



CITY OF PASADENA PLANNING COMMISSION

To: City Council

Date: November 5, 2004

From: Elizabeth Trussell, Chair
Planning Commission

Re: PROPOSED CENTRAL DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN, AMENDMENTS TO THE LAND USE ELEMENT AND THE MOBILITY ELEMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE GENERAL PLAN, AND REVISION OF TITLE 17 OF THE PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE (ZONING)

Over the last three months, the Planning Commission has held meetings and public hearings in consideration of:

- The Updated Land Use Element of the General Plan
- The Updated Mobility Element of the General Plan
- The draft Central District Specific Plan
- The revisions to the Zoning Code
- The Final Environmental Impact Report for the Updated Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Updated Mobility Element of the General Plan, the draft Central District Specific Plan, and the revisions to the Zoning Code
- The Statement of Overriding Considerations

As a result of this consideration the following actions were taken:

Final Environmental Impact Report for the Updated Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Updated Mobility Element of the General Plan, the draft Central District Specific Plan, and the revisions to the Zoning Code

The Planning Commission reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Report on October 6, October 13, October 27, and November 3, 2004. At the November 3 meeting, the Planning Commission adopted the following recommendation:

That the City Council certify the Environmental Impact Report for the 2004 Land Use and Mobility Elements, Zoning Code Revisions, and Central District Specific Plan with an errata sheet that clarifies in tables and text the disposition of the approximately 3,600 residential units existing in Zoning Districts CD 7 and CD 7A prior to 1994.

Discussion:

The Commission vote was six (6) in favor and two (2) opposed to this recommendation. A number of Commissioners expressed concern that the environmental analysis should clarify the existence of the 3,600 residential units in the Central District in 1994 even though the 3,600 units were included in the Citywide totals. It was especially important that Table ES-1 and all similar tables and text, which reflect pre-existing development as well as development potential, be presented in a manner that was both accurate and easily understood. In

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response to this request, Staff added a footnote to all the relevant tables and text which provides as follows:

"Consistent with the approach used in the 1994 General Plan, 3,600 existing residential units within the CD7 and CD7A zoning subdistricts (In-Town Housing) are counted with units outside the specific plan areas. The existing 3,600 units are included in this table with existing and total units in RM-32 and RM-48 districts "Outside Specific Plan areas."

Most of the Commissioners felt that this at least raised the issue vis-a-vis the Central District and accepted the clarification.

Statement of Overriding Considerations

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft Statement of Overriding Considerations at the meeting of November 3, 2004 and adopted the following recommendation:

That the City Council adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations that supports the Planning Commission's recommendation that the City Council approve a 75% reduced growth alternative.

Discussion:

Because the Commission recommended adoption of a project alternative, that was different than that recommended by staff, the Commission felt that the Statement of Overriding Considerations, that had been recommended by staff, was not an appropriate statement for adoption. Instead they recommend that staff's statement be revised to reflect those issues that were relevant to the project alternative that had been recommended by the Commission.

Land Use Element

The Planning Commission reviewed the Land Use Element on August 25, September 22, October 27, and November 3, 2004. On November 3 the Planning Commission adopted the following recommendation:

That the City Council approve the 2004 Land Use Element including the modifications listed in Attachment H, with the following exception: Net new development citywide by 2015 shall be limited to 75 percent of the development analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report (i.e., Alternative 2A of the EIR).

Discussion:

The pace of growth within the City is an important consideration for the future direction of development. The Commission discussed numerous approaches towards insuring that future growth was directed to the most appropriate areas and did not overstrip the City's ability to accommodate impacts associated with such growth.



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As part of the discussion regarding the pace of growth, the Commission tried to get a feel for exactly how much residential development still can occur in the Central District based on the 1994 estimated potential net new residential development (1994-buildout) figure of 5,095, less units built through January 1, 2004 (1,700), and less the number of units in projects with vested rights to build (with building permits) and those in the pipeline (have not yet received building permits). That number was never completely flushed out.

Ultimately, 5 of the 8 Commissioners concluded that adoption of a 75% growth alternative would provide a basis for properly regulating development and could be revisited at appropriate intervals (e.g. five years) to insure that such regulation did not result in lost economic opportunities.

