



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: OCTOBER 10, 2012

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

FROM: STEPHANIE DEWOLFE, AICP, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF
PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN LAND USE AND MOBILITY ELEMENT UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council

1. Direct staff to analyze the environmental impact of the following changes to the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Elements:
 - A. The New Policy Topic Areas (Attachment A.1),
 - B. The Mobility Supporting Initiatives Goals and Objectives (Attachment A.2),
 - C. Updated Mobility Element Objectives (Attachment A.3),
 - D. The new Land Use Policy Outline (Attachment A.4),
 - E. The changes to the guiding principles (Attachment A.5 – Guiding Principle Changes),
 - F. The changes to the specific plan boundaries (Attachment A.6 – Changes to Specific Plan Boundaries),
 - G. The changes to the General Plan Land Use Diagram (Attachment A.7 – Draft Land Use Diagram), and
 - H. The development levels stated in Table 1 and 2 of this staff report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The update of the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Elements is a large project with considerable detail; this report provides a discussion of the key components including new policy topic areas, goals and objectives for supporting mobility initiatives, updated Mobility Element objectives, a new Land Use Element policy outline, changes to the guiding principles, a revision to the specific plan boundaries, changes to the Land Use Diagram, and the development levels that the General Plan EIR will analyze.

In order to insure that changes to the Plan were derived from, addressed, and reflected the community's goals, the General Plan Update Advisory Committee (GPUAC) and city staff led an extensive community outreach program (Attachment C – Community Outreach Summary and Attendance Log provides more detail). These outreach events varied widely in their topics, formats, tools used, and locations. Through these events, the community has reaffirmed its support of four ideas that have formed the foundation for the Land Use and Mobility Elements, since 1994:

- Protect and preserve residential neighborhoods, historic districts, and open space;
- Target growth into the Central District, transit villages, and neighborhood villages;
- Plan for walking, biking, transit, and accessibility; and
- Focus on economic vitality.

Protect and preserve

Throughout the process, the community has consistently agreed that the General Plan should protect and preserve residential neighborhoods, open space areas, and historic areas. The Draft Land Use and Mobility Elements accomplish this task in a number of ways such as by,

- Focusing development to major commercial intersections and the Central District, and away from residential neighborhoods;
- Retaining the existing designation of any areas currently designated as single-family or multi-family;
- Preserving all previously designated open spaces; and
- Including changes to the second guiding principle on historic preservation and new policies on contextual design, sense of place, and architectural excellence.

Target growth

Another foundation of the Land Use Diagram is to target growth into the Central District, around transit stations, and at major intersections. "Transit villages" would be located around Gold Line stations and would include a broad mix of uses that enhance the local economy, create jobs, and provide housing opportunities. "Neighborhood villages" would be located at major intersections and would focus on neighborhood serving businesses with some mixed-use housing. In both instances, uses would be clustered to promote walking, bicycling and transit. The Draft Land Use Diagram calls for neighborhood villages at intersections such as North Lake Ave. and East Washington Blvd., North Fair Oaks Ave. and Orange Grove Blvd., and Sierra Madre Blvd. and East Colorado Blvd.

This plan strengthens the City's efforts to reduce traffic and environmental impacts by creating walkable transit-based neighborhoods by increasing the percentage of new residents and employees that are within a quarter-mile radius of a Gold Line station. Currently, approximately three percent of the city's residents and 11 percent of employees are within a quarter-mile radius of a transit station. This plan would place 30 percent of new residents and 46 percent of new employees within a quarter-mile radius of a transit station. Attachment B (Comparison Graphs) includes more detailed information.

Plan for walking, biking, transit, and accessibility

In order to address this foundation of the Land Use Diagram, planners used both land use planning tools and transportation tools. The Draft Land Use Diagram plans for alternative modes of transportation in three important ways:

- It allows for densities high enough to support transit.
- It targets growth around transit stations and corridors.

- It places a mix of uses – such as shops, housing, and jobs – close together, instead of in distinct districts. This decreases the amount of miles people drive their cars and makes walking, biking, and transit a more attractive alternative to driving.

Each of these strategies results in the increased likelihood that residents, shoppers, and employees walk, bicycle, or take public transit.

The policies in the land use chapter on urban design and the mobility policies further assist in planning for alternatives to driving. For example, in some areas policies will support landscaped medians, larger sidewalks, and pedestrian friendly architecture on the ground floor – such as ground floor windows, colonnades, awnings, and semi-enclosed open space.

