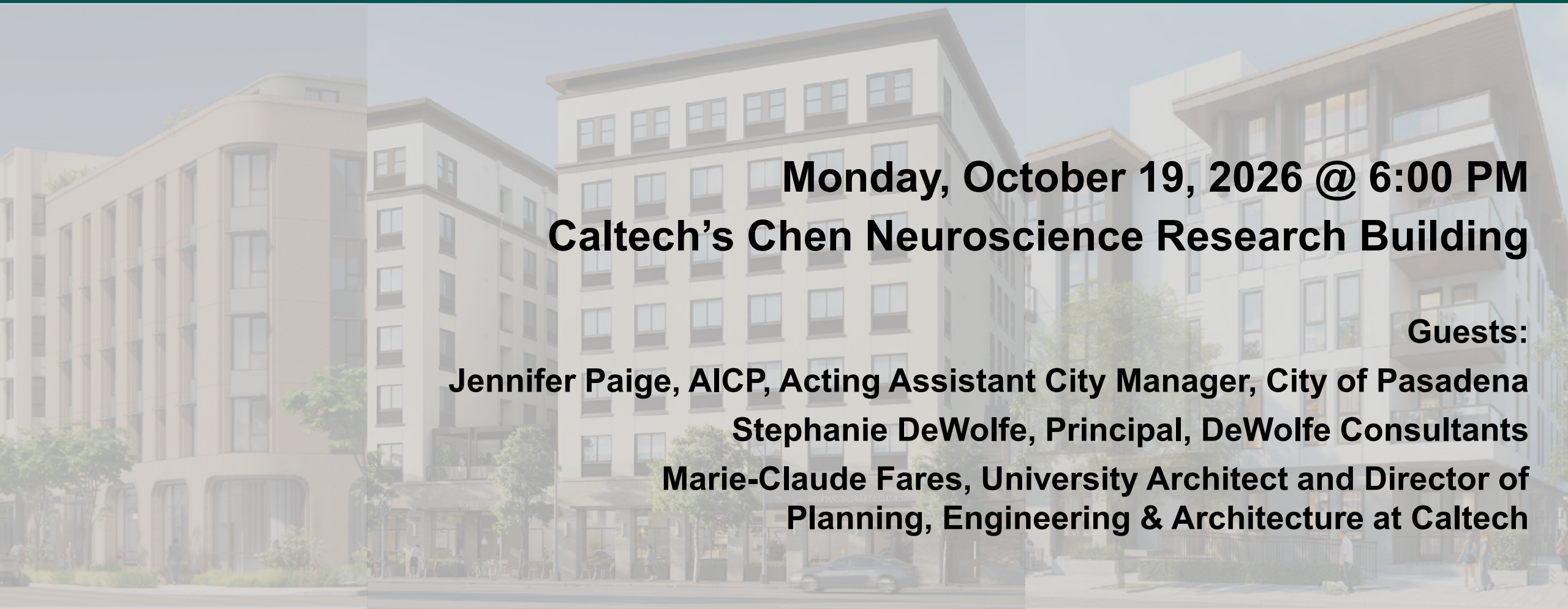
WHY IS ALL OF THIS BEING BUILT?

Making Sense of Residential Development in Pasadena

COUNCILMEMBER JASON LYON, DISTRICT 7



Monday, October 19, 2026 @ 6:00 PM

Caltech's Chen Neuroscience Research Building

Guests:

