

Agenda Report

October 24, 2011

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning Department
SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO COMMERCIAL PARKING CAPS AROUND THE SIERRA MADRE VILLA GOLD LINE STATION

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council approve Option #1 outlined within the body of this report, directing staff to initiate a citywide study of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) regulations upon adoption by the City Council of a General Plan Concept Plan and updated principles and policies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the September 19, 2011 City Council meeting, members of the public and Councilmember Masuda raised concerns about the parking cap in the Sierra Madre TOD area and the potential negative impact on businesses in that area. In discussion about how to respond to the issue, City Council expressed concerns about the relationship between changes to TOD regulations and the General Plan update process, relationship to the Specific Plans, and the need for a review of TOD regulations to be comprehensive. Council directed staff to return with a discussion of possible process alternatives.

Several process alternatives are outlined in the report below. In response to Council concerns, staff is recommending that the TOD regulations be reviewed following the General Plan policy discussion being held this fall. Both the Land Use and Mobility Elements include reference to TOD regulations that will be reviewed by the community through a public outreach program during November and December. The outcome of that process will provide context and direction from which to consider more detailed changes to the regulations. This process allows the revisions to the TOD standards to be considered within a citywide context and in consideration of other General Plan goals and policies however, it does not require that the General Plan be complete before initiating the study.

BACKGROUND:

At the September 19, 2011 City Council meeting, members of the public and Councilmember Masuda raised concerns regarding the effect of reduced parking standards and parking caps around the Sierra Madre Villa Station and the impact on new development in East Pasadena.

This item was not listed on the agenda and, because of Brown Act requirements, the City Council was prohibited from giving staff specific direction. However, the Council expressed concerns about what the process might be to respond to the issue.

Specifically, the Council expressed concern that:

- A review of TOD regulations should be comprehensive;
- Changes to TOD regulations should be considered as part of the General Plan process; and,
- Consideration should be given to incorporating this issue into the next update of the East Pasadena Specific Plan.

Ultimately, Council directed staff to return with a report responding to these concerns and outlining various process alternatives for consideration.

Below is a discussion of three possible options for analysis of the TOD regulations providing shorter-term, medium-term and long-term processes, each with a different relationship to the General Plan and Specific Plan update processes. In response to the City Council's concerns, staff is recommending Option #1 (medium-term), which allows completion of community discussion of the General Plan guiding principles and policies before taking up a review of TOD regulations.

Both the Land Use and Mobility Elements include reference to TOD regulations that will be reviewed by the community through a public outreach program this Fall. The outcome of that process will provide context and direction from which to consider more detailed changes to the regulations. This process allows the revisions to the TOD standards to be considered within a citywide context and in consideration of other General Plan goals and policies, but does not wait until the plan is finished to begin the study.

This recommendation is also in alignment with a statement in the current General Plan that anticipates a need for a comprehensive study of TOD regulations to create area-specific standards.

TOD Regulations

The TOD parking requirements around light rail stations were adopted in 2005 as part of the revisions to the Zoning Code. The regulations impose parking reductions and place a cap on the maximum amount of parking that can be built in TOD areas.

For office uses the TOD regulations impose a 25 percent reduction in the parking requirement. This reduction lowers the parking requirement from 3 spaces per 1,000 square feet to 2.25 spaces and caps the parking such that projects cannot exceed this standard. Outside the TOD, parking can exceed the minimum standard by 50 percent, which for an office use would allow a maximum parking of 4.5 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet.

For other commercial uses, the TOD regulations reduce parking by 10 percent and cap the maximum at this reduction. This includes such uses as retail sales, restaurants, medical offices and personal improvement uses which vary in terms of the number of parking spaces required.

The TOD parking requirements apply to areas within a quarter-mile of light rail station platforms. The exception to this is within the Central District where the TOD requirements apply to a broader area delineated in the Central District Specific Plan. The quarter-mile radius around the Sierra Madre Villa Light Rail Station platform includes properties in the East Pasadena Specific Plan area (north of 210 Freeway) and the East Colorado Specific Plan area (south of the 210 Freeway).

