

# Agenda Report

February 22, 2021

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department  
**SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

This report is intended to provide an overview of the City's General Plan and recent implementation programs and seeks further direction from the City Council on carrying out key citywide goals and policies.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides an overview of the City's General Plan and a summary of programs the Planning Department is currently working on that seek to implement the General Plan while balancing housing and employment growth, preservation of residential neighborhoods and historic resources, and environmental sustainability. This report specifically highlights programs focused on the implementation of the Land Use Element of the General Plan and identifies four areas where the public has expressed an interest in allowing housing that are currently designated for nonresidential uses only and which would require a General Plan Amendment. The City Council is asked to provide direction as to whether to proceed in that direction.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **General Plan**

In the State of California, all cities and counties are required to develop and adopt a general plan. A general plan is a comprehensive set of policy documents that provide the overall framework for translating broad community values and expectations into specific strategies for how a city or county should evolve. It establishes land use designations and policies that inform future land use decisions and assist decision makers as they review planning approvals for a new project or consider a proposed ordinance or policy.

A general plan must contain seven elements: land use, open space, conservation, housing, circulation, noise, and safety. Cities and counties that have identified

disadvantage communities must also address environmental justice in their general plans, including air quality. All elements of a general plan, whether mandatory or optional, must be internally consistent with each other. A general plan is also required to be updated periodically. While there is no requirement for how often to update a general plan, the planning period has traditionally been 15 to 20 years. The housing element is the only portion of a general plan that is required to be updated every five or eight years, as listed by the Housing and Community Development agency (HCD). Pasadena's General Plan consists of seven elements: Land Use, Mobility, Housing, Greenspace/ Recreation/ Parks, Open Space and Conservation, Noise, and Safety (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Pasadena's General Plan Elements**

Element	Description
Land Use	Designates the type, intensity, and general distribution of uses of land for housing, businesses, industry, open space, education, public buildings, waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses.
Circulation (Mobility)	Correlates with the land use element and identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other local public utilities and facilities.
Housing	Assesses current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community and includes policies and programs for providing adequate housing.
Open Space and Conservation	Addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources, including water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits. It also details plans and measures for the long-range preservation and conservation of open space lands, including open space for the preservation of natural resources, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and public health and safety.
Noise	Identifies and appraises noise problems within the community and forms the basis for land use distribution determinations.
Safety	Establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards, as well as from other concerns such as drought.

## **Recent History of Pasadena's General Plan**

### 1994 General Plan

In the late 1980s the Pasadena voters approved the Growth Management Initiative (GMI), which placed annual caps on the amount of residential and nonresidential development which could be approved, and required projects not exempt from the initiative to compete with other projects in order to obtain a development allocation. Exemptions included but were not limited to affordable housing, housing in redevelopment areas, nonresidential development in northwest Pasadena, and development pursuant to the Civic Center Master Plan. Several organizations filed a lawsuit against the GMI and, in 1991, the Court approved an out-of-court settlement.

In response to the settlement, the City initiated a comprehensive revision to the General Plan in 1992. The central philosophy of the revision program was to develop a unified vision for the future of the City, one which is shaped and driven by community values and reflects input of Pasadena residents. The major themes that arose from that process were synthesized into seven guiding principles, which represent the overall framework for developing, interpreting, and implementing Pasadena's General Plan.

In 1994 the City adopted comprehensive revisions to the Land Use and Mobility Elements of the General Plan. The 1994 Land Use Element advocated for several strategies for focusing growth, specifically directing higher density development away from single-family residential neighborhoods and into specific areas in order to create mixed use environments oriented to transit and pedestrian activity. It further supported development within these focused areas by reducing the potential for development in other parts of the City through rezoning. The 1994 Land Use Element also contained policies to provide safe and well-designed public spaces, preserve the City's heritage, ensure the accessibility of human services, and foster Pasadena's stewardship of the natural environment.

Following the adoption of the 1994 General Plan, the City began preparing seven specific plans that would carry out the goals and policies of the General Plan, a process that took over a decade to complete. The following plans were adopted by the City Council: North Lake (1997), South Fair Oaks (1998), West Gateway (1998), East Pasadena (2000), Fair Oaks/ Orange Grove (2002), East Colorado (2003), and Central District (2004).