In built out cities – where the cost of expanding intersections to reduce congestion is prohibitively expensive, has negative impacts on the community character, and provides a traffic benefit for only a few hours of the day – most transportation planners are looking at ways of reducing VMT, or vehicle miles traveled. Reducing VMT also has the added benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The travel demand model has determined that the Draft Land Use Diagram will reduce per capita VMT. The Environmental Impact Report will provide a detailed study of the Draft Land Use Diagram's impacts and mitigation measures to reduce traffic delays or decrease per capita VMT. Attachment B (Comparison Graphs) includes more detailed information.

Provide for economic vitality

Throughout the process, community members have expressed a strong interest in increasing jobs and concern for the future of commercial districts, especially amidst high vacancy rates. The Draft Land Use Diagram provides development levels with sufficient commercial square footage and residential units for businesses to expand, districts to revitalize, and for jobs to be created. In some areas, such as along North Fair Oaks Ave. and in Lamanda Park, housing was prohibited because of its economically competitive nature, in order to allow for uses that would provide additional jobs.

A strong theme throughout outreach efforts was the need for jobs. The Draft Land Use Diagram allows for the construction of 6.175 million square feet of non-residential construction until the horizon year of 2035. If this amount of non-residential development were to occur it would result in approximately 36,703 more jobs, a 35 percent increase over the existing number of jobs.

There has been concern about the appropriate revenues necessary to provide the community with excellent services. The Draft Land Use Diagram would generate uses in such a way that the City would see an increase in net revenues to the City's General Fund, by increasing the revenue from property taxes, utility taxes, sales taxes, and use taxes. For example, the Draft Land Use Diagram allows for new office buildings – which provide well-paying jobs and thus higher discretionary spending. New construction also provides the City with additional property tax revenue. Additionally, the Plan would allow for more retail uses which also provide jobs and sales tax revenues.

BACKGROUND:

The two major components to this update include the Draft Land Use Diagram and the guiding principles, objectives, and policies. The community has continued to support the guiding principles and the foundation of the Draft Land Use Diagram, while acknowledging the need to refine the principles and policies and make some adjustments to the Land Use Diagram.

Changes to guiding principles and policies

The General Plan contains seven guiding principles, which were adopted in 1994 to articulate the community's vision. These guiding principles were reaffirmed in the 2004 update of the Land Use Element. In current outreach efforts, community members strongly re-affirmed the principles while providing input to help improve the guiding principles, objectives, and policies.

Guiding principle changes

While the outreach process indicated high levels of satisfaction with the existing principles, the community also provided consistent feedback concerning a perceived inadequacy, the lack of a reference to the relationship between the City and educational institutions. As a result of this feedback, staff recommends the inclusion of a new eighth guiding principle:

"Pasadena is committed to community planning that supports vibrant educational resources responsive to the broad needs of our diverse community. Quality public schools are a shared community responsibility."

The recommended language includes both the public school system and other educational institutions such as the California Institute of Technology, the Art Center College of Design, and Pasadena City College.

In response to a petition submitted by Pasadena Heritage and communitywide concern regarding community character, staff also reviewed the language of the second guiding principle. Staff is recommending the following proposed language:

"Pasadena's historic resources will be preserved. New development within a historic district or adjacent to an individual resource will be compatible with, yet distinct from, the existing historic resources. Historic districts will retain their character and allow for new construction and additions that are sensitively designed."

The above wording retains the wording in the existing principle, "Pasadena's historic resources will be preserved," and follows Pasadena Heritage's recommendation to make it the first sentence. After this first sentence are supporting statements. The new statements recommended by staff depart from the existing wording (Change will be harmonized to preserve Pasadena's historic character and environment) and Pasadena Heritage's revision (Change will be harmonized to *enhance* [emphasis added] Pasadena's historic character and environment) in order to provide more clarity, define the term historic resource, and reflect nationally accepted standards for historic preservation.

The outreach process also recorded a number of more minor suggestions to improve clarity. In several places the word "promote" has been removed in response to community dissatisfaction with the term and that "promotion" can occur without actually encouraging and directing change. See Attachment A.5 (Guiding Principle Changes) for a complete list of changes to the guiding principles. A final set of guiding principles will come back to the Council in a refined state for its consideration and approval.

Policies

The existing Land Use and Mobility Elements contain objectives and policies that relate to each of the seven Guiding Principles. In conjunction with the land use diagram, these objectives and policies are designed to guide decision-making. Based on feedback, staff identified gaps in a few topic areas that required revision and enhancement, including: environmental sustainability, urban design, historic preservation, arts and culture, mobility, economic vitality, and education. Attachment A.1 (New Policy Topic Areas) provides a full list of the new policy topics, previously presented to the Council in May of 2012 and which will come back to the Council with the final recommendations on guiding principles.