As part of the TOD provisions, there are three methods by which a proposed project can build more parking:

- Commercial off-street parking. A site can exceed the cap by providing parking that is intended to serve the surrounding district and is available for public use.
- Joint parking. A site may exceed the maximum allowable number of parking spaces if the parking is approved to serve as joint parking. Joint parking is parking that is designed to serve multiple uses located on different sites. Joint parking is limited to providing the minimum required parking for the combined total parking requirements of the different individual sites.
- Shared parking. Shared parking is joint parking with a reduction in the number of required spaces because the multiple uses have different operating hours. The site where the parking is located can exceed the parking maximum but the combined total of parking spaces will be less than the minimum otherwise required for both uses if viewed individually.

Relationship to General Plan

The intent of TOD parking controls is to discourage single-occupant vehicle use and encourage the use of transit and ridesharing. The General Plan includes several policy statements supporting this premise.

The Mobility Element states that institutionalized reductions in parking supply and demand should be considered in areas that are in proximity to transit service. It further states that free, abundant parking influences people to drive to their destinations. The premise is that if long-term parking is easy to find and comes at no direct expense to the

driver, driving will always be the preferred transportation choice (even when transit is available).

The adoption of the parking reductions and caps implemented several policies that were incorporated into the 2004 Mobility Element and, in particular, Policy 1.17.

POLICY 1.17

Develop parking guidelines for new developments located in proximity to transit that establish capped parking requirements to reflect proximity to transit and encourage its use.

The Land Use Element also includes reference to TOD regulations. In anticipation of the need for the TOD requirements to be revised in the future, the 2004 Land Use Element included a recommendation for a long-term strategic program in which the City develops TOD plans that are customized for each of the stations. This recommendation acknowledges that the current standards may be appropriate in areas with a more dense urban form and a pedestrian-friendly environment, for example in the Central District, but may be less appropriate in East Pasadena where there is a more suburban development pattern.

Process Alternatives

Three process alternatives to analyze potential changes to TOD regulations are outlined below:

1. Comprehensive Study of TOD Regulations

Overview: Complete a comprehensive study of TOD regulations citywide following the community policy discussion of the General Plan Update and concurrent with the completion of the update process; the study would likely result in new standards tailored for each transit area.

Timeline: The General Plan policy discussion will be held between November and January, with final recommendations brought to Council in the Spring of 2012. The study could begin as soon as Council adopts in concept a set of updated principles and policies in the Spring. Recommended changes would be included in the General Plan EIR. Final adoption would be in December of 2012 along with the final General Plan.

Considerations: This will allow for a review of the TOD standards citywide and within the context of the updated General Plan, but does not wait until the plan is adopted to begin the study.

Further, it will allow for review of all TOD standards, not just parking. With the adoption of the 2005 Zoning Code, the Council enacted a Minor Conditional Use Permit (MCUP) requirement in the TODs for commercial/industrial projects greater than 15,000 square feet. This MCUP has additional findings related to whether a proposed project is encouraging transit use and reducing dependency on motor vehicles. This MCUP

requirement may need to be reconsidered. Other additional issues include: how the parking caps are applied to existing buildings when the use has changed, what additional uses should be prohibited or allowed in the TOD area; and whether the quarter mile radius should be modified.

This option has a mid-range completion schedule, and provides a balanced approach to the level of analysis. In addition, because this study will be coordinated with the General Plan, there is less impact on department workload. Because it will be included in the General Plan EIR, it does not require additional funding for a separate environmental review.

2. Review the East Pasadena TOD standards as part of the Specific Plan Update

Overview: Study the TOD standards for the Sierra Madre Station area as part of the revisions to the East Pasadena Specific Plan; the study would result in new standards specifically tailored for the Specific Plan area.

