

Agenda Report

April 22, 2013

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: UPDATE OF THE GENERAL PLAN LAND USE AND MOBILITY ELEMENTS

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Direct staff to analyze the environmental impact of the eight components of the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Elements
 - A. Changes to the Guiding Principles (Attachment A.1)
 - B. New Policy Topic Areas (Attachment A.2)
 - C. Land Use Element Policy Outline (Attachment A.3)
 - D. Updated Mobility Element Objectives (Attachment A.4)
 - E. Mobility Supporting Initiatives Goals and Objectives (Attachment A.5)
 - F. Proposed Specific Plan Boundaries (Attachment A.6)
 - G. General Plan Land Use Diagram (Attachment A.7)
 - H. Development Caps (Attachment A.8)

BACKGROUND:

In October 2012, the City Council received information on staff's preliminary recommendations on the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Elements. These recommendations came after a multi-year effort in which staff worked directly with community members to identify goals, create four alternative plans, refine a concept or hybrid plan, and identify General Plan policies that needed revising. After this multi-year process and after meeting with the City Council, staff met with advisory bodies and received their recommended changes. On April 8, 2013 the City Council received a presentation from staff describing the eight updated components of the Land Use and Mobility Elements. The Council engaged in discussion before and after the public testimony. This report provides responses to questions asked of staff and includes information on items which the Council desired to deliberate further. Once the Council is satisfied with the updated components of the Land Use and Mobility Elements, it will authorize staff to start the environmental impact report (EIR) process.

ANALYSIS:

Guiding Principles and Policies:

Staff is recommending changes to the Guiding Principles of the General Plan. These principles are meant to serve as broad vision statements describing the community's values and its vision. To support these statements, the General Plan includes objectives and detailed policies which define how the vision outlined in the Principles will be accomplished. Staff recognizes that there are divergent and diverse opinions in the community and will continue to work with the community in 2013 to refine these policy statements.

Second Guiding Principle:

The second Guiding Principle is a vision statement that has been rewritten to focus on protection of historic resources. The Planning Commission has recommended that the City Council amend the third sentence in the second Guiding Principle to read, "New construction that could affect the integrity of historic resources will adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards." The Guiding Principles are broad vision statements that describe how this community views itself in the future. It is intended to inspire and provide direction for making decisions. As vision statements these Guiding Principles necessarily do not focus on the intricate details of how the community will reach its vision. Instead, statements calling for the creation of guidelines or standards are mentioned in policies (such as Policy 5.2) or the implementation section of the General Plan. Instead of incorporating statements about specific standards in the Guiding Principles, staff recommends considering the subject of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards during the fall 2013 policy discussion.

The City Council sought advice from the City Attorney's Office on whether the Planning Commission's recommendation would be permissible. Pursuant to the City's general police powers in the land use arena, the City is free to choose the standards by which it will measure the urban planning, design, or environmental effects of a particular project, or the standards that will guide design of a project. In other words, the City could use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to protect its historic resources.

Staff's review of the Standards reveals a more practical implementation issue. As noted in the official title of the document (Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings), the Standards and Guidelines were developed for historic properties. They were not written with new construction on non-historic sites or new construction adjacent to historic districts in mind. As a result, for the most part, the use of the Standards and Guidelines on non-historic sites or sites adjacent to historic districts is not the best tool to achieve these goals. While the Secretary's Standards may not be appropriate in these cases, the City has other tools such as General Plan policies, specific plan development standards, design guidelines, and findings for approval that may prove more helpful and applicable. Despite this, there is one guideline that references the need for new additions or "related" new construction to be different from yet compatible with the historic structure. Staff has

included this context sensitive vision for new construction in its recommendation on the second Guiding Principle.

Compatibility, Context, and Sensitive Architecture:

The issue of compatibility, context, and sensitivity has also been raised. One aspect of this conversation includes how contemporary architecture should be incorporated into the City. Members of the community expressed concern about limiting contemporary architecture to appropriate locations. Specifically, the concern included the recommended second Guiding Principle (Attachment A.1) and Policy Topic 3.A (Style – Encourage a variety of architectural styles: allow contemporary and creative architecture in appropriate locations. The style of a building should be clear and consistent, whether traditional or contemporary, building should respond to their context in a manner that reflects a timeless quality.)