Upon further review of best practices from other city general plans, staff recommends reorganizing the Land Use Element to create a more streamlined and user friendly document. The current General Plan format lists each guiding principle followed by supporting objectives and policies; however, many policies relate to more than one guiding principle, which causes overlap and repetition throughout the Element. Staff recommends restructuring the Land Use Element into three categories: 1) Global Objectives, which cover topics that apply to all areas of the City; 2) Land Use Objectives, which are specific to land use categories; and 3) Community Area Objectives, which are specific to a particular subarea in the City. An outline of the proposed Land Use Element is provided in Attachment A.4 (Land Use Element Policy Outline).

In reviewing the guidelines published by the State Office of Planning and Research and best practices, staff also recommends revising the wording/formatting of policies to ensure consistency throughout the document. Policy revisions fall within one of four categories: 1) Policies not starting with an action verb will be rewritten to begin with an action verb (e.g., encourage, authorize, limit, etc.); 2) Policies needing further clarification will be revised to define terms and clarify a course of action, etc.; 3) Policies that have already been implemented will be removed or rewritten in the present tense to indicate the need for ongoing implementation; and 4) Policies that function as an implementation strategy will be rewritten as a broad policy that can also be incorporated in the implementation strategy section of the Element.

Change from development caps to development levels

The existing General Plan provided a development allocation or cap for each specific plan area and prohibited development over this amount. Some community members have suggested moving away from these caps as they are inflexible and could place an artificial barrier on market forces that could constrain the City's ability to meet other community objectives.

As an alternative to the existing system of caps, staff is recommending a new policy that would allow flexibility to construct a quantity of development consistent with the levels studied in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Levels of development above that analyzed in the General Plan EIR would require additional review consistent with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. This change in policy would respond to previously mentioned concerns, while still providing certainty to other community members who stressed the need to manage future growth in a manner commensurate with the environmental effects of that growth. Attachment B (Comparison Graphs) and the summary tables on the following page show the development levels the General Plan EIR will analyze.

Table 1

	Residential Development Levels (Dwelling Units)							
	Central District	South Fair Oaks	East Colorado	East Pasadena	North Lake	Fair Oaks / Orange	Lincoln	West Gateway
Existing Conditions (2009)	11,090	350	330	150	1,090	1,310	200	80
Constructed or Under Construction (2009-2011) or Approved Master Plan	1,330	-	-	210	0	25	-	35
Draft Development Levels	3,750	600	500	1,250	250	325	90	340
Total	16,170	950	830	1,610	1,340	1,660	290	455

Table 2

	Non-Residential Development Levels (Square Feet)							
	Central District	South Fair Oaks	East Colorado	East Pasadena	North Lake	Fair Oaks / Orange	Lincoln	West Gateway
Existing Conditions (2009)	19,017,000	2,635,000	2,979,000	4,261,000	1,056,000	1,564,000	433,000	497,000
Constructed or Under Construction (2009-2011) or Approved Master Plan	515,000	294,000	75,000	58,000	0	4,000	-	5,000
Draft Development Levels	2,500,000	600,000	525,000	1,500,000	250,000	300,000	150,000	200,000
Total	22,032,000	3,529,000	3,579,000	5,819,000	1,306,000	1,868,000	583,000	702,000

Changes to the Land Use Diagram

The Land Use Diagram is a map in the Land Use Element that displays what uses are allowed and at what intensity. The Land Use Element’s policies define the uses shown on the Land Use Diagram. The Diagram – in conjunction with the associated land use policies – act as the foundation of land use planning. Specific plans, zoning maps, planning entitlements and all land use decisions must be in conformance with this diagram. See Attachment E for the Existing General Plan Land Use Diagram.

The Land Use Diagram rests on four foundations derived from community input: 1) protect and preserve neighborhoods, open spaces and historic resources; 2) target growth to transit and neighborhood villages; 3) plan for alternative forms of mobility, and 4) focus on economic vitality. These themes formed the basis for developing the Draft Concept Map – a single land use plan that strives to balance community desires (see Attachment F for the Draft Concept Map). At the June 2012 Community Forums, participants gave overwhelming support to the vision outlined by the Draft Concept Map (averaged across the specific plan areas, 84 percent of participants agreed with the vision of the Draft Concept Plan). See Attachment D (General Plan Community Forums Notes and Comment Forms) for more information.