Timeline: Once the Land Use Element is complete at the end of 2012, work will begin on updating the Specific Plans. The sequencing of the specific plan revisions will be determined by the outcome of the Land Use Element update process. The Specific Plans that are most out of alignment with the new plan will be updated first. At this point in the process, it is unclear where the East Pasadena Specific Plan will fall in the update schedule. In addition, changes to the TOD requirements for the Sierra Madre Villa Station would need to be coordinated with the East Colorado Specific Plan as the quarter mile radius around the station includes East Colorado. This would necessitate both Specific Plan areas being updated concurrently and could create a longer process than updating one plan at a time. Environmental review would occur as part of the Specific Plan approval process. Assuming the eastside plans are the first to be updated, final adoption would likely be in 2014 or later.

3. Amend the Zoning Code for TOD Parking in East Pasadena Only

Overview: Initiate a code amendment to change only the TOD parking caps for the Sierra Madre Villa TOD area.

Timeline: A code amendment study could be initiated quickly. However, the study would require a traffic study for intersections around the Sierra Madre Villa Gold Line Station and an Initial Environmental Study before staff could begin to prepare the appropriate analysis and recommendations for review by the Planning Commission. This process could not be completed before June of 2012. If the study determines that a full Environmental Impact Report is needed, an additional year would be required.


Considerations: This study would be narrowly focused and therefore may engender less community concern. This option would also be the shortest in time duration if an EIR is not required. If an EIR is required however, the time schedule would be longer than Option #1.

This option would not result in a comprehensive review of the TOD requirements for this station, would not allow for alignment with the General Plan update process, and would not consider appropriate revisions for any of the other TOD areas as desired by City Council. Further, implementation of this option would require the Planning Department to reprioritize the work plan and shift other projects to later completion dates. It would also require new appropriation of funds for technical studies and environmental work.

FISCAL IMPACT:

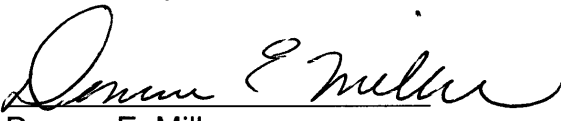
For any of the options, it is likely that a traffic study will need to be completed. Funds will need to be identified to complete this study. For Option #3, funds may also be required for a separate EIR. In Options #1 and #2, the environmental review would be incorporated into other planning processes. Staff will return with a budget request based on City Council direction.

Respectfully submitted,




VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

Prepared by:



Denver E. Miller
Principal Planner

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

SPACE BANK MINI STORAGE

3202 Foothill Blvd., Pasadena 91107 626-449-4405
FAX 626-449-4278

RECEIVED

11 OCT 20 P1:33

October 20, 2011

CITY CLERK
CITY OF PASADENA

To: City Clerk for the City of Pasadena

From: Margie Schubert & Bob Oltman
Partners, Space Bank Mini Storage

Re: East Pasadena TOD Parking Restrictions

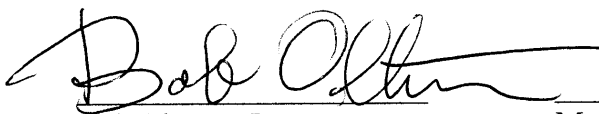
As the city staff has been charged with the continuing investigation and analysis of our neighborhood's parking requirements and restrictions, we'd like to weigh in with our thoughts and experience.

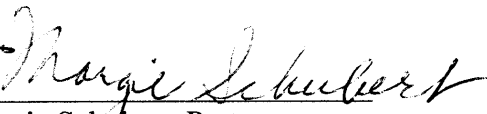
We'd recommend the parking restrictions continue to remain in the Zoning Ordinance only. The General Plan and East Pasadena Specific Plan are quiet in addressing the parking restrictions. We feel the focus should only be on amending or modifying the Zoning Ordinance as necessary. (We've attached a sample procedure to achieve such an Amendment.)