### 2004 General Plan

The City initiated a process to update the Land Use and Mobility Elements of the General Plan, incorporating information gained from preparing seven specific plans, and revising the Zoning Code in 1999. After a series of community meetings to consider possible revisions, the City adopted minor updates to the General Plan in 2004. The 2004 Land Use Element reinforced the City's seven guiding principles of creating mixed-use urban environments oriented to transit and pedestrian activity and focusing

higher density development into the specific plan areas. It also supported development in northwest Pasadena, including Fair Oaks, Lincoln, Villa Parke, and Lake and Washington to provide new employment and housing opportunities in these areas. The 2004 Land Use Element also incorporated citywide design principles that would serve as a guide to ensure new development complemented the urban fabric of Pasadena.

2015 General Plan

In 2009 the City initiated a comprehensive process to update its General Plan. This update represents a multiyear collaborative effort among residents, business owners, property owners, neighborhood and business associations, community groups, an advisory committee, City commissions, and the City Council. During the preparation of the Land Use and Mobility Elements, the City also held various workshops, stakeholder interviews, and commission hearings that dealt with housing and land use planning between 2011 and 2013. These workshops focused on where the City should direct residential growth and the types of housing products desired. These strategies underpin the City’s growth strategy and vision to maintain a socially and economically diverse community of homeowners and renters articulated in the adopted 2014-2021 Housing Element, consistent with the General Plan Guiding Principles (See Table 2).

**Table 2. General Plan Guiding Principles**

No	Guiding Principle
1	Growth will be targeted to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life. Higher density development will be directed away from residential neighborhoods and into the Central District, Transit Villages, and Neighborhood Villages. These areas will have a diverse housing stock, job opportunities, exciting districts with commercial and recreational uses, and transit opportunities. New development will build upon Pasadena’s tradition of strong sense of place, great neighborhoods, gardens, plazas, parks, and trees.
2	Pasadena’s historic resources will be preserved. Citywide, new development will be in harmony with and enhance Pasadena’s unique character and sense of place. New construction that could affect the integrity of historic resources will be compatible with, and differentiated from, the existing resource.
3	Pasadena will be an economically vital city by providing jobs, services, revenues, and opportunities. A diverse economic base with jobs for Pasadena residents will be fostered; existing businesses will be encouraged to stay or expand; affordable housing will be provided for the labor pool; the continued fiscal health of the city will be ensured.
4	Pasadena will be a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable community. Safe, well designed, accessible and human-scale residential and commercial areas will be provided where people of all ages can live, work and play. These areas will include neighborhood parks, urban open spaces and the equitable distribution of public and private recreational facilities; new public spaces will be acquired. Human services will be coordinated and made accessible to those who need them.

5	Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without cars. Specific plans in targeted development areas will emphasize a mix of uses, pedestrian activity, and transit; public and private transit will be made more available; neighborhood villages and transit villages will reduce the need for auto use.
6	Pasadena will be a cultural, scientific, corporate, entertainment and education center for the region. Long-term growth opportunities will be provided for existing institutions; a healthy economy will be fostered to attract new cultural, scientific, corporate, entertainment and educational institutions.
7	Community Participation will be a permanent part of achieving a greater city. Citizens will be provided with timely and understandable information on planning issues and projects; citizens will directly participate in shaping plans and policies for Pasadena's future.
8	Pasadena is committed to public education and a diverse educational system responsive to the broad needs of the community.

In 2015, the City adopted the comprehensive updates to the Land Use and Mobility Elements of the General Plan. The 2015 General Plan includes revisions to the Land Use and Mobility Elements, it updated the Land Use Diagram, established new residential and nonresidential development caps for each of the specific plan areas, and modified several specific plan boundaries. It also incorporated six optional elements into the updated Land Use and Mobility Elements, eliminating these elements from the General Plan. The 2015 General Plan represents a vision for the City that embodies core values which have been expressed by the community in the two previous General Plan updates of 1994 and 2004.

The Land Use Element continues to focus new housing and employment opportunities with a mix of uses within Pasadena's specific plan areas and former redevelopment areas. It further supports development within these focused areas by continuing to protect single-family residential neighborhoods and historic districts.

