

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission considered the zone changes and General Plan amendments on September 21, 2005, and recommended that the City Council approve the amendments, as recommended above.

NORTHWEST COMMISSION

On September 13, 2005 the Northwest Commission voted to disapprove the recommendation to rezone the study area. The Commission's concerns centered on whether the zone changes would be the most effective way of providing affordable housing. The Commission expressed that the most certain way of providing affordable housing was to rely on the affordable units required by the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance in new developments. Furthermore, the Commission expressed that keeping the existing zoning would provide more affordable units than the proposed zoning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Garfield Heights Neighborhood Association requested the City to down-zone the areas along Adena Street and North Los Robles Avenue due to concerns over the possible negative side effects of increased density and the incompatible design of new high density projects next to single family areas. In response, the Planning Commission initiated a zone change study. The study examined the issues of compatibility, the existing density levels, the presence of non-conforming lot sizes and width, and the character of Los Robles Ave. Based on the study and input from the community, staff recommends changing the zoning and General Plan designation of the North Section from Multi-Family Residential RM-16 to Multi-Family Residential RM-12 and the Mountain Section from Multi-Family Residential RM-32 to Multi-Family Residential RM-12.

BACKGROUND

In response to a written request from the Garfield Heights Neighborhood Association to down-zone areas adjacent to the Landmark District, the Planning Commission, on May 11, 2005, initiated a zone change study for the Adena Street portion of the study area. Later, on June 22, the Commission expanded the size of the study area to include three pieces: the North, South, and Mountain sections. At its July 27 meeting the Commission reviewed a preliminary recommendation from staff. After meeting with the neighborhood, staff presented their recommendations to the Northwest and Planning Commissions.

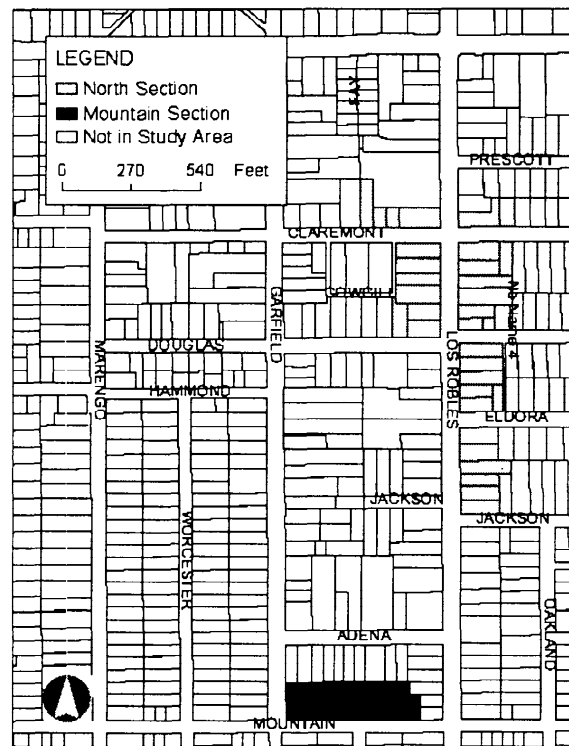


Figure 1: This map shows the study area

ANALYSIS

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA: The 43 parcels which make up the study area are divided into two sections. The North Section, made up of 43 parcels, is zoned City of Gardens Multi-Family Residential RM-16, which allows 16 dwelling units per acre. The Mountain Section, made up of nine parcels, is zoned City of Gardens Multi-Family Residential RM-32, which allows 32 dwelling units per acre.

DENSITY: In the RM-16 zoned, North section, 77% of the properties have two units or less. In the RM-32 zoned, Mountain section, 60% of the properties have two units or less. Despite the fact that this area has been zoned for multi-family structures since the mid 1930s it has undergone little increase in density. The City has completed a number of down-zonings in the Northwest area. For more detailed information on the existing density of the study area see Attachments One and Three.