Throughout the General Plan process staff has heard a diversity of opinions on the appropriateness of contemporary architecture and the broader issue of making sure the scale of new development is compatible and sensitive to its context in architectural style and building mass. Staff has taken note of these concerns and will continue to work with the community to further refine the urban design policies. At this point in the process the Council is not being asked to decide on final language for this policy, a complete and refined list of policies will come to the City Council for approval in the summer of 2014.

Eighth Guiding Principle:

While the second Guiding Principle has seen significant revisions, staff is proposing a completely new Guiding Principle on education. In addition to staff's proposal for an eighth Guiding Principle on education the Council considered three amendments. The first was a revision presented to the City Council on April 8 and developed between City staff and Invest in Pasadena Kids (IIPK), "Pasadena is committed to community planning that supports vibrant educational resources responsive to the broad needs of our diverse community. Recognizing the relationship between education and economic vitality, quality public schools are a shared community responsibility." This is staff's revised recommendation (see Attachment A.1).

The second proposal was to take the opening phrase recommended by the Planning Commission, "Pasadena supports public education," and integrate it into staff's proposal.

The third proposal was to switch the order for the two proposed sentences so that the Principle would read, "Recognizing the relationship between education and economic vitality, quality public schools are a shared community responsibility. Pasadena is committed to community planning that supports vibrant educational resources responsive to the broad needs of our diverse community."

Staff evaluated these additional comments and believes the revised staff recommendation, above, more clearly defines the principle.

Development Caps:

To bring about the vision described in the Guiding Principles, the General Plan includes caps on the maximum number of residential units and commercial square footage allowed. As part of this update staff has proposed a new set of development cap numbers. This new set of numbers was the result of a thorough, multi-step process which included technical analysis and community input. In working with the community through an iterative mapping process, staff was able to use land use models to determine the maximum build-out capacity given the proposed land uses and maximum FARs. Staff looked at a number of quantitative measures (such as historic trends, regional forecasts, the relationship between jobs and housing, fiscal effects, and computer generated estimates on traffic impacts and use of natural resources) and qualitative goals (such as the vision for each Specific Plan, best practices, and environmental objectives) in deriving its recommendation. The community first saw total residential unit and commercial square footage numbers in the June 2010 workshops, newsletter, and survey of alternatives. The following year, at another set of workshops in June, the community reviewed a concept map and accompanying development forecasts. In this most recent set of meetings, which started in October 2012, the community has had another opportunity to provide input on the amount of residential and commercial development. Staff recommends these new development cap numbers as a balanced means of meeting many qualitative and quantitative impacts and objectives.

Amending the Development Caps:

Perfectly predicting the demand and effect of growth over a 20 year horizon is very difficult. In recognition of this, the General Plan allows for the City Council to modify the development caps through the five-year update of the General Plan. However, the General Plan does not define the scope of a five year update. Staff is proposing to modify this policy. Staff's proposal would require the City Council or Planning Commission to take a proactive step to adjust the development caps. The process through which development caps would be modified would be through a General Plan Text Amendment. While the Zoning Code allows property owners to initiate a change to the General Plan Land Use Diagram, the Code states that an amendment to the text in the General Plan can only be initiated by the City Council or Planning Commission; this would eliminate the possibility of a project driven change to the development caps. The Code also states that the City Council or Commission first must vote to study the subject. Then, the Planning Commission must make a recommendation to City Council; after which, the City Council takes action. Any proposed changes to the development caps would require environmental review and all of these actions would have to follow public notification requirements. These steps would help limit modifications to the development caps from occurring on a project by project basis. An alternative strategy to relieve concerns regarding project by project changes to development caps would be to limit the initiation of a study to amend the development caps to no more than once a year and only in conjunction with the Planning Department's annual development cap monitoring report. With annual monitoring of the development caps, the need to modify the caps on a project by project basis may become unnecessary.

The community has invested a considerable amount of effort to create the proposed Land Use Diagram and the vision on which it is based. The Land Use Diagram essentially sets a theoretical maximum build-out capacity. Staff's intent is to provide the City Council the ability to make incremental adjustments to the development caps without having to reexamine the Land Use Diagram and its accompanying policies.

