

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: JUNE 25, 2007

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: NORTH LAKE SPECIFIC PLAN AND RELATED ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Approve the Initial Environmental Study, Initial Environmental Study Errata Sheet and Negative Declaration (See Attachment 1);
2. Adopt the Findings that the Specific Plan amendments and related Zoning Code Amendments are consistent with Pasadena Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning Code Section 17.74.070) and the General Plan as outlined in this report (See Attachment 2);
3. Adopt the Findings that remaining sites identified in the adopted 2000 – 2005 Housing Element are adequate to accommodate the City's share of the Regional housing need for the planning period pursuant to Government Code Section 565584 (Attachment 2);
4. Amend the North Lake Specific Plan, Zoning Code, to allow certain changes to density of residential and mixed-use development, building heights, certain land use modifications, and land use regulation clarifications, and design review, and amend the Zoning Map to change the zoning designation from commercial to residential for certain areas within the Plan area, as outlined in this report, (Attachment 4 and 5)
5. Adopt the attached Resolution implementing the aforementioned amendments to the North Lake Specific Plan (Attachment 3);
6. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance amending the Zoning Code and the official Zoning Map of the City of Pasadena to implement the Specific Plan revisions as outlined in this report within 60 days; and
7. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed Specific Plan and related Zoning Code and map amendments on December 13, 2006, January 24, 2007, April 11, and June 13 2007. The Commission unanimously recommended approval of the proposed amendments with a change in one staff recommendation and included two additional recommendations as follows:

- a) that the proposed height for the segment between Mountain Street and Orange Grove Boulevard (Segment 3) would allow mixed-use and commercial development with a maximum height of 30 feet for commercial and mixed-use. (See Attachment 4)

Note that the staff recommendation has been revised to concur with the Planning Commission recommendation. In this regard however, staff is further recommending that Drive-through businesses be exempt from the Nonconforming provisions in the Zoning Code to encourage and allow greater flexibility for existing businesses to remodel.

- b) that the City Council direct the proposed amendments for review by the Transportation Advisory Commission, with particular attention to be given to the potential traffic/circulation impact that may result from the increased density on North Lake Avenue between Orange Grove Boulevard and Maple Street. (See Attachment 4).

Staff would note that the 2004 Revised General Plan's analysis of the Specific Plan's potential allocated residential development, coupled with a number of improvements needed to accommodate growth as cited by the 2004 Mobility Element, concludes that the City's street system has adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated growth with several improvements. One of these improvements includes street widening for Maple Street between North Lake Avenue and Los Robles Avenue. The improvement was made a priority of the Capital Improvement Program, and will be funded through development fees.

- c) that a parking study to address parking deficiencies along Lake Avenue be completed and reviewed by the Transportation Advisory Commission, the Planning Commission, and the City Council within 60 days.

Funding for the parking study has been included in the recommended Fiscal Year 2008 budget.

NORTHWEST COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Northwest Commission considered the amendments during its meeting of December 12, 2006. The Commission expressed interest in further prohibition of the sale of alcohol for off-site consumption, the need to monitor and facilitate quality development in the Specific Plan area, the need for an educational component to

inform developers and businesses on the goals of the Specific Plan, and a mechanism to inform the public on upcoming projects within the Plan area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Lake Specific Plan was adopted in June 1997. As part of the periodic review intended for specific plans every five years, staff, with community input, identified and assessed accomplishments as well as necessary amendments to current provisions to further the Plan's goals and objectives.

The proposed Specific Plan amendments include modifications to densities for residential and mixed-use projects, building heights, zoning designations (Zoning Map amendments), changes to thresholds for Design Review and land uses. In addition, changes are proposed to specific use standards of the Specific Plan to clarify the intent of certain regulations. Among these is the clarification on expansion or enlargement of auto-related non-conforming uses and allowable improvements. Attachment 4 contains the details on the specific amendments, and Attachment 5 contains the land use modifications and land use regulation clarifications.

