

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

TO: TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

FROM: DAVID REYES, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: SCOPING MEETING FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) FOR THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Transportation Advisory Commission receive and provide public comments on the Initial Study prepare for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan Update.

BACKGROUND:

On April 29, 2013, the City Council gave direction to staff to prepare an environmental analysis on the proposed changes to the General Plan. Before beginning the environmental analysis, staff hosted two meetings with the community and met with the Planning Commission to review the steps of the environmental process and begin collecting comments. Staff has reviewed the comments from those meetings in its preparation of the Initial Study.

An EIR will be required. Consistent with CEQA requirements, the EIR will include an analysis of the proposed program as well as several project alternatives. The General Plan Update focuses on the Land Use and Mobility Elements and the Land Use Diagram. The update also includes the consolidation of optional elements, or chapters, (including cultural and recreational, historic and cultural, public facilities, scenic highways, social development, and economic development and employment) into the required elements of the General Plan. The Land Use Element includes caps on net-new residential and non-residential development in its specific plan areas and sets a forecast for growth in areas outside of the specific plans. The General Plan Update and specific plan amendments would allow for approximately 11,649 net-new housing units and 8,025,000 net-new square feet of non-residential development. The project includes a citywide review of the Zoning Code provisions regulating transit oriented development, or TODs.

The City has a contract with the Planning Center | DC&E to provide consulting services related

to the preparation of the General Plan and to review the environmental impact of the General Plan Update. An environmental Initial Study and a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR have been prepared. During the period for public review of the NOP (September 5 to October 21, 2013) the City will receive comments to assist in determining the scope and content of the EIR. Following the NOP public review period, the consultant will prepare the Draft EIR.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The General Plan Update involves many changes. Below are highlights of the major changes proposed as part of the Update. Additional detail can be found in the Project Description in the Initial Study.

Policy Changes

The existing Land Use and Mobility Elements contain objectives and policies that relate to each of the proposed eight Guiding Principles and provide guidance in making decisions. 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. The draft statements prepared in the policy topic areas will be refined into policies and incorporated into the existing elements. Staff will also review the existing policy statements and consider additional refinements, improvements, and deletions. As part of this effort, staff will review the policies within optional elements of the General Plan and consider ways of folding them into the required elements.

Land Use Diagram

The Land Use Diagram has been revised to provide additional information and certainty within the specific plan areas. The specific plan areas will now have specific designations (such as residential, commercial, or mixed use) with limits on the intensity of development. The changes to the Land Use Diagram were made as a result of four foundational principles.

- *Protect & Preserve* – residential neighborhoods, historic resources & open space areas.
- *Target Growth* – in the Central District, “transit villages” around transit, and “neighborhood villages” at key intersections.
- *Plan for Walking, Bicycling, Transit & Accessibility* – promote alternative modes of travel.
- *Focus on Economic Vitality* – land uses & policies that create jobs and enhance and revitalize commercial areas.

Development Caps

The Land Use Element includes caps on net-new residential and non-residential development in its specific plan areas and sets a forecast for growth in areas outside of the specific plans. The General Plan Update and specific plan amendments would allow for approximately 11,649 net-new housing units and 8,025,000 net-new square feet of non-residential development. The table below breaks down the amount of development that will be studied in each sub-area. In recognition of the City’s existing policy that exempts affordable housing units from the cap, the EIR will need to study additional development beyond the proposed caps. Based on previous development levels after the adoption of SB1818 (a major update to the State’s Density Bonus Law provisions in 2005) staff believes that it would be reasonable to assume that 17 percent of new units would be affordable.