Effect of Increasing Development Caps:

The City Council asked staff if increasing the development cap in a Specific Plan area could result in mitigation measures so onerous that they could preclude future development. It is feasible that this sort of situation could occur. However, the increases called for during public comment (increasing the Central District development cap from 3,750 to 5,000 residential units and 2.5 million to 4 million commercial square feet) would be unlikely to create such a situation. To be certain, the City Council could have the environmental impact report (EIR) study the higher numbers proposed. This would allow the Council to compare the impacts of this more intense project against the impacts of an alternative that reviewed lower numbers.

Population Forecasts:

In relation to the discussion of the development caps, the Council asked staff how the population projected by this General Plan would compare with other population projections for Pasadena. The General Plan Land Use Diagram presented to the City Council on October 10 projected a total of 70,250 residential units and a population of 158,200. To reach these projections, the development caps would have to be met in each Specific Plan area. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has projected 62,073 housing units and a population of 164,433 by 2035, the horizon year of this Plan.

While the recommended Land Use Element projects a similar population as SCAG, the number of residential units differs by about 12,000 units. The main reason for this difference is that the City's land use model projects lower numbers of persons per unit because the City expects the vast majority of residential growth to occur in mixed use projects and higher density residential areas, which have lower numbers of people per unit. Additionally staff believes that SCAG forecasts were released prior to the 2010 Census figures and were therefore using inflated projections by the Department of Finance.

Changes to the Land Use Diagram:

The development caps work in conjunction with the Land Use Diagram to control the amount and location of growth. A number of changes to the Land Use Diagram were proposed during the April 8 City Council meeting. The following locations were areas the Council flagged for further deliberation:

- CD-22-B: The north side of East Green Street between Mentor and Wilson (see Attachment C.5). This area currently has a maximum FAR of 1.5 and a maximum height limit of 35 feet. The Planning Commission recommended a designation of Low Mixed Use (0.0-1.0). Staff continues to recommend a designation of Med Mixed Use (0.0-2.25) as it furthers the vision of targeting

growth into the Central District, improving economic vitality, and planning for walking, biking, transit, and accessibility.

- CD-38: The east side of S. El Molino Ave., both sides of S. Oak Knoll Ave., and the west side of S. Hudson Ave. between E. California Blvd. and the Pasadena Unified School District's properties (see Attachment C.5). This area currently has a designation of High Density Residential (0-48 dwelling units/acre). The General Plan Update Advisory Committee recommended retaining this designation. The Planning Commission recommending changing the designation of this area to Med-High Density Residential (0-32 dwelling units/acre). Staff agrees with the Planning Commission's recommendation of Med-High Density Residential which will assist in further protecting the residential neighborhood and the historic character.
- EC-6: East Colorado Blvd. between Altadena Dr. and the Southern California Edison right of way (see Attachment C.2). After hearing concerns from members of the community regarding the need to further protect residential neighborhoods, staff recommends a land use designation of Low Mixed Use (0.0-1.0) for EC-6.
- NL-1, NL-4, and NL-5: N. Lake Ave. generally between E. Orange Grove Blvd. and E. Mountain St. and E. Washington Blvd. between Palm Terrace and N. Lake Ave. (see Attachment C.6). After hearing concerns from members of the community living adjacent to North Lake Avenue about potential negative impacts on residential neighborhoods, staff recommends that the City Council change the designation of NL-4 and NL-5 from Med Mixed Use (0.0-2.25) to Low Commercial (0.0-1.0). Staff also recommends keeping the Med Mixed Use (0.0-2.25) designation on E. Washington Blvd. for the first approximately 150 feet and then reducing the designation on the rear of the properties to Low Mixed Use (0.0-1.0). Lastly, staff recommends that those parcels that extend from N. Lake Ave. through to N. Mentor Ave. be given a designation of Single Family Residential on the N. Mentor Ave. side of the parcel. Staff is also recommending other changes to make the draft Land Use Diagram consistent with the existing Specific Plan. These changes include a designation of Low Density Residential for 701 and 711 N. Mentor Ave., Medium Density Residential for 919 E. Orange Grove Blvd., and Medium Density Residential for 960-1010 E. Washington Blvd.
- EP-5, EP-11, EP-12, and EP-13: Generally the area north of E. Foothill Blvd., east of N. Sierra Madre Villa Ave., and west of N. Rosemead Blvd., (see Attachment C.3). After hearing concerns from members of the community regarding the need to further protect residential neighborhoods, staff recommends a land use designation of Med Commercial (0.0-2.0) for EP-13, Low Mixed Use (0.0-1.0) for EP-11, Med Commercial (0.0-2.0) for EP-12, and Med Commercial (0.0-2.0) for the east side of EP-5 and Low Mixed Use (0.0-1.0) for the west side of EP-5.
- FOOG-8-A & FOOG-8-B: Generally the area along E. Orange Grove Blvd. between North Fair Oaks Avenue and N. Los Robles Ave. (see Attachment C.1). This area currently does not have a FAR restriction but has a height limit of 36 feet. Staff previously recommended a designation of Low Mixed Use (0.0-1.0) for this area in order to focus growth at the proposed neighborhood village at N. Fair Oaks Ave. and E. Orange Grove Blvd. In response to a request by a property