In summary, the proposed amendments will shift the high density (48 units/acre) allowed along the northerly end of the North Lake Avenue (between Ladera and Elizabeth streets) to the segment south of Orange Grove Boulevard, which is in close proximity to the light rail station, the freeway, and multi-family neighborhoods. The density at the northern end will be limited to 16 units per acre to make it more compatible with single family residential area in the vicinity. Densities will be also reduced from 32 units per acre to 16 units per acre in the segment between Claremont and Mountain Avenue, to encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings and, from 48 to 32 units per acre for the area between Mentor and Catalina, along the north side of Washington Blvd, to ensure that future development is in a scale compatible with the area. The presence of an alley along this segment provides further protection to the surrounding residential neighborhood. However, due to the adjacency of the single family residential neighborhood on the south side, the density has been reduced from 48 to 16 units per acre. For three parcels located at the northwest corner of Mentor Avenue and Orange Grove Boulevard, the density will also be reduced from 32 units per acre to 16 units per acre, to be more compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Zoning Map Amendments are proposed for three areas within the Specific Plan area (See Attachment 4). All three areas will remain within the boundary of the Specific Plan, two of the segments are located at the easterly and westerly ends of East Washington Boulevard, and one segment is located at the northwest corner of Mentor Avenue and Orange Grove Boulevard. The zoning designation for all three would change from commercial to multi-family residential only.

Modifications to either increase or reduce allowable building heights accompany the density changes. The maximum height of 48 feet for commercial and mixed-use will go with the higher density located along the southerly end of the Specific Plan area, while lower heights, ranging from 25 to 37 feet, will remain on segments of the corridor extending to the northerly end. Building height limits for exclusively residential development will continue to follow the City of Garden standards.

Modifications to allowable land uses are also proposed to enhance neighborhood commercial activities. Work-Live will now be among other allowable land uses within the Specific Plan area. To further encourage revitalization of the Specific Plan area particularly in Segment 3 (Mountain Street to Orange Grove Boulevard), staff is proposing that existing drive-through businesses be exempt from the Nonconforming provisions in the Zoning Code to encourage and allow greater flexibility for these businesses to remodel, including expansion, and retain their drive through service. Further, these drive-through businesses would be exempt from the Specific Plan's current restriction to prohibit the increase in number of queuing positions or service windows. A Conditional Use Permit and design review would continue to be required under the Nonconforming provisions. The exemption could provide quicker customer service and reduce potential customer idling time, which may reduce noise impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. It should be noted that, no new Drive-through businesses will be allowed, in accordance with the Specific Plan. With the proposed maximum height of 30 feet, there is a concern that there may be no incentive for change in the area. Allowing these businesses to improve without losing their drive-through service would encourage redevelopment of the area, which is a goal of the Specific Plan in this segment.

In response to community concern that the Specific Plan Design standards should be revised and strengthened in conjunction with a lower Design Review threshold to improve the overall quality of building design, staff recommends that design review should be required for all New Construction, Major Rehabilitation, Substantial Alterations of all structures within the Specific Plan area, as is currently required for the Lake/Washington sub-area. The change will require review by the Director of Planning and Development for structures up to and including 25,000 square feet (with street frontage), and review by the Design Commission for structures over 25,000 square feet. Design Standards are being developed, and these will be applicable to new development.

BACKGROUND

The 1994 revised General Plan provided a general vision for the North Lake Specific Plan, and designated the intensity of development (500 total housing units and 175,000 square feet of non-residential square footage) and mix of land uses for this area. The Specific Plan was adopted in June 1997.

As part of the periodic review of the Specific Plan implementation efforts, with input from the community, the Planning Commission, and Northwest Commission, it was determined that revisions to density, building heights, land uses, design, and zoning

provisions are necessary to further the Specific Plan vision for the area. As the need for enhanced design guidelines for future development within the Specific Plan area is a major concern for residents in the area, revision of these guidelines will be part of the program that will review citywide design guidelines.

ANALYSIS

Input from the community confirmed the Specific Plan vision for the area, and further identified community goals and priorities that guided the recommendations for revisions.

