



April 12, 2022

City of Pasadena Planning Commission
Attn: Hayman Tam
Hale Building
175 N. Garfield Ave., 2nd Floor
Pasadena, CA 91101

Re: South Fair Oaks Specific Plan Update

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

Pasadena Heritage is pleased that you will be studying the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan, which will be one of the most important neighborhoods in Pasadena in the next few decades. It will be a neighborhood where Pasadena can add much needed housing and jobs near transit. There is an opportunity basically to build a whole new urban neighborhood. Pasadena Heritage believes that this neighborhood should be sustainable, but that it should also respect the often overlooked history of what once an working-class ethnic enclave.

We have a few suggestions for this meeting that we ask to be considered. We have also performed a preliminary survey the district, and provided the Planning Department with a list of historic resources that we believe may be eligible. The list is attached at the end of this letter.

We ask for you input on the following subjects:

Recognize Historic Sites that Celebrate Pasadena's Diversity

Although many of the historic Japanese and Mexican American sites in this plan area have been lost, there are still some important sites remaining. The *Raymond Florist* and the *Sugano Grocery* have already been deemed eligible as important Japanese American sites, and we believe that *Bellefontaine Nursery* is also eligible in this same vein. In the western extent of this plan area, we believe that *Mijares Restaurant* is eligible as one of the most important Mexican American sites, as is Concordia Court. Development pressure may soon threaten these locations, and we urge that they be identified now as historic sites and suggest stronger incentives to encourage their preservation. Transferable Development Rights (TDR) have been used elsewhere to encourage preservation, most notably in the West Gateway Specific Plan. We do not want to see these last few remaining sites torn down, and we must find creative solutions that save and incorporate them.

There are also a handful of historic homes in the Arts & Innovation Flex District, the earliest of which date back to the 1890s. These sites too are associated with Pasadena's diverse history and was part of one of Pasadena's redlined communities. In 1939, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation recorded that the area was 40% Black, and 15% Mexican and Japanese, one of the

City's most diverse. This company was the author of the infamous "redlining maps" and most of the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan was graded "low red." They described the area as such:

This is the "melting pot" area of Pasadena and, while zoned for business and industry, is honeycombed with poorly constructed cottages and shacks. That portion of area which is graded is residential 4th grade and is almost wholly given over to single family structures, but the adjacent business and industrial section is also infiltrated with similar structures, which are occupied by Negroes, Mexicans and Japanese. The higher grade areas to the west are protected from subversive races by deed restrictions, and many servants in these districts are residents of this area. This area is thoroughly blighted and a slum clearance project is under discussion. It is graded a "low red".

Pasadena Heritage fears that the few remaining homes may be demolished as a result of the proposed zoning. It is remarkable that they have remained for so long despite the zoning. As part of the upcoming citywide historic survey, each site need to be looked carefully, not just for its architectural merits but also due to its association with important figures and cultural context. One suggestion for retaining the few remaining homes would be to look at incentives that encourage their preservation. One option might be to allow housing, or live-work units, on sites that have extant historic homes. They often have deep, large yards, and can accommodate additional units in the rear of the property. It would be a shame to remove the few remaining vestiges of this once vibrant community. We hope the Planning Commission can provide some ideas on incentives to encourage the preservation of these important sites.

An interactive version of these maps can be explored here, for those who may want to see the full description of the neighborhood: <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/>

Support Targeted Heights Proposed

Since earlier drafts of this Specific Plan, heights have been modified to better reflect existing context and the overarching goals of this neighborhood. The greatest height is immediately adjacent to Fillmore Station, but the southern half of Raymond Avenue is at a slightly lower height to encourage the development of a mid-rise, pedestrian oriented district. We find these changes to be a positive improvement.

Raymond Avenue Bike Lanes

Although we understand this will be part of the implementation process of this Specific Plan, Raymond Avenue will serve as an important neighborhood street, and should be restriped with bike lanes. Doing so would connect this neighborhood directly with Old Pasadena and would complement transit, and further reinforce the Plan's vision of creating a transit oriented neighborhood.