CHARACTER: While in general the consolidation of lots in multi-family areas makes development much more efficient, lot consolidation might not be positive for this neighborhood. This is not a typical multi-family area where large apartment/condo style buildings line the street. Nearly 80% of the buildings in the Mountain Section and 85% of the building in the North Section have a single-family character (e.g. a single-family house, a single-family house converted to multi-family housing, or a single-family house with multi-family housing in the rear). See Attachment Two for more information on the building types in the study area.

Additionally, the average (median) width of lots in the North Section is 55 feet and 69 feet for the Mountain section. If lots are consolidated in order to create multi-family development, the scale and width of the new buildings could be dramatically different than the existing. By down-zoning, the likelihood for lot consolidation will decrease and the potential for preserving the neighborhood's character will increase.

BUFFERING AND COMPATIBILITY: The existing zoning allows for the construction of multi-family structures directly adjacent to single-family districts. In some cases in the existing Code, buildings could be built to the property line. This limited amount of separation may seem too small to owners of adjacent single-family homes. Partially due to the concern of how building height and setbacks affect adjacent single-family zones, the City is proposing to revise portions of the City of Gardens ordinance.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Based on the current zoning, if all the lots were built to their maximum capacity, the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance would not apply. None of the lots are currently large enough to build ten units – the point at which compliance with the Ordinance is required. However if lots are consolidated, larger developments with affordable housing components is feasible.

In this discussion of affordable housing one key figure is unknown - the percentage of housing that is currently offered at an affordable rate. The reason why this is important is that if 30% of the units in the area are currently offered at an affordable rate and new developments is not required to provide any affordable housing, then keeping the existing development would more likely keep affordable housing.

HOUSING SUPPLY: One of the effects of down-zoning an area is the reduction in the potential housing supply. If the Council changes the zoning as staff recommends, there

is a theoretical loss of 43 new units. If the existing zoning were maintained, an additional 39 units could be created in the North Section and 25 units in the Mountain Section. By adopting staff's recommendation, an additional 19 housing units could be built in the North Section and 2 units in Mountain Section. These numbers could be misconstrued for the same three reasons described earlier in the Affordable Housing section of this report.

CONSISTENCY WITH GENERAL PLAN

Staff is recommending to change the General Plan designations on the Land Use Diagram. Even so, these changes are consistent with the objectives and policies found in the General Plan.

Land Use Element

Objective 1 – TARGETED DEVELOPMENT: Direct higher-density development away from Pasadena's residential neighborhoods and into targeted areas, creating an exciting urban core with diverse economic, housing, cultural and entertainment opportunities.

Policy 1.9 – Other Geographical Areas: Limit development outside targeted development areas.

The proposed re-zoning will not reduce the density of development in areas earmarked for higher densities. The areas designated for higher densities (referred to in the above objective and policy as "targeted areas" and "targeted development area") are the specific plan areas.

Objective 5 – CHARACTER AND SCALE OF PASADENA: Preservation of Pasadena's character and scale, including its traditional urban design form and historic character, shall be given highest priority in the consideration of future development.

Policy 5.4 – Neighborhood Character and Identity: Urban design programs, including principles and guidelines, shall recognize, maintain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Policy 5.9 – Contextual and Compatible Design: Urban design programs shall ensure that new development shall respect Pasadena's heritage by requiring that new development respond to its context and be compatible with the traditions and character of Pasadena, and shall promote orderly development which is compatible with its surrounding scale and which protects the privacy, and access to light and air of surrounding properties.

The proposed re-zoning will assist in assuring that new developments preserve Pasadena's character and scale. By changing the zoning, different development regulations will be applied to new construction, which will allow for more generous setbacks and lower heights.

Housing Element

Policy 1.1 – Preserve the character, scale, and quality of established residential neighborhoods.