Table 1
Pasadena General Plan
Development Caps

	<i>Central District</i>	<i>South Fair Oaks</i>	<i>East Colorado</i>	<i>East Pasadena</i>	<i>North Lake</i>	<i>Fair Oaks/ Orange Grove</i>	<i>Lincoln</i>	<i>West Gateway</i>	<i>Non-Specific Plan Area²</i>
Residential Dwelling Units									
Proposed Development Cap	4,885	915	300	1,050	250	325	180	340	1,710
Affordable Housing ¹	830	156	51	179	43	55	31	58	291
Total Net-new residential units	5,715	1,071	351	1,229	293	380	211	398	2,001
Commercial Square Footage									
Proposed Development Cap / Net-New Non-Residential Development	3,379,000	1,421,000	930,000	1,095,000	250,000	300,000	300,000	200,000	150,000

¹ The City's development cap does not apply to affordable housing units. To assess the environmental impact of a reasonable number of affordable units being built beyond the development caps, a factor of 17% was added to the development caps. The 17% was derived from reviewing the total number of affordable housing units constructed in Pasadena since the State's Density Bonus Law (SB1818) was enacted in 2005.

² The General Plan Land Use Element does not provide a cap on areas outside of specific plans. The number provided in this table will be studied for environmental review purposes.

Street Classification System

The proposed Street Types Plan is intended to guide development of the City's transportation network. The Street Types Plan updates the traditional functional classification of roadways such as arterial, collector, and local streets and recognizes both how the street functions in the roadway network as well as to how the street relates to the land uses (context) adjacent to the street. The Street Types Plan expands on the Multi-Modal and De-Emphasized Street Classifications adopted through the 1994 General Plan Update, but it does not result in a change in capacity for any of the roadways.

Changes to the Transit Oriented Development Ordinance

On October 24, 2011, the City Council gave direction to staff to study changes to the City's Transit Oriented Development regulations. Council's direction came in response to concerns from community members in East Pasadena regarding the City's existing parking requirements for office space and the parking reductions required in transit oriented districts, or TODs. As part of the environmental analysis, staff will be developing recommended changes to the TOD Ordinance and reviewing the environmental impact of those changes.

SCOPING MEETINGS:

A scoping meeting is a public meeting designed to solicit public input on the content of an EIR, identify potentially significant impacts early in the process, and present the preliminary

mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study. As part of the process, the consultant prepared an environmental Initial Study intended to assist staff in narrowing the scope of the EIR.

Three other scoping meetings will be held for the General Plan Update.

- Community meeting on Thursday, September 12 at Pasadena Presbyterian Church
- Community meeting on Saturday, September 14 at Pasadena City College
- Planning Commission on Wednesday, September 25

INITIAL STUDY:

The Initial Study identified several environmental factors in which a “potentially significant impact” could result. The following factors will be analyzed further in the EIR:

Aesthetics – The potential impact on the visual character of the proposed program on the physical environment;

Air Quality – The potential impact on existing air quality and compliance with regional air quality thresholds;

Biological Resources – The potential impact on riparian habitats or other sensitive natural communities;

Cultural Resources – The potential impact of the project on historic, archaeological, or paleontological resources;

Greenhouse Gas Emissions – The potential impact of temporary and operational emissions, and the potential contribution to greenhouse gases that could contribute to the cumulative problem of global climate change;

Hazards and Hazardous Materials – The potential impact of transporting hazardous materials, using hazardous materials, disposing of hazardous materials, or locating new uses on sites with hazardous materials;

Hydrology and Water Quality – The potential impact on water quality, drainage, and water resources;

Land Use and Planning – The potential impact to adopted land use plans, policies, and regulations;

Noise – The potential impact of exposing people to noise, groundborne vibration, and ambient noise levels;

Population and Housing – The potential impact of inducing substantial population growth;

Public Services – The potential impact to public services such as fire protection, libraries, parks, police protection, and schools;

Recreation – The potential impact on recreation and park uses;

Transportation/Traffic – The potential impact of creating conflict with adopted transportation plans, ordinances, or policies that measure the effectiveness of the circulation system; and

Utilities and Service Systems – The potential impact on utilities and service systems including waste water and conveyance systems and compliance with solid waste requirements.

NEXT STEPS:

After the scoping meeting, the public comments will be reviewed to determine if they raise issues that need to be addressed in the EIR, and then preparation of the Draft EIR will begin. In the fall of 2013, staff will return to the Planning Commission to discuss potential project alternatives for inclusion in the draft EIR. Once the draft EIR is complete, in early 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, in summer of 2014, 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.

Respectfully Submitted,




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Attachments:

Attachment A – Environmental Initial Study