

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: December 8, 2003

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: DRAFT CENTRAL DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

Following a public hearing, it is recommended that the City Council:

- 1) Conceptually approve the draft Central District Specific Plan as modified by the Planning Commission comments, and
- 2) Direct staff to complete an environmental impact report on the Central District Specific Plan; and the previously approved Zoning Code Update, Land Use, and Mobility Elements of the General Plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On October 22, 2003, the Planning Commission adopted the following motion regarding the draft Central District Specific Plan:

Recommend that the City Council conceptually approve the draft Central District Specific Plan with the following recommended changes:

- Page 179 – As part of the Urban Residential standards, add a new requirement to the Specific Plan and Zoning Ordinance that mandates that the required open space in residential projects be visible from the public street.
- Page 188-89 - Change the implementation measure on pocket park development to a short to mid-term priority. Page 80-81 - Add language to the Specific Plan to allow pocket parks to be acquired through purchase, lease, license, or other appropriate methods.
- Add a policy to allow residential developments to develop a small public/private park on part of the site in-lieu of providing the required open space. This could take the form of a small public park (of a minimum size) in an accessible part of the site that is open to the public for at least daylight hours. To encourage these small parks, other incentives could be provided, such as granting the 10% floor area ratio (FAR) bonus or reducing the total community space requirement if part of it is in a public park.

- Page 86 - Increase the required front setbacks from 10' minimum to 20' minimum on Oakland, Madison and Oak Knoll Avenues between Walnut and Corson Streets; and on Locust Street between El Molino and Hudson Avenues.
- Page 93 – With approval of the Design Commission, allow a height of up to 50' and 4 stories on corner lots in the Old Pasadena core area – at those locations that are within 75' from an intersection.

In addition, the Planning Commission identified the following issues and recommended that they receive further study in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or during the Specific Plan refinement process:

- Because transferability between residential and non-residential development as allowed in the Specific Plan could result in one of the limits provided in the General Plan being exceeded with a corresponding decrease to the other use, Staff and the City Attorney should study the transferability provision to ensure that it is consistent with the General Plan and not subject to legal challenge.
- The plan should examine ways to provide more incentives for the creation of publicly accessible open space.
- The EIR and the plan should examine an alternative wherein parking requirements were not capped by virtue of inclusion in Transit Oriented Development Districts (TODs), but instead determined by the market.
- There should be an examination of recent population and demographic data to verify that the 1994 General Plan assumptions relative to population growth and family size are still relevant.
- The specific plan should study the possibility of providing incentives for the development of public parking.

In response to the Planning Commission concerns, staff will also examine a mechanism to inform the Planning Commission and City Council when the overall amount of housing or commercial development proposed in the Central District approaches the limit set forth in the 1994 General Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The Central District Specific Plan is the seventh and final Specific Plan envisioned by the 1994 Land Use Element of the General Plan.

A Central District Specific Plan Framework was reviewed by the Planning Commission and conceptually approved by the City Council in Fall 2002. The Framework presented the primary regulatory elements of the Central District Specific Plan. These included sub-districts, land use distribution, heights, intensity of commercial and residential development, setbacks, and sidewalk widths.

The draft Central District Specific Plan expands on the Framework and makes some changes in response to the recommendations of the City Council and as a result of further study by staff and consultants.

provide another opportunity to review the recommendations of the draft Central District Specific Plan in conjunction with the data and analysis provided by the EIR.

ANALYSIS:

Sections 8, 9, and 10 of the draft Specific Plan, the Design Guidelines for private and public development, were considered separately and adopted by the City Council on October 21, 2002. Staff is currently using these guidelines to review projects in the Central District.

The City Council held a public hearing and conceptually approved the Central District Framework on November 25, 2002. They requested that staff study several issues further during the EIR preparation process. These issues and (*in italics*) an explanation of how they have been or will be addressed are:

- Develop criteria for the circumstances when a developer can apply for the 10% floor area bonus. *Page 53 outlines circumstances for requesting an FAR bonus and findings that must be made by the Planning Commission in order to grant this bonus.*
- Reference to heights in stories should be replaced with height in feet. *These references have been removed, except in the historic core of Old Pasadena, where a height of 40' is intended to allow a tall ground floor and 2 additional floors of development. Without a 3-story limit proposed by the draft Plan, a 40' height limit may encourage buildings of 4 stories with a short ground floor. District-wide Map 25 on page 93 shows the permitted heights in feet.*
- Consider counting above ground parking garages in the FAR calculations for parcels above a threshold size. *The draft Plan does not recommend including parking garages in the FAR calculations, but the Parking Considerations on page 52 outlines several measures to discourage above ground structures.*
- Consider whether the FARs should be increased around the light rail stations and decreased accordingly elsewhere. *The draft Plan has increased the FARs north and south of Del Mar around the Del Mar station. FARs on Los Robles, north and south of Colorado Boulevard have been decreased to balance the total amount of development permitted in the Central District. District-wide Map 14 on page 55 shows the revised FARs*
- Study the impacts of a cap on parking around the Gold Line stations versus no cap on parking around the stations. *Staff recommends a maximum cap on long-term parking in the transit-oriented district of the Central District. Page 62 outlines the recommended parking requirements. A cap on short-term parking is not recommended. The EIR will analyze the impact of the proposed cap.*
- Allow for the replacement of a building that is demolished by more than 75% to provide for reconstruction (replica) of what was previously on the site. *The revised Zoning Ordinance will recommend that all buildings destroyed by an Act of God up to 100% can be replaced with a replica that meets current Building Codes.*
- Study the small area south of California Boulevard at Lake to see if an FAR of 1.0 is appropriate since it permits less intensity than the RM32 zoning further south on Lake.