See discussion under Policy 5.9 of the Land Use Element

Policy 1.10 – *Promote the preservation of the existing affordable housing stock.*

The affect of this down-zoning on affordable housing can not be known with certainty. New development is more likely to occur under the existing zoning. Of those new developments none will need to comply with the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, unless lot consolidation occurs. In addition, new development will likely displace more renters.

Policy 2.1 – *Encourage the production of housing appropriate to all economic segments of the population, including lower-, moderate- and upper-income housing, to maintain a balance community.*

See the discussion under Policy 1.10

CONSISTENCY WITH THE ZONING CODE

An amendment to the General Plan's diagram and the Official Zoning Map may be approved only after first finding that:

§17.74.070 (A) (1) *The proposed amendment is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan; and*

See the discussion of General Plan consistency above.

§17.74.070 (A) (2) *The proposed amendment would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare of the City.*

Since these zone changes and General Plan amendments are consistent with the General Plan, as written above, and the General Plan is the statement of the public interest; therefore it will not be detrimental to the public interest. Reducing the allowed density will not cause any harm to the health, safety, or welfare of the City. Further, any project proposed under the new zoning would require City approvals (ranging from building permits to design review) which allow for the review of these projects' affect on the health, safety, and welfare of the surrounding community.

§17.74.070 (A) (3) *For General Plan diagram amendments only, the site is physically suitable (including absence of physical constraints, access, compatibility with adjoining land uses, and provision or utilities) for the requested/anticipated land uses/developments.*

By changing the zoning categories more lots will be in conformance with the lot size and width requirements set by the code. This allows for future construction to occur on lots that are closer in size and width of the ideal lot size, thus allowing for the type of development envisioned by the Code.

FINDINGS FOR STATE LAW

Since 2003, local jurisdictions are required to assess any reduction in potential density on a parcel to determine whether it will affect the jurisdiction's capacity for its share of the regional housing need (i.e., RHNA). If adequate capacity remains then the jurisdiction may approve the reduction but only with two written findings: (1) that the reduction is consistent with the general plan, including the housing element; and, (2) that the remaining sites are adequate for the jurisdiction's share of regional housing need. For the zone changes that are proposed in the study area, the two findings should be made.

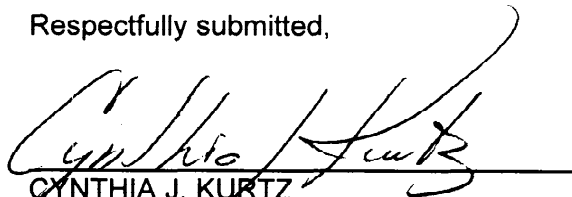
The zone changes are consistent with the City's General Plan, according to the analysis above in this report. The City's remaining sites are adequate for development of the City's share of regional housing need. The 2000-2005 Housing Element analyzed sites both in multifamily residential districts and also in districts that allow both residential and commercial uses, including the seven specific plan areas. Within the residential districts alone, the element established a remaining capacity of 2,899 units. The proposed zone changes would reduce this capacity within the city's residential districts by a maximum of 43 units, from 64 to 21 within the study area itself. According to the Element, the remaining capacity of 2,856 units, not including the potential within the specific plan areas and other commercially zoned districts, is adequate to meet the city's RHNA of 1,777 for the period through 2005.

FISCAL IMPACT

The immediate fiscal impact resulting from this zone change and General Plan amendment is staff time. No fees were paid in order to process this request.

The long term fiscal impacts are unknown. If implemented, the development potential for this area will decline. This could mean a reduction in property value and a loss in permit fees. However there appears to be a phenomenon of converting multi-family units back to single-family homes. It could be argued that by helping to retain the character and scale of the neighborhood and by assisting in historic preservation property values, and thus revenues, could rise.


Respectfully submitted,


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City Manager

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Attachments:

1. Density Level Map
2. Building Type Map
3. Density Levels and Average Lot Sizes
4. Negative Declaration and Environmental Initial Study
5. Certificate of Fee Exemption: De Minimis Impact Finding
6. Notice of Determination