

May 23, 2011

Mayor Bill Bogaard, Pasadena City Council
City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91109

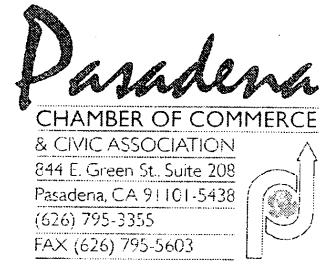
Re: General Plan Update report

Dear Mayor Bogaard and City Council Members,

The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce continues to have strong reservations about the General Plan update process and the lack of inclusion and opportunities for input from Pasadena's business community. The process continues to be weighted almost exclusively to gain input from residents with little attempt made to actually hear or record input from your commercial constituents.

As an example, Planning Department staff made a presentation to the Chamber Board of Directors in April. The alternatives were explained and those in attendance provided input, however, there was no one taking notes, keeping track of comments or making any attempt to keep a record of what was being said. The meeting seemed intended to only present the information, not get or record any feedback. As another example, when the Council was presented with a request to consider changing the Transit Oriented Development standards for parking in east Pasadena, a change that was agreed upon by both residents and commercial interests, we were told that consideration should be given during the General Plan update process. Your planning staff, however, has not included that in the program or recommendations. Instead, I have been told that TOD parking requirements are not part of updating the General Plan.

On June 23rd, the Planning Department will host a meeting at Pasadena City College intended to inform the business community about the alternatives. Again, though there is a question and answer period, there does not seem to be any mechanism for recoding comments or keeping a record of the input received. As Jason Mikaelian of your staff explained it to me in an email, "... it was decided that the workshops will be an opportunity for the public to get information on the alternatives. People will not be polled or fill out surveys at the workshops." Perhaps I am interpreting this incorrectly, but it seems to me that there will be no opportunity for feedback on the alternatives at the workshops. If that is the case, what is the point of anyone attending? Absent an opportunity to for input, your commercial constituency will be frustrated once again at the inability to have meaningful input into the plan as it progresses.



Further, if the only opportunity to comment will be through the survey, how will you ensure your commercial constituency is involved and can comment? How will they be made aware of the survey? How will their responses be counted? I hardly expect the City of Pasadena to send enough surveys for every worker in Pasadena to comment, though every resident will have that opportunity as they will be mailed the survey and instructed about how to take it online.

As you should already be aware, your business community feels disregarded in the General Plan Update process. So far, their opportunities to comment have been minimal, and when they have come to meetings on the plan, their comments are not recorded in any meaningful way, nor are they reflected in any reports or work product. What is being proposed for the June meetings seems as if it will only further alienate your commercial constituency and polarize the process even more than it already has been.

There is a simple remedy. You could ask your staff to include your commercial constituency- that meaningful opportunities for input about the alternatives be a part of the community meetings, and that any comments, suggestions, remarks or criticisms be recorded at that time. One would also hope that surveys would be given to all those in attendance, and that additional surveys be circulated through groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Old Pasadena, Playhouse District, North and South Lake Avenue business associations and others to be as inclusive as possible in your outreach.

Further, when your staff does reach out to commercial and business interests, such as the Chamber Board or the business districts, they could be asked to keep track of comments and include that feedback as part of their outreach reports and, more importantly, factor those comments into the alternatives analysis and refinement process.

Without meaningful avenues to comment, at every available opportunity, it is very unlikely you will hear much at all from the constituency that provides the economic backbone to our city- the one that pays the fees, taxes, charges and costs that provide so many of the vital and important services that make Pasadena a desirable city to live and work in.

~~Thank you for your consideration.~~

Paul Little
President and Chief Executive Officer