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## Shaping Our Community for the Future: Pasadena's General Plan Plots the Course

**W**HAT WILL PASADENA LOOK LIKE in 10 years? Can we minimize the impacts of new development on our city? Can we do anything about all this traffic? An economic growth cycle is prompting many to ask these questions.

The Land Use and Mobility Elements of the General Plan, a new Central District Specific Plan and revised Zoning Code plot the course for where new development will be concentrated, what it will look like and how traffic will be controlled.

This special edition of Pasadena In Focus describes what the documents are all about and how they will guide Pasadena's future.

First, a little background.

1994 was an important year in Pasadena. After input from thousands of residents, an updated General Plan was adopted and principles were put in place to guide the progress of the plan.

Now, 10 years later, certain parts of the General Plan are being updated.

What is the General Plan? It is a framework for translating broad community values and expectations into specific strategies for managing growth and enhancing the quality of life. The General Plan is reviewed regularly and updated about every five years so it can continue to be a realistic document for achieving the community's vision for the future. It includes goals and policies for transportation, housing, land use, open space, noise and safety. These "elements" are updated periodically; the elements for land use and mobility are currently in the process of being updated.

The General Plan also includes specific plan areas for which these policies are intended. These are the main corridors of our community, such as West Gateway, Fair Oaks Avenue, East Colorado Boulevard and North Lake Avenue. The Central District is the largest of these specific plan areas.

Look inside this special edition for more details.



## Guiding Principles

*Pasadena's General Plan was written based on seven guiding principles, which affirm the values of our community. One is not more important than another; they are all relevant and work together. These principles continue to guide the 2004 update of the General Plan.*

- *Growth will be targeted to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life.*
- *Change will be harmonized to preserve Pasadena's historic character and environment.*
- *Economic vitality will be promoted to provide jobs, services, revenues and opportunities.*
- *Pasadena will be promoted as a healthy family community.*
- *Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without cars.*
- *Pasadena will be promoted as a cultural, scientific, corporate, entertainment and educational center for the region.*
- *Community participation will be a permanent part of achieving a greater city.*

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## Defining the Documents

**THE FOUR PLANNING DOCUMENTS** work together to establish standards that guide the density and scale of new development to ensure compatibility with existing streetscapes, target growth toward transit centers and commercial corridors and control traffic impacts on residential areas.

What kinds of buildings should be constructed in Pasadena and where should they be built? That's where the **Land Use Element** comes in. It establishes goals and policies to guide long-term decision-making regarding what types of projects can be built throughout Pasadena. This updated element continues to focus growth and development into specific plan areas and away from residential neighborhoods while creating pedestrian-friendly mixed-use environments in downtown areas that are at or near bus and Metro Gold Line stops. The 2004 update does not propose any major changes to the 1994 version with the exception of land use in the Central District.

Pasadena's Central District generally includes Old Pasadena, the Civic Center, the



Photos courtesy of: The Pasadena Convention and Visitors Bureau  
**Pasadena Playhouse Courtyard.**

Playhouse District, South Lake and all of Arroyo Parkway. The **Central District Specific Plan** establishes a development policy for all properties located in the district's nearly 1,000 acres. More than four years were spent developing the plan, which includes about 21 million square feet of commercial space and 4,000 residential units. The plan provides guidelines for creating pedestrian walkways, transit-oriented development and public spaces that will bring a real sense of urban vitality to downtown Pasadena while preserving architectural resources and distinctive residential neighborhoods.



***Pasadena ARTS bus.***

The **Mobility Element** will continue to emphasize ways for us to get around – without our cars. That's a real challenge, considering that Pasadena is located in Los Angeles County, one of the busiest economic regions in a nation where most people get in their cars to travel only a couple of blocks. Ongoing growth in the greater L.A. area will continue to affect this community because Pasadena is a regional center of economic activity. The Mobility Element update continues to guide the expansion of multimodal corridors that support population and employment growth and protect residential neighborhoods from major traffic.



***Strolling on South Lake.***

What about building heights, sidewalk widths, parking locations and sign placements? In addition to the three General Plan update documents, the **Zoning Code** is being revised. Zoning is a tool to protect public health and safety by guiding land use. Many of us have been to unattractive communities where a carwash is next to a private home next to an auto wrecking yard next to a fast-food restaurant. Pasadena's Zoning Code establishes rules and regulations for implementing land use plans and policies included in the General Plan.



