

Martinez, Ruben

From: Marsha Rood
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Subject: CITY CONCIL MEETING - JULY 19, 2021 - ITEM 15 COMMENTS

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DATE: JULY 19, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARSHA ROOD, CENTRAL DISTRICT RESIDENT; VICE PRESIDENT, DOWNTOWN PASADENA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION ((DPNA))

RE: ITEM # 15 DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING ADDITIONAL GOALS AND CONSIDERATION DURING REDISTRICTING FOR 2020

On April 27, 2012, nearly ten years ago, the DPNA wrote a letter to the City Council advocating a specific Council District for the Central District, arguing that the CD is a unique commercial and residential area with a walkable, urban mixed use lifestyle different from that of the suburbs. In fact, the 1994 General Plan, some 30 years ago, intentionally sought to create "a dynamic and lively opportunity to choose an urban life style that de-emphasizes the use of an automobile and that emphasizes the use of Transit, Bicycles and Feet – walking in the city". However, at the time of the 2012 redistricting, the City Council did not establish a separate district for the CD, encouraging the DPNA to return with its request ten (10) years later. Here we are.

The CD is growing by leaps and bounds, but the effects of this tremendous growth are not being mitigated by the very fees that are generated by all the development in the CD. This is an ongoing threat to the CD.

Since the DPNA request, the State of California enacted the FAIR MAPS ACT of 2018. The Act's mandate is to draw district boundaries using the following criteria in order of priority:

1. Districts must be geographically contiguous.
2. The 'geographic integrity' of local neighborhood or "local community of interest" shall be respected "in a manner that minimizes division."
3. District boundaries must be easily identifiable and understandable by residents, using natural and artificial barriers when possible.
4. If practicable and when not in conflict with prior criteria, districts shall be drawn to encourage geographical compactness in a manner that nearby areas of population are not bypassed in favor of more distant population.

Arguably, the CD meets most, if not all, of these criteria.

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- The 2012 DPNA letter stated that the community of interest for the CD is a “walkable, urban, mixed-use lifestyle” community and, therefore, should be represented by a councilmember who would have direct daily experience of that lifestyle.
- The splitting the CD among four council districts does not minimize division; rather, exaggerates it.
- The City has argued that having four different council representatives is an advantage. However, the result is that there no one “go-to” member of Council and the CD slips through the cracks. An example of this is that only one member of the Redistricting Task Force lives in or has a business in the CD. Another example is the Mayor's Housing Task Force which has no appointed representative from the CD. With at least 20% of the City's population, the CD no seat at the table.
- Importantly, the councilmembers are focused primarily on the suburban areas of Pasadena where the votes are. For many in the CD, it is a form of gerrymandering which threatens the continuing vitality and sense of place of the CD.

At the time of the DPNA's first request, the population of the CD was estimated to be [plus or minus] 20,000 people per the 2010 U.S. Census. Because of the significant amount of building in the CD since then, the population of the CD could be upwards of 28,000 in the next two to three years. However, in the fact of this *tsunami* of growth, only minor improvements have been made to the pedestrian networks in the downtown. 1,081 housing units are now under construction in the CD with 1,717 in the pipeline or permitted, a total of 2,798 - over twice as many as in the other seven Specific Plan areas combined. The fees to mitigate traffic are generated in large measure in the CD, but are spent primarily in the suburbs. Of the some \$127,500,000 in traffic mitigation and transportation impact fees, less than 1% is earmarked for pedestrian and bicycle improvements in the downtown. These mitigation fees are arguably treated more like a general tax and a mitigation fee.

The concentration of commercial, public services and amenities combined with residents and workers can create an “Urban village”, linked and connected. However, very few pedestrian amenities and improvements have been installed in the CD since the year 2000. As a result, the pedestrian network system is vastly underfunded and has not keep up with the booming housing growth. The city needs to focus on creating strong pedestrian networks to connect retail, restaurant, commercial and public offices, and cultural venues to adjacent neighborhoods. The pedestrian speed of 3 mph is perfect speed for the “15-minute” city.

We can do pedestrian networks. We did it in the now nationally successful Old Pasadena which has a Walk Score of 97 out of 100. Th situation now is that no department of the city is charged with creating and maintaining pedestrian networks. The Public Works and Transportation Departments use a “Dash Board “to track the pedestrian injury/kill rates at intersections to determine where pedestrian improvements should be installed. The synergy of economic development, transportation,, public works, and planning is missing – they are siloed for the most part, looking at the problems of urbanization from their own perspectives. Installation of pedestrian walkways and networks are critical for existing and new residents coming to Pasadena's urban core to reduce the need for a car and for more parking. It is also crucial to meet the sustainability goals of the City.

Are we a City by Default or a City by Choice? We must not just build housing; we must also build communities.