The Mobility Element is focused on three main policy objectives: 1) Enhance livability, 2) Encourage walking, biking, transit, and other alternatives to motor vehicles, and 3) Create a supportive climate for economic viability. The Mobility Element's transportation system planning is based on the development patterns identified in the Land Use Element. As growth and mobility are intrinsically tied, the City's long range planning efforts developed the Mobility Element and Land Use Element as a unified, coordinated effort.

### **General Plan Implementation**

The 2015 Land Use Element contains an implementation plan that establishes a process for reviewing and monitoring and the plan provides a list of actions or tools to carry out the City's key guiding principles. The following is a summary of several active programs the Planning Department is working on that seek to balance housing and



employment growth, preservation of residential neighborhoods and historic resources, and environmental sustainability.

General Plan Monitoring and Development Caps

Development caps is the mechanism in which the City moderates growth along Pasadena’s major transportation corridors and within Specific Plan areas. In 2015, the City Council established new development caps for each of the Specific Plan areas which set a cumulative number of residential units and nonresidential square footage permitted through 2035. The Planning Department monitors new development and generates monthly reports documenting remaining capacity within each Specific Plan area. The development cap numbers are only considered utilized when building permits are issued (See Table 2 below).

**Table 2. Residential and Nonresidential Development Cap by Specific Plan Area**

	<b>Residential Unit Cap</b>	<b>Nonresidential S/F Cap</b>	<b>Residential Cap Remaining (Issued Permits)</b>	<b>Non-Residential Cap Remaining (Issued Permits)</b>
<b>Central District</b>	4,272	2,112,000	2,551	1,319,243
<b>East Colorado</b>	300	300,000	297	295,311
<b>East Pasadena</b>	750	1,095,000	750	1,090,685
<b>Fair Oaks/Orange Grove</b>	325	300,000	283	291,193
<b>Lamanda Park</b>	100	630,000	101	629,344
<b>Lincoln Avenue</b>	180	300,000	179	300,000
<b>North Lake</b>	250	250,000	250	250,201
<b>South Fair Oaks</b>	802	988,000	785	909,820

Note: affordable housing units are not counted towards residential caps in any Specific Plan, except for the Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan. Parking structures and structures tied to educational institutions also do not count towards nonresidential development capacity limits.

Mansionization

The City Council adopted revised single family development standards for Lower Hastings Ranch in 2016 and the Hillside Overlay Districts in 2017 to address the potential for “mansionization”. In 2018 staff began reviewing the development regulations pertaining to single-family zones throughout the rest of the City, in coordination with the Planning Commission and the public. Multiple meetings were held with the Planning Commission between 2018 and 2020, and the City Council approved adoption of revised standards in October 2020, with first and second reading taking place in February 2021.

### Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) Ordinance

The City Council has adopted a number of technical changes and revisions to the City's ADU Ordinance to comply with a series of state laws enacted to encourage increased production of housing units, with the most recent changes to the ADU Ordinance in 2018. The amendments to the ADU Ordinance included updated requirements for maximum unit size, minimum lot area, setback and height standards, and parking. Since the adoption of the most recent changes, a number of state laws went into effect, further amending ADU requirements. To date the City of Pasadena has not yet updated the ADU Ordinance to reflect recent changes to state law, but Pasadena is required to adhere to state ADU laws where local provisions conflict with state requirements. It is anticipated that a revised ADU ordinance will be presented to the City Council in the later part of 2021.

### Climate Action Plan (CAP)

The City Council adopted the Pasadena CAP in 2018, a strategic framework for measuring, planning, and reducing the City's share of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Since the adoption of the CAP, Pasadena has taken many steps to reduce GHG emissions and promote environmentally sustainable practices. For example, the City has electrified a portion of its fleet, reduced municipal energy use, converted some of its energy supply to carbon neutral sources, restored acres of greenspace, and planted hundreds of public trees. Although these accomplishments are promising, it is still too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this long-term plan. A GHG emissions inventory is recommended to assess the effectiveness of the CAP approximately every five years. In November 2020, staff presented the 2019 Annual Report to the Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) for its review and comment. Upon receipt of comments from the EAC, staff will present the annual update to the Municipal Services Committee this spring, and ultimately to the City Council later this year.

### Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO)

In 2019, The City Council amended the IHO, which requires that any new housing development project with 10 or more units set aside a percentage of those units to be rented or sold at affordable rates. The ordinance was updated to increase the percentage from 15 to 20%. Among the 20% of units that are required to be affordable, 5% must be affordable to Very Low Income households, 5% to Low Income households, and 10% to Moderate Income households if the units are rental. For projects that build units for sale, all 20% may be affordable to Moderate Income households. New housing development projects could provide the affordable units on the same site as the project, build the affordable units in a different location in the City, or pay an in-lieu fee. All fees collected as part of the in-lieu option are used to preserve existing affordable housing in the City, build new affordable housing projects in Pasadena, or other various strategies to support housing affordability.

### Affordable Housing Concession Menu

In 2019, the City Council also adopted an Affordable Housing Concession Menu with the intent of incentivizing developers to minimize the amount of height and massing they would otherwise be entitled to under State law. Concessions on the menu included provisions allowing one additional story of height over no more than 60% of a building footprint, reduction of setback, parking, and loading requirements, and an increase in floor area ratio of up to 0.5. The goal of the concession menu is to limit building mass and height requests while providing time and cost savings to the developer by granting the concessions by-right and allowing them to go directly to Design Review. Staff is currently assessing the menu after one-year and will be providing recommended changes to the City Council this spring.

### Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO)

The City Council directed staff in 2019 to update the City's HPO to address public concerns and ensure that it reflects best practices in historic preservation. Since then, staff has comprehensively reviewed the City's existing HPO as well as HPO's in other communities throughout the State, engaged in an outreach effort to solicit public comments on the proposed Ordinance amendments and conducted several public hearings before the Historic Preservation and Planning Commissions, and recently to the City Council. Earlier this year, staff presented to the City Council proposed amendments aimed at addressing the treatment of proposed demolition of, and major alterations to, eligible, undesignated historic resources, the need for a defined process to conduct historic resource evaluations, the types of projects that require a Certificate of Appropriateness, unclear and inappropriate violation procedures, and a number of more minor technical issues and clarifications that need to be made to the HPO.

### Housing Element Update

The Housing Element is part of the City's General Plan and sets forth the policies and programs to address the housing needs of all households in Pasadena. The Housing Element is the only portion of the General Plan that is required to be updated every eight years. The City's current Housing Element will expire in October 2021. City staff has begun the process of updating the Housing Element for the period 2021-2029. As part of the Housing Element update, staff will assess the City's share of housing need, identify constraints and housing resources, conduct an inventory sites analysis, and formulate a housing plan to meet State law. This assessment will also inform the SPU Program. As part of the Housing Element update, the City will conduct an extensive outreach program through community workshops, online surveys, Planning Commission and City Council study sessions, and public hearings starting this spring. Per state law, the City Council is required to adopt the updated 2021-2029 Housing Element by October 15, 2021.