Mobility Element

The Planning Commission reviewed the Mobility Element on September 22 and October 27, 2004. On October 27 the Planning Commission unanimously adopted the following recommendation:

1. *The Draft Final 2004 Mobility Element is consistent with the 2004 General Plan Update;*
2. *Recommend implementation of traffic improvements at six intersections;*
3. *Endorse implementation of the Gold Line Phase II Extension.*

Discussion:

During discussions relating to the Updated Mobility Element, the Commission was provided with information relating to the recommendation and deliberations on the part of the Transportation Advisory Commission. That information was helpful in focusing the Commission's deliberation on the goals and objectives of the Updated Mobility Element, which it ultimately felt were consistent with the previous goals and objectives of the General Plan.

Central District Specific Plan

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft Central District Specific Plan at its meetings on July 28, August 11 and 25, and October 13 and 27, 2004. On October 27, 2004, the Planning Commission unanimously adopted the following recommendation:

That the City Council adopt the Central District Specific Plan with the changes outlined in Attachment N with the following exceptions:

1. *In the absence of effective incentives for the placement of parking garages underground, the square footage of parking garages on lots greater than a certain size (to-be-determined) shall be counted in the FAR calculation.*
2. *The following additional streets should have the ground floor pedestrian-oriented requirement on District-wide Map 24 – Pedestrian Oriented Concept:*
 - *Both sides of DeLacey Ave. from Green St. to Valley St.;*



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- *Green Street from Pasadena Ave. to Fair Oaks Blvd.;*
- *Raymond Avenue from Walnut St. to Del Mar Blvd.;*
- *Fair Oaks from Walnut St. to Del Mar Blvd; and*
- *South side of Walnut St. from Fair Oaks Ave. to Raymond Ave.*

3. *Neighborhood Parks—Designate 5 to 7 acres of City-owned property in the Central District as Neighborhood Parks (not community parks) to be located within walking distance of local residences, including multi-family housing.*

Discussion:

During discussions on the Central District Specific Plan there was regular comment on the urban design benefits derived by the placement of parking in subterranean structures. It was the objective of the Commission to provide the most effective method of achieving this goal, without undue impact on economic development. Lacking clear and effective incentives, the Commission felt that the most effective method of achieving this goal was the inclusion of above ground parking structures in FAR calculations.

Also during discussions, the role and benefits of establishing certain streets as Pedestrian-Oriented was discussed. Testimony was received from groups and associations. The Commission concluded that the Old Pasadena area would benefit from expansion of this designation beyond the staff recommendation.

At the request of the Commission, Staff had added an inventory of existing City-owned property. This inventory can be used as a reference tool to help determine what opportunities exist for the designation of such City-owned land as Neighborhood Parks. The Commission felt that the designation of 5-7 acres of new Neighborhood Parks was necessary (i) to balance the increased density the Central District is experiencing and will continue to experience, and (ii) to breath life into Policy 2.1 under Objective 2 (Open Space) of Pasadena's first guiding principle of Targeted Development. The Neighborhood Parks should not be located on the west side of the Central District as the Commission felt that the two existing community parks (Memorial Park and Central Park) sufficiently serve the needs of the westside Central District residents.

Revised Zoning Code

The Planning Commission reviewed the revised Zoning Code on October 27, 2004 and recommended approval.

Discussion:

The revised Zoning Code provides for a new format and contains a number of revisions, which were previously discussed with the Commission and Council over the course of the last two years. The Commission's comments have been incorporated in the recommended draft, except for the following:



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1. The following changes were made to the last sentence in Number 8 (Exemptions for Existing Projects) of Exhibit 4 (Additional Amendments that are in the draft Zoning Code):

"The recommendation is to allow projects that have been deemed complete on the date of adoption of the statute (the revised Zoning Code) to go forward without having to meet the new notification procedures."

2. The following change should be made to no. 5 under "Fences and walls" on Exhibit 1:

"5. Fence **and wall** height shall be measured from the existing grade."

3. Section 17.78.110. E of the Zoning Code will be changed to indicate that "lawsuits must be filed and served within 90 days" (or similar verbiage) in order to be consistent with the Government Code.

4. The following typo was noted in Number 4 (Parking Requirement for Private Schools) of Exhibit 4:

"members of the faculty," not "facility."

Respectfully,

For Elizabeth Trussell
Chair
Planning Commission