Jennifer Paige, AICP, Acting Assistant City Manager, City of Pasadena

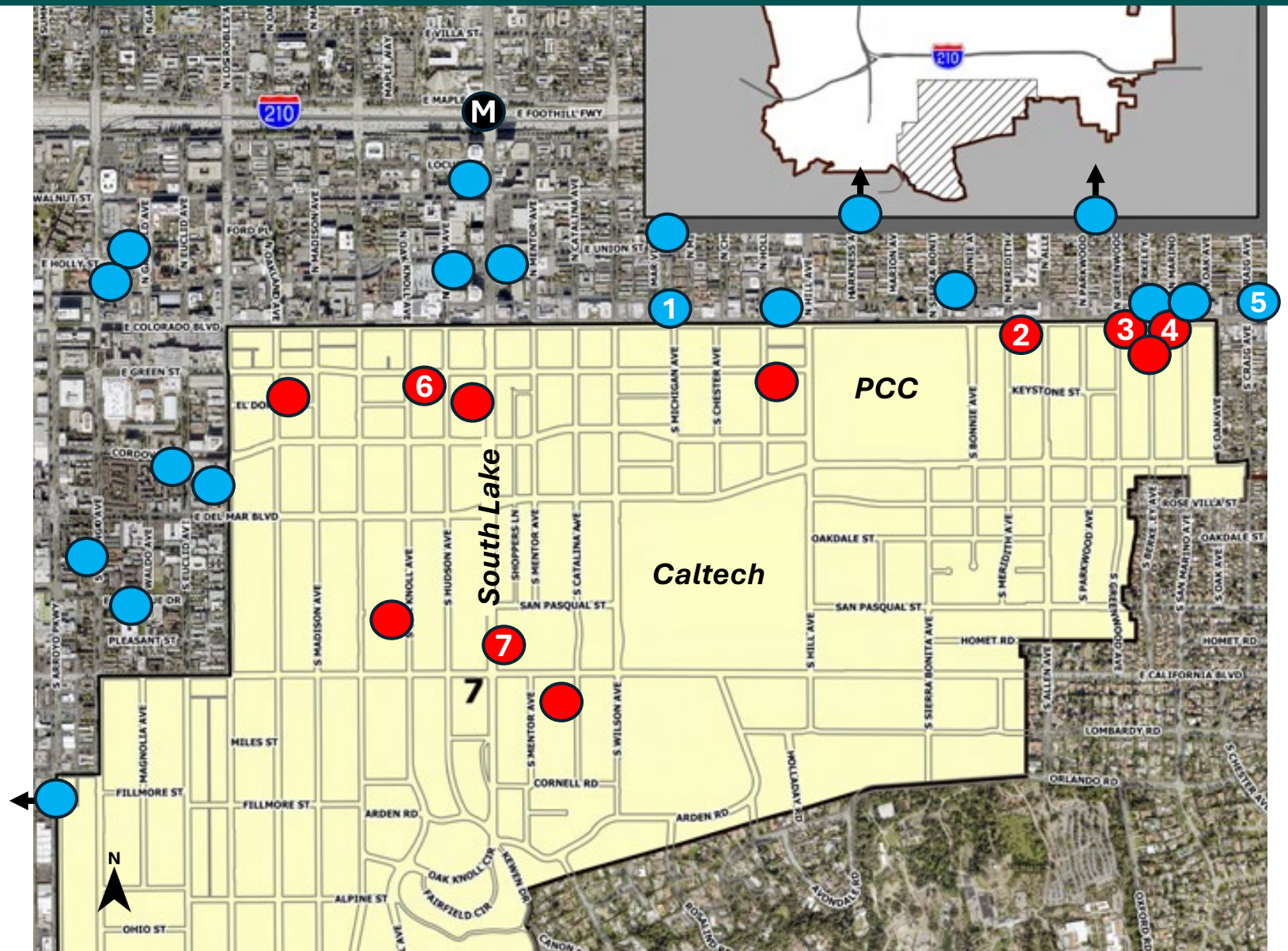
Stephanie DeWolfe, Principal, DeWolfe Consultants

Marie-Claude Fares, University Architect and Director of Planning, Engineering & Architecture at Caltech

THE AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

- Per HUD, max 30% of income shall be spent on housing costs, including utilities, insurance, etc.
  - > Utilities take 8-10% of income.
  - > Therefore, rent should not exceed 20-22% of income.
- Area Median Income (AMI) in LA County is $108,100 for a 4-person household.
  - > Households should not be spending more than $32,430 on total housing costs.
  - > $21,620 on rent, or $1,800 per month.
- Average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Pasadena is $3,000/month (a 3-bedroom is closer to $4,000/month).
  - > For rents to be affordable, a household would need to make somewhere between $190,000 and $240,000/year.
- Significant gap exists between incomes and rents in Pasadena (and the rest of California).

PROJECTS IN DISTRICT 7



PROPOSED PROJECTS

PROJECTS IN DISTRICT 7

11 projects total
- 936 housing units (459 affordable)
- 145 assisted living units
- 107,600 SF nonresidential