***Public Art at One Colorado.***

These four documents require a state-mandated **Environmental Impact Report** that analyses the impacts that proposed projects may have on noise, traffic and other environmental issues and suggests way to lessen these impacts. One EIR will cover all four documents because they have so much in common. Community input was encouraged during the EIR public comment period, which ended Aug. 23.

You may access all of the documents and the EIR by visiting [www.cityofpasadena.net](http://www.cityofpasadena.net) and clicking on General Plan Update or going to Pasadena Central Library, 285 E. Walnut St.

The City Council will open a public hearing on these documents **Monday, Sept. 27, at 8 p.m.** at the Pasadena Senior Center, 85 E. Holly St. Public comment is welcome.

## Central District 101: Planning for a Dynamic Future

**T**HE CENTRAL DISTRICT he Central District Specific Plan has been long awaited by some Pasadena residents, but many may not have heard of it before. If you consider yourself among the latter, here's your opportunity to learn more about it.

### A dynamic downtown

The plan defines the future of South Lake, the Playhouse District, Old Pasadena, the Civic Center and Arroyo Parkway. New development and adaptive reuse are transforming the Central District into the dynamic and vibrant area envisioned by participants in the 1994 General Plan update.

This area is the heart of Pasadena. It is our vibrant urban core, attracting visitors from throughout the region to its shopping, dining, cultural attractions and entertainment opportunities. The Central District is also home to half of the jobs in Pasadena and the majority of new housing development. It's not uncommon to find residents who live downtown, work downtown and spend evenings and weekends frequenting the many restaurant and entertainment offerings – all without getting in a car!

Over the past five years, hundreds of residents, business owners and community leaders came together during a series of community forums, focus groups, commission meetings and working sessions to identify issues, establish a common vision and help shape the plan.

The result is a set of standards that maintain the distinctive urban character of Pasadena while preserving and complementing historic buildings, providing a broad array of office, retail and residential space, supporting cultural opportunities and encouraging walking, bicycling, bus and Metro Gold Line use. Rules for new development are consistent with traditional development patterns (major development along Colorado Boulevard and minor development on other streets) and require much of the new development to be near Metro Gold Line stations. Historic neighborhoods are protected by requiring new development adjacent to residential neighborhoods to be compatible with historic architecture.

## **Implementing the vision**

The 1994 Land Use Element of the General Plan established caps, or limits, on the amount of development that is allowable within the Central District. It called for no more than 5,095 new residential units and 6.2 million square feet of new retail and commercial space in downtown areas. Those caps and standards remain in place today. Since 1994 about half of the allowable downtown residential units have been built and 25% of allowable commercial space has been developed.

Land use regulations guide the type of development (residential, retail, office, etc.) and the size of buildings that can be built on specific parcels. Floor area ratio, or FAR, is a term that is not familiar to many Pasadenans. FAR determines the maximum bulk of a building and is calculated by dividing the total number of square feet of a proposed building by the total number of square feet of the lot on which it sits. For example, a building with 20,000 square feet of enclosed floor area on a lot of 10,000 square feet has a floor area ratio of 2.0. The maximum FAR allowable in the Central District is 3.0 and the lowest is 1.0.

## **The “Pasadena Look”**

It is important for Pasadena’s urban core to experience growth while maintaining its appeal. FAR regulations distribute new development throughout the Central District, focus higher density development around transit centers and require new buildings to match the unique scale and character of the district.

Additional standards addressing open space, sidewalk widths, building setbacks and building heights control the massing of buildings and the character of the street.