The draft Plan recommends an FAR of 1.0 for this area. Further study may be undertaken to reduce the intensity of the RM32 area to the south.

- Study the appropriateness of the requirement that the percentage of housing in new buildings on South Lake Avenue be limited to 50% or less of the total floor area. *The draft Plan recommends continuing this requirement, but further discussion with the South Lake Business Association is needed on this issue.*

CHANGES FROM THE FRAMEWORK TO THE DRAFT PLAN

The draft Specific Plan incorporates several changes to the key concepts that were presented to the Council in the Framework. The boundaries of the sub-district and recommended heights and densities have changed slightly around the Del Mar Gold Line station to encourage transit-oriented development south of Del Mar Boulevard. The draft Plan recommends that housing not be permitted to face Lake Avenue north of Green Street and not be permitted on Arroyo Parkway south of California. The draft Plan recommends that the transit-oriented district of the Central District be a larger area, not just $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radii around the Gold Line stations. Attachment 2 outlines the changes from the Framework to the Draft Specific Plan.

After reviewing the draft Specific Plan with the Planning Commission and the community, several additional changes were recommended and are reflected in the recommendation:

Add a new requirement to the Specific Plan and Zoning Ordinance that mandates that the required open space in residential projects be visible from the public street. This change will help to reduce the mass of new residential projects and provide a view into an open space courtyard from the street.

Change the implementation measure on pocket park development to a short to mid-term priority and allow pocket parks to be acquired through purchase, lease, license, or other appropriate methods. These changes will make the acquisition of small public park space a greater priority and provide more flexibility to the City in providing property for parks.

Add a policy to allow residential developments to develop a small public/private park on part of the site in-lieu of providing the required open space. This could take the form of a small public park (of a minimum size) in an accessible part of the site that is open to the public for at least daylight hours. To encourage these small parks, other incentives could be provided, such as granting the 10% FAR bonus or reducing the total community space requirement if part of it is in a public park.

Increase the required front setbacks from 10' minimum to 20' minimum on Oakland, Madison and Oak Knoll Avenues between Walnut and Corson Streets; and on Locust Street between El Molino and Hudson Avenues. In reviewing the setback requirements, staff determined that the existing setbacks of a minimum of 20' were appropriate for these narrow residential streets and reducing them to 10' would result in new development that is out of character with the existing scale of development.

With approval of the Design Commission, allow a height of up to 50' and 4 stories on corner lots in the Old Pasadena core area – at those locations that are within 75' from the corner. This would allow for more creative site design and is consistent with the historic development pattern of buildings in Old Pasadena.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A community meeting on the draft Central District Specific Plan was held on August 6, 2003 at the Pasadena Senior Center. Approximately 20 people attended to hear about the contents of the Specific Plan, how it differs from the Framework, and to ask questions and provide comments on the draft Plan.

Staff has met with the Old Pasadena Economic Development Committee (August 19, 2003), members of the Old Pasadena Management District staff (November 11, 2003) and the Playhouse District Board of Directors (August 27, 2003.) The Planning Commission received public comments on the draft Central District Specific Plan on September 10, 24, and October 22, 2003.

The following questions and issues were discussed in these meetings.

- How and why were the Floor Area Ratios developed?
- What are the appropriate Floor Area Ratios around the light rail stations?
- How much of the Central District caps on housing and square footage have been used to date?
- What are the issues related to combining the housing unit and square footage caps in the Central District?
- Why does the Plan not allow transfer of development rights?
- Should there be a cap on parking around the light rail stations?

Attachment 3 provides detailed information about these issues. Discussion of these issues led to the recommended changes in the draft Plan and areas for additional study that are outlined in the Planning Commission and staff recommendation.

NEXT STEPS

Following conceptual approval by the City Council, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be released for comment in February 2004. The EIR will be reviewed and finalized between February and April 2004. City Commissions will review the EIR and draft Central District Specific Plan in May and June 2004, with Council adoption of the Central District Specific Plan anticipated in July or August 2004.

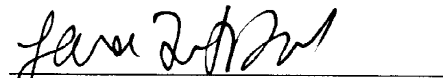
FISCAL IMPACT

Completion of the Central District Specific Plan and preparation of the Environmental Impact Report are both included in the work program and budget of the Planning and Development Department.

Respectfully submitted,


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- Attachment 1: Draft Central District Specific Plan
- Attachment 2: Changes from the Framework to the Draft Plan
- Attachment 3: Issues and Questions from the Planning Commission Review
- Attachment 4: Floor Area Ratios of projects in the Central District
- Attachment 5: Central District Housing Units & Square Footage