A high priority for the Plan and the community is the protection of residential neighborhoods from potential impacts of higher densities and commercial uses. To this end, revisions to lower densities and building heights are proposed for areas along nearby single-family residential neighborhoods, which is the case for example for segments along North Lake Avenue between Ladera and Elizabeth Streets, along Washington Boulevard between El Molino and Palm Terrace, and between Mentor and Catalina Avenues, and the northwest corner of Mentor Avenue and Orange Grove Boulevard.

Targeting development within Specific Plan areas and focusing higher density closer to the light rail station, within the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) area, continues to be at the core of the Plan and the community vision. To promote these goals, the revisions propose locating the highest residential density (48 units per acre) and building height near the Lake Avenue Light Rail Station and the freeway.

Several structures along North Lake Avenue are included in the Architectural Resources Inventory of the Specific Plan, therefore preservation and adaptive reuse of historic resources is also a major priority for the community. To further this goal, and encourage reuse of the existing buildings, the density for the segment along Lake Avenue between Claremont and Mountain Avenues will be reduced from 32 to 16 units per acre.

Protection of commercial areas, as well as providing for low scale neighborhood-serving commercial development is also a community priority in that it enhances commercial opportunities for business owners and area residents. Modifications to land uses to allow work-live and mixed-use further provide for neighborhood-serving commercial opportunities. The Specific Plan as originally envisioned, proposed a change in character for this segment. In the 10 years since the adoption, there has not been much of a change in character within the segment. Staff is concerned that with a 30 foot maximum height, proposed in segment 3, from Mountain Street to Orange Grove Avenue, there would be even less incentive for change. Staff is proposing that drive-through businesses be exempt from the nonconforming provisions in the Zoning Code to encourage and allow greater flexibility for existing businesses to remodel, including expansion, and retain their drive through service. Further, these drive-through businesses would be exempt from the Specific Plan's current restriction to prohibit the increase in number of queuing positions or

service windows. A Conditional Use Permit would continue to be required under the nonconforming provisions. The exemption could provide quicker customer service and reduce potential customer idling time, which may reduce noise impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. It should be noted that, no new drive-through businesses will be allowed, in accordance with the Specific Plan. With the restriction in the proposed maximum height of 30 feet, there is a concern that there may be less of an incentive for change in the area, allowing these businesses to improve may facilitate redevelopment of the area, which is a goal of the Specific Plan in this segment. Specifically, the Plan envisions a beautification program of the Drive-through businesses in this segment, referred to as the "Fast Food Garden District", which would encourage properties to adopt a coordinated program of shared driveways, parking and landscaped garden courts. Staff is further proposing that the exemptions go into effect upon the forthcoming revised design standards to be developed for the Specific Plan area.

Staff examined a total of nine sub-areas of the Specific Plan, five are proposed for density changes. In most all cases where density changes are proposed, staff's analysis concluded that the underlying zoning districts of Commercial Office and Commercial Limited should remain. However, there are three locations where this is not the case, two segments along East Washington Boulevard and the northwest corner of Mentor Avenue and Orange Grove Boulevard, where the commercial zone will be changed to a multi-family zone, while remaining within the boundary of the Specific Plan area. The current zoning designation for the first segment along East Washington Boulevard, between Palm Terrace and El Molino Avenue, north side only, is Commercial Limited, Specific Plan, Village Building Type (CL SP1a), and would change to Multi-family Residential 32 units per acre. The current zoning designation for the second segment along East Washington, between Mentor Avenue and Catalina Avenue, south side only, is Commercial Office, Specific Plan, Village Building Type (CO SP1a) to Multi-family Residential 16 units per acre. The current zoning designation for the third segment for three parcels located at the northwest segment of Orange Grove Boulevard and Mentor Avenue is Commercial Limited, Specific Plan, Village Building Type (CL SP1a), and would change to Multi-family Residential 16 units per acre.

In the analysis of the various segments, staff considered consistency with the Plan's vision, the identification of infill opportunity sites, sites with additional development opportunities, in addition to the protection of residential neighborhoods and long standing commercial areas, among others.