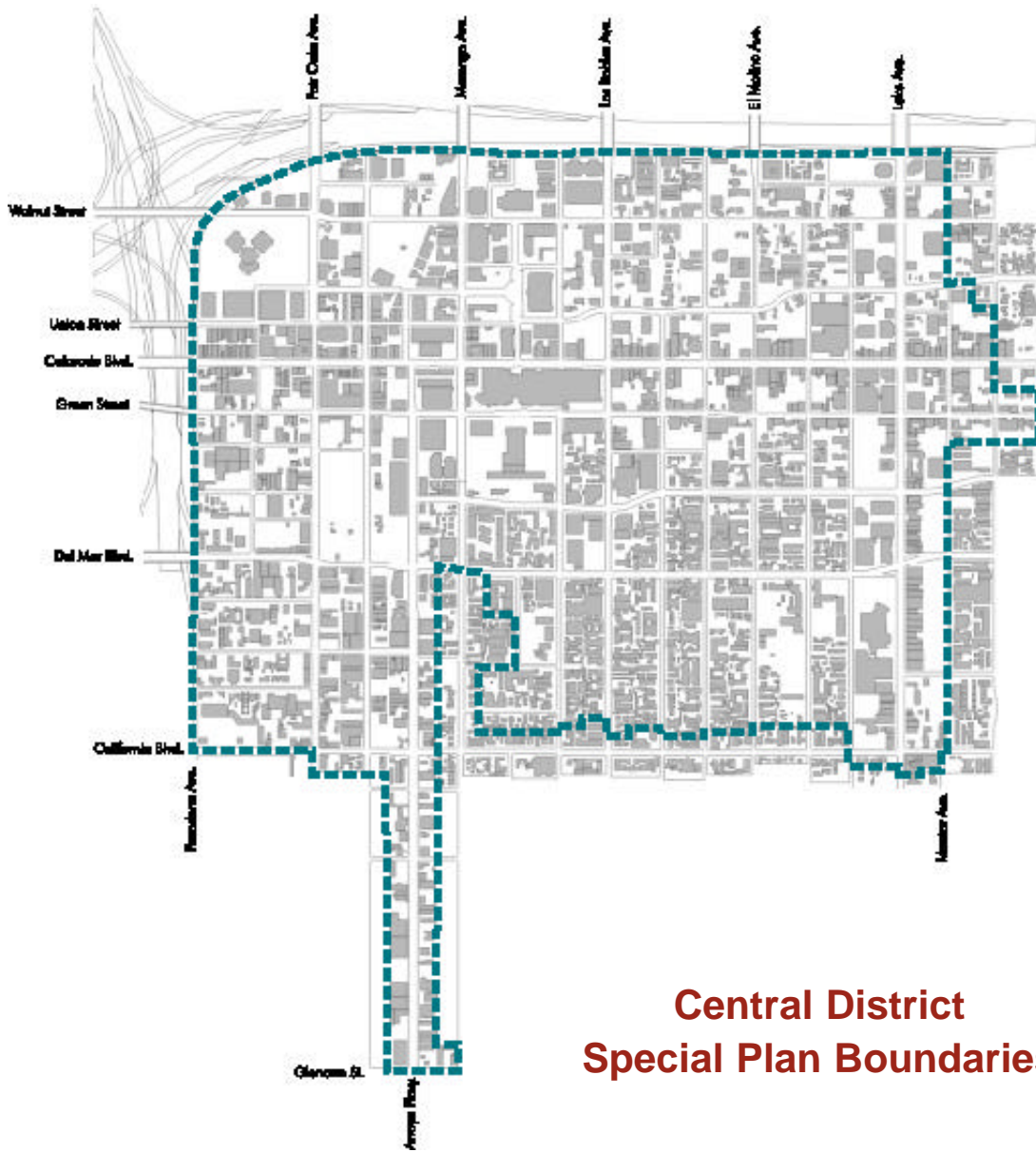
Beyond the size of buildings, their “look” is directed by urban design guidelines. These regulations require high-quality construction, attractive façades, lush landscaping, interesting courtyards and plazas, outstanding visual details and carefully planned parking areas.

## **Traffic!**

More and more, people in the Central District are getting around without cars, but traffic remains a big issue. To direct traffic away from residential neighborhoods, the Mobility Element requires new development in the Central District to be built near Metro Gold Line stations and major corridors such as Colorado Boulevard and Lake Avenue. New development in these areas encourages people to get around without cars – by walking, bicycling, taking the bus and riding the light rail.

## **Ready to learn more?**

Visit [www.cityofpasadena.net](http://www.cityofpasadena.net) and click on General Plan Update and then on Central District Specific Plan or stop by the reference desk at Pasadena Central Library. Either way, you’ll find plenty of maps, photographs and more detailed information. You’ll be an expert in no time!