It should be noted, the East Pasadena Commercial District is unique. It was designed for access with personal transportation in mind. The traffic signals, sidewalks and storefronts are not pedestrian friendly. The pending parking restrictions would have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods by pushing more traffic and parking into the residential streets. It could additionally be argued that pollution from vehicles would increase with increased parking space searches. East Pasadena would benefit greatly by the existence of adequate, convenient, onsite parking.

It would appear the use of a Zoning Amendment would be a timely and cost-effective vehicle to address the East Pasadena parking issues. We would also recommend this procedure as it would encourage an efficient solution and promote smart growth in our neighborhood.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with city staff as we strongly feel we all have a vested interest in the betterment of this fine city.


Bob Oltman, Partner


Margie Schubert, Partner

ZONING CODE AMENDMENT – process summary

The basic process for a Zoning Code Amendment which could be used to modify or eliminate the current limitations on off-street parking near Transit Stations is summarized below. This summary is based on the provisions of the Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC).

1. Initiation. A Zoning Code Amendment cannot be initiated by the filing of an application, but rather must be initiated by the City Council, the Planning Commission, or the City Manager. (PMC, § 17.74.030.) It is unlikely that the City Manager or the Planning Commission would initiate a Zoning Code Amendment without specific direction from the City Council to do so. Thus, as a practical matter, any Zoning Code Amendment would need to be initiated by the City Council, which is typically done in the form of an adopted resolution. The exact steps that can or should be taken to prompt the City Council to take such action cannot be determined without first conferring with City Staff and other stakeholders. However, one possible approach would be to prepare and submit a letter to the City Council from a group of stakeholders (including business organizations) discussing need for the proposed Zoning Code Amendment and asking the City Council to initiate it. Of course, it would also be helpful to discuss the matter ahead of time with one or more Council members who understand and are sympathetic to the issues.
2. CEQA Clearance. Once the Zoning Code Amendment is initiated, the City Staff must evaluate the amendment under CEQA. (PMC, §17.76.030.) If City Staff determines that the Zoning Code Amendment is exempt from CEQA (which is fairly typical for code amendments) no further environmental review would be undertaken, and the matter would be set for public hearing (discussed below). On the other hand, it is possible that the City Staff could determine that an initial study of the amendment is required, leading to the issuance of a negative declaration (ND) or mitigated negative declaration (MND) or possibly even the preparation of an EIR. A ND or MND would likely take one to three months. In the unlikely event that the City determines that an EIR is required, the CEQA process could take a year.
3. Public Hearing/Staff Report. Once the CEQA process is completed, the amendment would be scheduled for public hearing, which would likely be held by the Planning Commission. (Pursuant to PMC § 17.74.050, the Planning Commission must consider and make a recommendation to the City Council on any Zoning Code amendment.) Prior to the hearing, City staff would prepare a staff report describing the amendment and presenting its recommendations. Notice of the hearing must be published 14 days prior to the hearing. (PMC § 17.74.040(A)(1).) Mailed notice to individual property owners is typically not required for code amendments.
4. Planning Commission Recommendation. The Planning Commission must make a recommendation to the City Council whether to approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the Zoning Code Amendment based on the findings set forth in PMC §17.74.070. Specifically, in order to recommend approval of a Zoning Code amendment, the Planning Commission must find that (1) the amendment is in conformance with the goals, policies and objectives of the General Plan, and (2) that the amendment would not be materially detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or general welfare.
5. City Council Hearing/Decision. After the Planning Commission votes on the proposed amendment, the Planning Commission's recommendation is transmitted to the City Council. The City Council must then hold its own public hearing on the matter. (PMC §17.74.060.) The City Council will then decide whether to approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the Zoning Code Amendment based on the findings set forth in PMC §17.74.070 (discussed above). If the City Council decides to approve an amendment, the amendment will be adopted in the form of an ordinance. The ordinance will become effective 30 days after it is published.

The time frame for the process outlined above is difficult to estimate without first having discussions with City Staff. However, assuming that an EIR is not required, estimate that the entire process would take somewhere in the range of six to twelve months.