to satisfy portions of the ground-floor street frontage of new buildings on certain streets, broadening the options to create active streets
- Increased residential densities to 87 dwelling units per acre, allowing for flexibility to meet housing needs and satisfy the intention of the General Plan

Priorities for Inclusion

While we are encouraged by some positive changes listed above, we remain concerned that several critical policy changes – offered in our June 2019 comment letter and diagrams – are not reflected in the plan. Overall policy comments and priorities include:

1. **Revise the land use policy and zoning for North Lake Avenue to permit residential and mixed-use development.** With average office vacancy rates around 35%, physical and economic conditions on North Lake Avenue are dire and expected to become more challenging in the post-COVID era. The plan should allow residential development in this subarea to help alleviate the ongoing affordable housing crisis and homelessness conditions, right-size the office market for future trends, and support the Gold/L Line as an amenity. Although this would require a General Plan Amendment, this policy change would be transformative by promoting significant new investment and vitality at this critical gateway into Pasadena.
2. **Incorporate the vision for enhanced streetscapes and mid-block crossings for Colorado Boulevard.** The recent installation of angled parking and on-street dining – which are

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anticipated to remain permanent – solidifies the transformation of Colorado between Oak Knoll and Madison. The plan should reflect additional components envisioned in our streetscapes vision, including wider sidewalks (at least 22' in areas) – taken from existing parking/loading lanes and not private property – with curbside dining, pocket plazas, and mid-block crossings to connect paseos on either side of Colorado.

3. Designate the Union/El Molino site as park/open space and note the desire for a complementary plaza space on the nearby public parking lot on South Madison Ave. The addition of these open spaces will further provide a sense of place and community in the middle of Playhouse Village. The plan should acknowledge these sites and recognize that the City will have likely completed construction of the new public park and parking plaza at Union/El Molino when this plan is adopted.
4. Recognize the challenges of widening sidewalks along Union and Walnut and provide for a comprehensive approach. These streets will become more vibrant pedestrian areas as future residential and mixed-use developments occur. The plan should recognize the challenges of inconsistent right-of-way widenings for sidewalks and advocate for a comprehensive approach such as a special infrastructure program paid through local developments.

Other Specific Comments

Specific policy comments for other elements of the Draft Plan include:

- Respect the historic character and unique significance of the Mentor Avenue cultural district. The collection of low-scale early-20th Century architecture, rear courtyards and alleys, and multiple cultural venues is one of the few such examples in the Central District. The plan should formally recognize these assets with targeted preservation and lowered building heights to support the role of this rich, pedestrian-scaled area.
- Reconsider the required paseo from Vroman's northward to Union Street.
- Allow for streetwall flexibility to accommodate setback requirements.
- Confirm the designation of parkway requirement along Colorado (suspected error; requirement should be on Green).
- Confirm the designation of the 100' stepback along north Hudson and Mentor avenues – this seems like a very large requirement where there are existing parking garages in many locations.
- Explore allowing live-work units as an additional land use type to create further flexibility for ground floor activation and housing type diversity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan, and we look forward to revisions as we create a plan for a successful future.

Kind regards,



Brian Wallace

Executive Director



Bernard Chua

Chair, Board of Directors



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DAN RICHARDS

February 21, 2021

City Council
c/o Mark Jomsky
City Clerk
100 North Garfield Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91101

Re: General Plan Overview and Implementation Update

Dear Mayor Gordo and City Council members:

Livable Pasadena has been closely following the conversation around proposed changes to our General Plan. We are very happy that the city has sought community input, and we hope that the community continues to be part of the conversation going forward. The General Plan will have a long-term impact on the life of our city and the ways in which Pasadena is able to grow and adapt to our changing world.

This will be a long process, and we urge the city to carefully consider all elements of the plan and how they work together to impact our livability. We need to ensure that our green spaces are expanded and protected, our traffic patterns are not made worse, and that our walkability is preserved with set-backs being enforced. We need to carefully examine and implement restrictions on new development so the character and feel of our city is preserved. The General Plan should be amended to better meet the changing needs of Pasadena – but those changes should be made in a way that benefits all of Pasadena, not solely the developers. It is clear, the developers are following these conversations closely too.

We are wondering why only these specific areas are being considered, and why all low/medium commercial areas aren't included? Only examining a few areas will lead to inconsistent zoning and the danger of preferential treatment of a few developers with interests in those areas. The debate about any proposed changes should be open and transparent. If not, we risk the welfare of all of Pasadena for the benefit of a few. For example, on the Staff Report it is noted that the requested Amendments to Area 3 and Area 4 were submitted by a "community stakeholder." Livable Pasadena would like to know who submitted those requested changes.

Additionally, we concur with Pasadena Heritage's skepticism regarding the proposed height changes along Colorado and Green Street. The ever-increasing height and scale of new development in Pasadena carries the risk of destroying our green spaces, trees, and walkability. It also will change the feel and character of our neighborhoods. Changes to our General Plan should take these factors into account. If heights are increased anywhere in Pasadena, they should only be increased moderately, and only after full consideration of the impact these new heights would have on the neighborhood and on the city as a whole.

Thank you,

Megan Foker
On behalf of Livable Pasadena

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