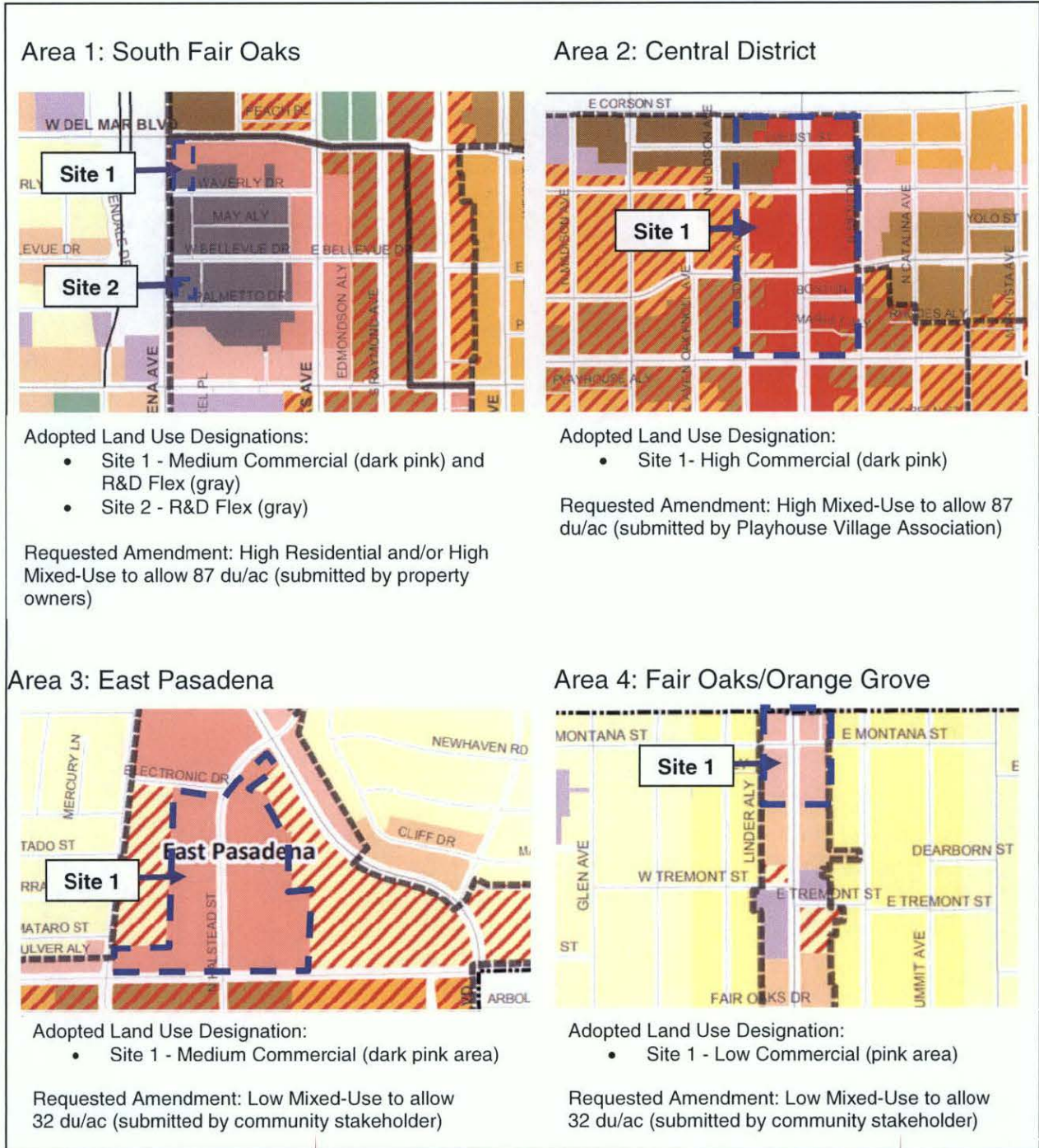
### Specific Plan Update (SPU) Program

The City Council directed the Planning Department in 2018 to update all eight of Pasadena's Specific Plans and the Zoning Code consistent with the recently adopted 2015 General Plan. The updates to the specific plans would establish plan-specific development and design standards in accordance with the adopted Land Use Diagram and the General Plan. Since the launch of the program, a growing number of community members have engaged in the process by viewing the program website, signing up for email updates, participating in a pop-up event or youth activity, attending a plan-area workshop, and/or participating in a virtual open house or live webinar. In general the community has expressed support for introducing more building form and design-oriented standards, such as façade length, modulation, and ground floor design, as well as requiring standards for sidewalks, parkways, open spaces, and paseos. A mix of opinions were expressed by the community on land uses, residential densities, and building heights.

The Planning Department is seeking further guidance at this time from the City Council on four specific areas of the Land Use Diagram of the General Plan. The Land Use Diagram functions as a guide, depicting the pattern of development for Pasadena in 2035. The diagram shows the distribution of uses as well as the density and intensity of development. What is contained in the Land Use Diagram is a broader range, with more specific regulations that will be contained in the Zoning Code, Zoning Map, and Specific Plans after the SPU process is completed. The regulations contained in these documents provide greater detail and may be more restrictive than what is provided for in the General Plan.

Through the outreach with the community, the Planning Department received several requests to amend the Land Use Diagram to allow new residential uses in four areas designated for nonresidential uses (See Map 1). Further studies would be required to determine if these changes to the Land Use Diagram would affect the environmental analysis that was completed for the 2015 General Plan Update. These are changes that would require an amendment to the General Plan, rather than developing standards and regulations that are consistent with the General Plan, and may impact program budget and/or schedule. Therefore, staff is seeking direction from the City Council at this time before additional work on the specific plans is completed.

### Map 1. Requested Amendments to the Land Use Diagram by Specific Plan Area



**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This report is for information purposes and seeks direction from the City Council on General Plan implementation and will not result in any fiscal impact at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



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