Attachment 4 provides a summary of the recommended revisions for specific segments, including land use mix and number of parcels. Current zoning, density, and height are shown under "Existing Conditions." Additional findings pertaining to existing conditions are included in footnotes. Information is also provided on the potential gain or reduction of units that may result from the density changes. The summary concludes with staff recommendations.

Changes are proposed to clarify the intent of the land use regulations set forth in the Specific Plan. Noteworthy is the clarification of what constitutes an expansion or enlargement of certain auto-related non-conforming uses, as identified by the Specific Plan (i.e. vehicle services – vehicle/equipment repair, vehicle services). Further clarification is noted to specify allowable improvements that would facilitate a more efficient site plan, such as modernization of equipment, reconfiguration of site parking, and installation of landscaping. See Attachment 5, for the specific revisions to the land use regulation clarifications.

See Attachment 7 for a summary of community participation.

Design Guidelines/Design Review Threshold

There is expressed concern from the community that the Specific Plan Design Standards should be revised and strengthened in addition to a lower Design Review threshold to improve the overall aesthetics of the corridor, including quality of buildings, building materials, scale, compatibility with the surrounding neighborhoods, etc,. Currently, the Zoning Code requires design review of buildings beginning at 5,000 square feet and up for the North Lake Specific Plan corridor. The City Council has approved funding for the development of design standards for commercial corridors. These standards are anticipated to be completed within a 12 months. Further, staff recommends that design review should be required for New construction, Major Rehabilitation, and Substantial Alterations of existing structures within the Specific Plan area, as currently required for the Lake/Washington Sub-area. The change will require review by the Director of Planning and Development for structures up to and including 25,000 square feet (with street frontage), and review by the Design Commission for structures over 25,000 square feet.

The Implementation component included in Attachment 6, identifies a range of activities, projects, and programs designed to revitalize the Specific Plan area. This component provides an opportunity to assess what has been accomplished within the Specific Plan area.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW – INTIAL STUDY AND DRAFT NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Staff prepared an Initial Environmental Study (IS) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines. (See Attachment 1). The draft IS evaluates potential environmental effects that may result from implementation of the proposed amendments. Based on this analysis, staff proposes adoption of a Negative Declaration (Attachment 1), because it has been determined that the amendments could not have a significant effect on the environment.

Required Findings

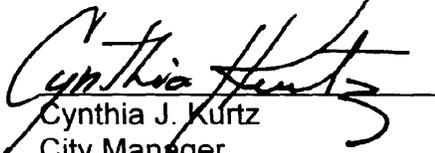
The Zoning Code requires that certain findings be made for Specific Plan and Zoning Code Amendments, and State Law requires certain findings be made to assess any

reduction in potential density to determine whether it will affect the regional housing need (i.e. RHNA). All three findings can be made for the proposed amendments, as indicated in Attachment 2. The analysis for the State Findings indicates that the capacity of 500 units, as allocated by the General Plan for the Specific Plan, can be met within the Plan area, and concludes that the remaining capacity under the current zoning for the Plan area and the remaining capacity citywide, is adequate to meet the regional housing need.

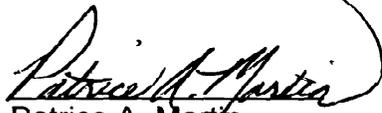
FISCAL IMPACT

All costs associated with the design, review, and construction of future projects proposed within the Specific Plan area will be the responsibility of future applicants.

Respectively submitted,


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City Manager

Prepared by


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Approved by:


Richard Bruckner
Director of Planning and Development

Attachments:

- 1 - Initial Environmental Study, Initial Environmental Study Errata Sheet and Negative Declaration

- 2 - Findings of Consistency with the Zoning Code and State Law
- 3 - Resolution Amending the North lake Specific Plan
- 4 - Summary of Recommended Height and Density Revisions
- 5 - Summary of Land Use modifications and land use regulation clarifications
- 6 - Implementation Progress of Specific Plan
- 7 - Community Participation