owner and after further staff study, staff recommended a designation of Med Mixed Use (0.0-2.25) for FOOG-8-A. The Planning Commission and GPUAC joined staff's recommendation. After further consideration of the community's desire to see additional economic vitality and reinvestment while balancing the need to protect single-family homes to the south of Orange Grove, staff recommends using a designation of Low-Med Mixed Use (0.0-1.75) for FOOG-8-A and B. The revised recommendation proposes a designation lower than the advisory bodies' recommendation for FOOG-8-A, but higher than the advisory bodies' recommendation for FOOG-8-B; resulting in an overall increase for E. Orange Grove Blvd.

Reinstituting the Specific Plan Designation:

Instead of having further dialogue on what the appropriate land use designation is for a site, a community member suggested continuing the existing General Plan's practice of giving all Specific Plan areas the same generic designation of "Specific Plan." The current General Plan Land Use Diagram provides specific commercial and residential land use designations for properties outside of the Specific Plans. The Specific Plan areas however have a generic designation of, "Specific Plan." For these areas, the current General Plan provides a general vision for each Specific Plan and a development cap.

Under the existing General Plan's Land Use Diagram, there is no maximum FAR and no limits on uses. Staff's recommended Land Use Diagram provides additional protection and provides new limits by providing a specific land use designation with a maximum FAR for Specific Plan areas. The proposed Land Use Diagram provides an additional layer of protection to neighborhoods by requiring a General Plan Amendment to increase the FAR or change the land use designation (i.e. Low Commercial or Low Mixed Use) of a site

Beyond the protections noted above there are environmental benefits to providing additional information on the maximum density and potential uses within the Specific Plans. Doing so will allow analysis in the General Plan EIR to be more specific and accurate. For instance the traffic model will be able to more accurately predict impacts if the General Plan Land Use Diagram includes more certainty on the type, density and distribution of new construction.

Since the beginning of this process City staff has attended more than 160 meetings and met with over 5,000 people. Staff started with defining the community's values, developed broad concepts with the community and then continued through more and more detailed discussion to bring forward the detailed Land Use Diagram. In the November 2010 Charrette the community began creating land use designations and started applying them throughout the city, including the Specific Plan areas. In June 2011, June 2012, and October 2012 the City Council and community continued to review maps that provided designations for the specific plan areas. This iterative, consensus building process has resulted in a Draft Land Use Diagram which has considerable community consensus. Staff recommends that the City Council not set

aside the consensus already reached in the other areas of the city and, instead, continue the process of refining the Land Use Diagram by making any additional modifications.

In changing the level of specificity in the Land Use Diagram, questions have arisen about the relationship between the General Plan and Specific Plans. The new land use designations within the Specific Plans will only take effect after the Specific Plans are updated. Until that time, the existing Specific Plans will continue to guide development. In most cases the Specific Plans will be updated to reflect the broader land use designations in the General Plan. However, the Specific Plans can provide additional land use categories and FAR maximums that are stricter than the General Plan. For instance, in areas where the proposed Draft Land Use Diagram shows a land use designation of Medium Mixed Use 0.0-2.25, the Specific Plan could be updated with a maximum FAR of 2.0. It is conceivable, and likely, that in the more fine grained analysis that occurs at the Specific Plan level, that changes to the General Plan Land Use Diagram may be needed and can be accomplished concurrent with the Specific Plan amendment.