Changes from Existing General Plan to Draft Land Use Diagram

The Draft Land Use Diagram changes the allowed uses and densities of properties throughout the City. Staff has included Attachment G (Changes from the Existing General Plan to the Draft General Plan), to demonstrate the location of these changes. The Existing General Plan Land Use Diagram does not provide a land use or density for parcels in the specific plan areas, instead it labels them as “Specific Plan.” Therefore, the analysis in Attachment G relies on zoning designations, which are highly detailed. It is important to note that the Draft Land Use Diagram uses standard practice of providing a range of densities, while relying on further work in the specific plan to provide more detailed density limits.

Specific plan boundary changes

Updating the Land Use Diagram also affords an opportunity to address changes to specific plan boundaries. Staff is recommending these changes to better support the vision for each area.

See Attachment A.6 (Changes to Specific Plan Boundaries) for a map of the changes described below.

The first change expands the East Colorado Specific Plan, providing more opportunity sites to create a College/University district. To do this, the East Colorado Specific Plan would expand south to include the area along East Green Street between South Wilson Ave. and South Hill Ave. This area is not currently in a specific plan.

The second change would move the boundary between the Central District and East Colorado Specific Plans east one block to South Wilson Ave. The existing buildings and the vision for this block of East Colorado corresponds more to the Central District than to the lower density, commercial development typical along the rest of the East Colorado Specific Plan area.

The third change would move Lamanda Park (the area generally north of East Colorado Blvd, east of North Altadena Dr. west of the 210 Freeway, and south of W. Foothill Blvd.) into the boundaries of the East Colorado Specific Plan. The East Pasadena and East Colorado Blvd Specific Plans previously functioned as corridor plans. This change is in recognition of the greater role that this research and development/flex space area of Lamanda Park can play with the retail and office uses on East Colorado Blvd.

The fourth change would expand the boundary of the East Pasadena Specific Plan south to include E. Colorado Blvd. between Kinneloa Ave and the City's eastern boundary. This change will allow the areas north and south of the Gold Line Station to share a more unified vision as a transit village.

The last set of changes would expand the boundary of the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan north to Del Mar Boulevard, east to Arroyo Parkway, and south to Arlington Drive. This change will allow the area to take on a new focus of becoming an employment center to serve major institutions in the area such as Huntington Memorial Hospital, the Art Center's South Campus, and other new medical and creative office uses. The area would also allow housing units in order to serve the needs of seniors, students and employees of the major institutions.

Revisions made to development levels

Participants in the June 2012 workshops agreed with the intensities proposed in the Draft Concept Plan (averaged across the specific plan areas, 60 percent of participants agreed with the intensity of development while 27 percent wanted higher intensity development). One area, however, required additional attention. In questions where respondents were given the ability to support an intensity higher than what the Draft Concept Plan recommended, a majority selected this option. In response, staff investigated additional performance and forecasting metrics and determined that it would be appropriate to add 500 residential units to the 3,250 previously proposed in the Draft Concept Plan. Adding these 500 units improves the relationship between jobs and housing and provides additional pedestrian activity, customers for local businesses, and patrons for cultural events.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

An environmental impact report (EIR) will be prepared for the update to the Land Use and Mobility Element. The EIR will analyze the impacts of the new policy topic areas, goals and objectives for supporting mobility initiatives, updated Mobility Element objectives, a new Land Use Element policy outline, changes to the guiding principles, a revision to the specific plan boundaries, changes to the Land Use Diagram, and the development levels. Prior to beginning the EIR, the City Council will provide direction on the above changes to the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Elements.

Respectfully Submitted,



Stephanie DeWolfe, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Scott Reimers
Planner

Attachments: (16)

- A.1 New Policy Topic Areas
- A.2 Mobility Supporting Initiatives Goals and Objectives
- A.3 Update Mobility Element Objectives
- A.4 Land Use Element Policy Outline
- A.5 Guiding Principle Changes
- A.6 Changes to Specific Plan Boundaries
- A.7 Draft General Plan Land Use Diagram
- B. Comparisons Graphs
- C. Community Outreach Summary and Attendance Log
- D. General Plan Community Forums Notes and Comment Form Results
- E. Existing General Plan Land Use Diagram
- F. Draft Concept Map
- G. Changes from the Existing General Plan to the Draft General Plan
- H. Memorandums from Stan Hoffman and Associates
- I. PACScore and VMT/Capita maps
- J. Potential Change Areas