Support Reduced Parking, Unbundled Parking

We are pleased to see some of the parking requirements lowered across the proposed plan. Recently proposed medical office buildings have requested variances to reduce parking, a sign that the current minimums are set too high. Another entitled medical office contains four floors of office space and five levels of subterranean parking, and it sits right next to the L line. It devotes more total space to parking than office. A revision is long overdue.

Support Greater Setbacks and Emphasis on Tree Canopy

Finally, we thank the community advocates such as Livable Pasadena, Madison Heights Neighborhood Association, and West Pasadena Residents Association for calling for an emphasis on trees and green space. This can be a district that is both green and urban – they are not mutually exclusive. This neighborhood will ultimately become a 21st Century neighborhood, but can be fitting of Pasadena’s reputation as a Tree City.

We thank you for considering our input and hope to tune in to a robust discussion.

Sincerely,



Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director



Andrew Salimian
Preservation Director

List of Designated and Potentially Eligible Properties

ADDRESS	HISTORIC NAME	ALTERNATE NAME	DESIGNATION
610 S Arroyo Pkwy	Trader Joe's		PH - Potentially Eligible
640 S Arroyo Pkwy	Lucky Boy		PH - Potentially Eligible
800 S Arroyo Pkwy	Adohr Milk Farms		PH - Potentially Eligible Sign
836 S Arroyo Pkwy	Lowe Company Interior Design Offices		Identified in 1995 Ethnic History Report
31 W Bellevue Dr			Eligible Landmark
41 W Bellevue Dr			Eligible Landmark
47-51 W Bellevue Dr	Morris House		PH - Potentially Eligible
97 W Bellevue Dr	Wood/Taylor House		Eligible Landmark
133-135 W Bellevue Dr			PH - Potentially Eligible
1-27 W California Blvd			PH - Potentially Eligible
40 E California Blvd	Dy-Dee Diaper Service		PH - Potentially Eligible
62 E California Blvd	Raymond Florist		Identified in 1995 Ethnic History Report
530-563 Concordia Ct	Concordia Court		Identified in 1995 Ethnic History Report

300 S Fair Oaks Ave	Union Garage Company	The Garage	Old Pasadena NRHD, Noncontributor
330 S Fair Oaks Ave		Pasadena Antiques & Design	Old Pasadena NRHD, Contributor
474-480 S Fair Oaks Ave	Pasadena Antique Center		Eligible Landmark
511 S Fair Oaks Ave	Bekins Moving & Storage	Public Storage Co.	National Register Individual Property, Historic Sign
510 S Fair Oaks Ave	Nishi Auto Parts	Nishikawa Auto Service	Identified in Early Auto Related Properties Context Report
512 S Fair Oaks Ave	T.L. Gurley Antiques		Eligible Landmark
533 S Fair Oaks Ave	Sugano Grocery Store		Identified in 1995 Ethnic History Report
838 S Fair Oaks Ave	Bellefontaine Nursery		Identified in 1995 Ethnic History Report
1055 S Fair Oaks Ave			PH - Potentially Eligible
1075 S Fair Oaks Ave	Gerlach's Drive-In		Identified in Early Auto Related Properties Context Report
72 E Glenarm St	Glenarm Power Plant		Historic Monument, Landmark
51 Palmetto Dr	Ryder-McDonald House		PH - Potentially Eligible
67 Palmetto Dr	Allen House		PH - Potentially Eligible
100 Palmetto Dr	Palmetto Court		National Register Individual Property
145 Palmetto Dr	Mijares Restaurant		Identified in 1995 Ethnic History Report
361 S Raymond Ave	Humane Society		National Register Individual Property, Landmark
443 S Raymond Ave	Royal Laundry		National Register Individual Property, Historic Sign
94-112 Waverly Dr			Moved historic homes, need to be reconsidered