Planned Developments on Parcels Greater than Two Acres:

A community member proposed to the Council that all properties over two acres go through a Planned Development (PD) procedure (see Attachment B for a map of affected properties). The purpose of a PD is to allow the owner of a large site to have flexibility from the development standards (such as setbacks, densities, and in some cases height) and the allowable uses in order to “encourage variety” and “greater freedom” so as to provide improved “access, light, open space and amenities.”

Staff does not recommend this proposal. One of the foundations of this Land Use Element is to protect residential neighborhoods and historic properties. By requiring all properties to go through a process that starts with removing all development standards and use restrictions from a site would remove protections on which the community relies. In addition, promoting the use of PDs categorically would create uncertainty in the community. Furthermore, a PD is created for a specific project which allows for the customization of the allowed uses and the development standards. While it is important to have flexibility, a PD can be viewed as a tool that undermines a Specific Plan and the shared vision for an area.

The Zoning Code has a different tool called, an Adjustment Permit. Using this tool allows for the development standards to be modified for flexibility but does not change the underlying allowed uses. The Adjustment Permit requires that a site be only a minimum of half an acre, allowing more flexibility than a PD. The Adjustment Permit also has a requirement that the project demonstrate a more enhanced environment and architectural excellence.

Visualizing FARs:

Since the community started mapping different alternatives in November 2011, staff has provided handouts and exhibits to help people visualize different FARs. Attachment D

has been updated and included as an attachment to this report to assist in further discussions of FAR.

Public Health Issues:

The City Council heard concerns about the Draft Land Use Diagram's proposal to place residential uses adjacent to freeways. In response, the Council asked staff what can be done to further promote public health efforts in the General Plan. The idea of planning communities in order to promote healthier living is a growing area of focus for planners. Under Policy Topic 1.6.A (page 6 of Attachment A.2) staff has included the following statement, "Adopt a framework of policies that characterize and encourage the connections between access to locally grown foods, nutritional education, the encouragement of physical activity, and an overall commitment to health and wellness in our communities for youth, adults, and seniors." Staff will work with the Health Department on incorporating additional policies regarding healthy communities and bring these policies to the community for their review and comment in the fall of 2013.

NEXT STEPS:

Once the City Council gives staff the direction on the content to be studied in the General Plan EIR (GP EIR), staff will begin a multi-phase process to complete the EIR and the policy work. The process of preparing the GP EIR will begin with a series of pre-scoping meetings in the spring/summer of 2013. The purpose of these meetings will be to inform the public about the General Plan and to collect comments from the community on the potential environmental impacts. After those meetings, staff and consultants will prepare and release an initial study, post a notice of preparation, and host a set of meetings to collect feedback on the initial study in the summer/fall of 2013. At this step staff will present possible alternatives to be studied in the draft EIR and ask the Planning Commission for feedback. In the fall, staff will also host meetings with the community to review and edit the existing policies, refine the New Policy Topic Areas, and incorporate policies from obsolete elements. Once the draft EIR is complete in the winter of 2013/2014, staff will host meetings with the community and commissions to describe the impacts in the draft EIR and collect comments. After the Final EIR is prepared, staff will engage the community in a final series of meetings and then take the Final EIR to the Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Commission, and City Council in the summer of 2014.

Respectfully submitted,



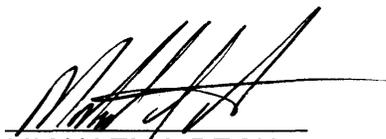
VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning and Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Scott Reimers
Planner

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments:

A – Staff’s Final Recommendations

- A.1 Changes to the Guiding Principles
- A.2 New Policy Topic Areas
- A.3 Land Use Element Policy Outline
- A.4 Updated Mobility Element Objectives
- A.5 Mobility Supporting Initiatives Goals and Objectives
- A.6 Existing and Proposed Specific Plan Boundaries
- A.7 General Plan Land Use Diagram
- A.8 Development Caps

B – Map Showing Properties Greater than or Equal to Two Acres

C – Advisory Body Change Maps

- C.1 Advisory Body Change Map – Fair Oaks Orange Grove
- C.2 Advisory Body Change Map – East Colorado
- C.3 Advisory Body Change Map – East Pasadena
- C.4 Advisory Body Change Map – South Fair Oaks
- C.5 Advisory Body Change Map – Central District
- C.6 Advisory Body Change Map – North Lake

D – Land Use Categories: Relationship between FAR and Building Height