## Central District Special Plan Boundaries

### Central District Trivia

1. What percentage of Pasadena's total jobs are in the Central District?
2. What percentage of Pasadena's total retail sales revenue is generated in the Central District?
3. What percentage of Pasadena residents live in the Central District?

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Do the Central District Specific Plan, Mobility Element, Land Use Element and revised Zoning Code represent what the community wants?**

**A.** Over the last five years, more than 125 community meetings have been attended by hundreds of residents, business owners, community organizations and others. As a result, the community has participated heavily in identifying issues, prioritizing values, refining technical analysis and evaluating proposals and impacts.

**Q. How do the documents protect neighborhoods?**

**A.** They focus new development in downtown areas and around light rail stations, diverting traffic onto major thoroughfares and away from neighborhoods, reducing height limits and density for new commercial development adjacent to residential areas, designating even more historic districts and streamlining pro-cedures for establishing future historic districts.

**Q. Won't traffic get better if we simply don't allow any more new development?**

**A.** No. Pasadena is in the middle of a major metropolitan area and we cannot control regional growth and associated traffic. Even if we stopped all new development, traffic would continue to increase. However, we can control how traffic flows through the city and protect neighborhoods. The General Plan and the Mobility Element call for traffic improvements to create the most efficient ways for traffic to move across town and direct traffic away from neighborhoods.

**Q. Does the Central District Specific Plan limit growth?**

**A.** It is consistent with limits approved by voters in the 1994 General Plan. These limits do not allow an increase in the total number of square feet that can be built in Old Pasadena, the Playhouse District, South Lake, the Civic Center and Arroyo Parkway.

**Q. When will the pace of development in Pasadena slow down?**

**A.** New development in Pasadena comes in cycles related to supply and demand. Economists advise the best approach to strong market demand is to "ride the wave" by guiding development to best meet the needs of the community.

**Q. The architecture of some of the new buildings downtown doesn't appeal to me. How will the documents ensure that new development is attractive and in keeping with Pasadena's distinctive character?**

**A.** Previous regulations were rather confusing and out of date. Community concerns about

building design have been incorporated into the new regulations, which include floor area ratios, design guidelines and setback and height limits. These regulations will help maintain street character and ensure that new development next to historic buildings is complementary.

**Q. Why is so much housing included in the Central District Specific Plan?**

**A.** Pasadena is part of a booming economic region that does not have enough housing to accommodate the increasing population. The Central District Specific Plan calls for one-quarter of the square footage in the district to be residential. This mix of commercial and residential development will be concentrated in downtown areas where people work, shop and play, resulting in less traffic in residential neighborhoods.

**Q. Will any of the downtown housing be affordable?**

**A.** Yes. The city's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance requires 15% of new units to be affordable to low-income and moderate-income households. Developers have the option of paying the city a comparable fee that is deposited into a fund dedicated to affordable housing.



## Glossary

**IT IS NOT SURPRISING** that certain General Plan words and phrases are unfamiliar to many residents. Here's a cheat sheet:

**ADAPTIVE REUSE** – A process that adapts old buildings for new uses while retaining historic architectural features. In Pasadena, for example, a former private residence is now art museum and a former fire station is now a private residence.

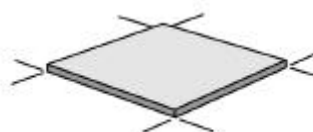
**FLOOR AREA RATIO, OR FAR** – The ratio of floor area to land area expressed as a percent or decimal, which is determined by dividing the total floor area of a building by the total area of the lot on which it is built.

**MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT** – A structure that usually combines pedestrian-friendly retail on ground levels, with other uses, including residential units and office space, on other levels.

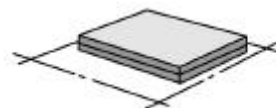
**MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR** – A street or area that includes a variety of transportation options including buses, trains, bicycles, automobiles, etc., all linked to each other.

**Floor Area Ratios (FARs):**

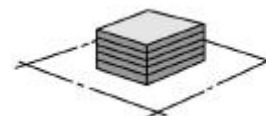
Here are three examples of the ways a 10,000-square-foot building may be built on a 10,000-square-foot lot. All three would be an FAR of 1.0



**1 story building**



**2 story building**



**5 story building**

## Answers to Central District Trivia

1. 50%    2. 25%    3. 10%

## Noticias En Breve

### Moldeando Nuestra comunidad para el futuro

¿Cómo se vera Pasadena en 10 años? ¿cómo impactará el crecimiento a nuestros vecindarios? ¿Podemos hacer algo sobre el trafico?

Todas estas preguntas tienen respuesta mediante nuestro Plan General de la Ciudad, y en un marco para traducir los valores de la comunidad en estrategias específicas, para lidiar con el crecimiento y mejorar la calidad de vida.

1994 fue un año muy importante para Pasadena. Después de la opinión de miles de residentes, se adopto un plan general actualizado y se puso en efecto unas directrices fundamentales.

Ahora, 10 años después, parte del plan general está siendo actualizando para que continúe siendo un documento realista para lograr la visión de la comunidad.

Transportación, vivienda, uso del terreno, arte y cultura, espacios abiertos, ruido y seguridad-metas y políticas para estos “elementos” son actualizado periódicamente, el uso y movilidad de la tierra actualmente están siendo actualizado.

El plan general también incluye zonas específicas de interés. Estos son nuestros corredores principales de la ciudad, tales como el West Gateway, al sur de la Fair Oaks, al este de la Colorado y al norte de la avenida Lake. El Distrito Central es el más grande de estas zonas.

### Definiendo los Documentos

¿Dónde y qué tipo de edificios se debe construir en Pasadena?. *El elemento del uso del Terreno* establece metas y políticas para guiar las decisiones que se toman a largo plazo. Esta actualización de los elementos continua enfocándose en el desarrollo en zonas específicas del plan y fuera de los vecindarios, aunque crean ambientes de uso mixto en la zona del centro cerca de la paradas del autobús y la línea del Metro Gold donde las personas disfrutarán al caminar. La actualización del 2004 no propone grandes cambios al la versión de 1994 excepto el uso del terreno en el Distrito Central.

El Distrito Central incluye Old Pasadena, el Centro Cívico, el Distrito de Playhouse, Sur Lake y todo el Arroyo Parkway. *El Plan Especifico del Distrito Central* establece una política de desarrollo para todas las propiedades localizadas en el Distrito casi 1,000 acres. Se demoraron casi 4 años para elaborar el plan, él cual incluye unos 21 millones de pie

cuadrado de espacio comercial y sólo 4,000 de unidades residenciales (incluyendo las propiedades existentes).

*El elemento de movilidad* continúa enfatizando otras maneras para que nos moviliemos sin nuestros autos. Eso es un gran desafío, considerando que nos encontramos en unas de las regiones de negocio más ocupadas del país, y conocida por el amor que le tenemos a nuestros automóviles.

¿Qué hay sobre la altura de los edificios, el ancho de las aceras, estacionamiento y lugar de los letreros? Para ello el *Código Zonal* está siendo revisado. La zonificación es la herramienta para proteger la salud y la seguridad guiando el uso del terreno. Muchos de nosotros hemos estado en comunidades atractivas donde un lavadero de auto esta al lado de una casa al lado de un desmantelamiento de autos al lado de un restaurante de comida rápida. Los códigos de la zona pueden guiar el desarrollo para que tenga mejor sentido de que esta cerca de que.

Estos cuatro documentos requieren un *Informe del Impacto del Medioambiente* mandatorio del estado que analice el impacto que pueden tener los proyectos sobre el ruido, trafico y otros temas ambientales, y que sugiera maneras de minimizar el impacto. Una EIR cubrirá todos los 4 documentos porque tienen mucho en común. La junta del Consejo empezará a deliberar el lunes 27 de septiembre, a las 8 p.m. en el Centro de Ancianos de Pasadena, en el 85 Este de la calle Holly. los comentarios del publico son bienvenidos.

Usted puede tener acceso a los documentos y al EIR visitando la página del Internet [www.cityofpasadena.net](http://www.cityofpasadena.net) y haga un clic en la actualización del plan general o visitando la biblioteca Central en el 285 Este de la calle Walnut; o llamando al 744-4009.



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