PROJECTS IN ADJACENT AREAS

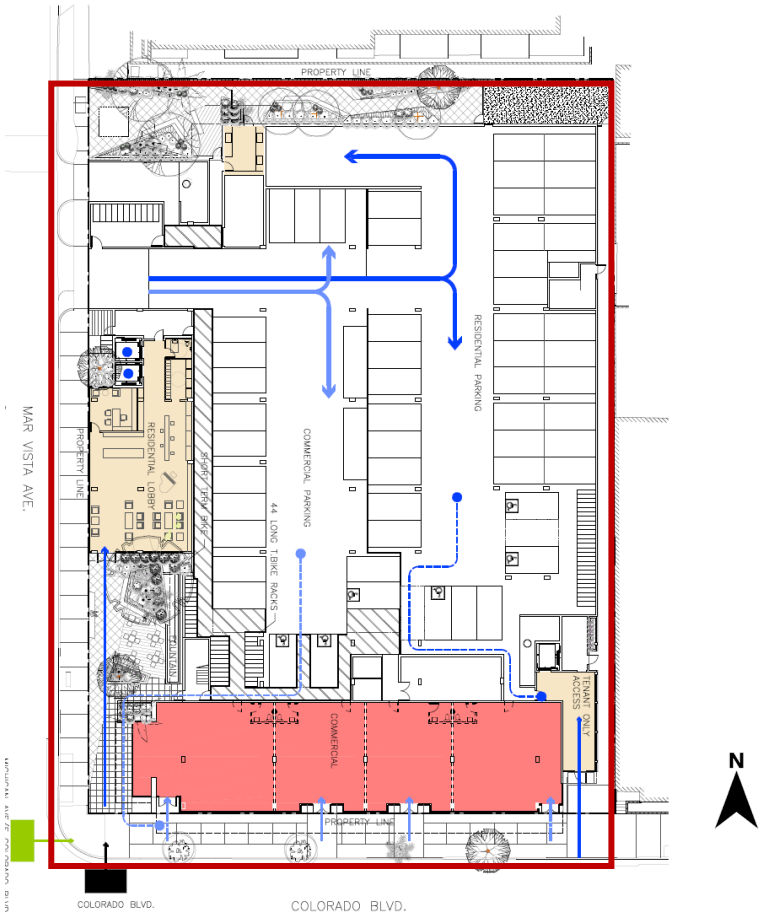
19 projects total
- 1,545 (623 affordable)
- 216 hotel rooms
- 80 assisted living units
- 100,000 SF nonresidential

10+ units or 10,000 SF nonresidential. Submittal to construction phase.

1155 E. COLORADO BLVD.

- Preliminary Consultation completed
- 42,600 SF site
- 6 stories

- 148 units (17 affordable)
- 151 units/ac (70% bonus)
- 5,000 SF commercial
- 144 parking spaces

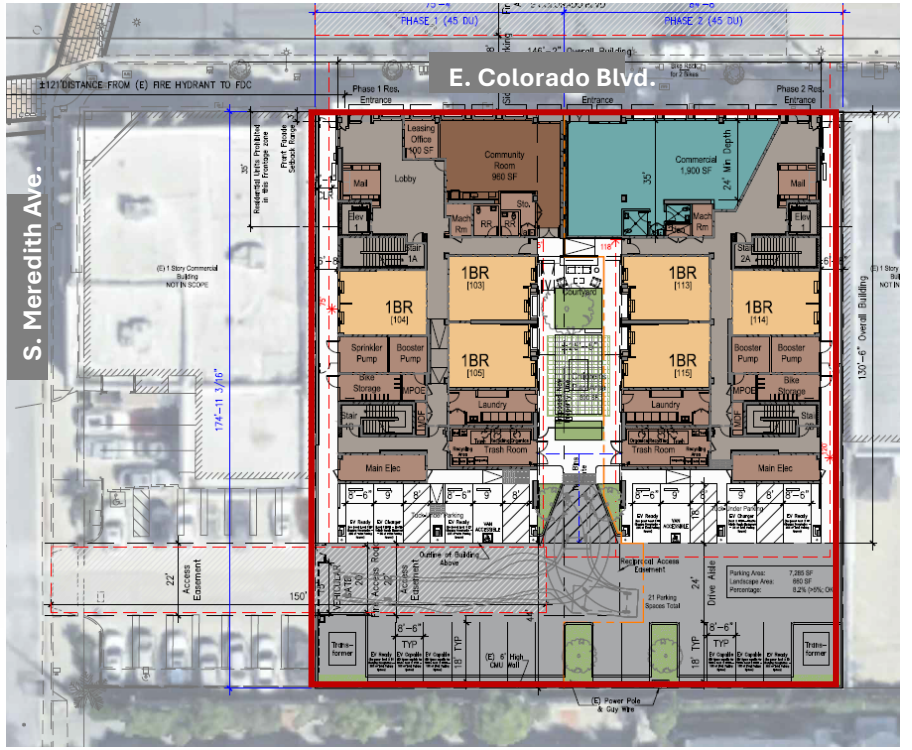


1756-1776 E. COLORADO BLVD.

2

- Consolidated Design approved
- 28,000 SF site
- 7 stories

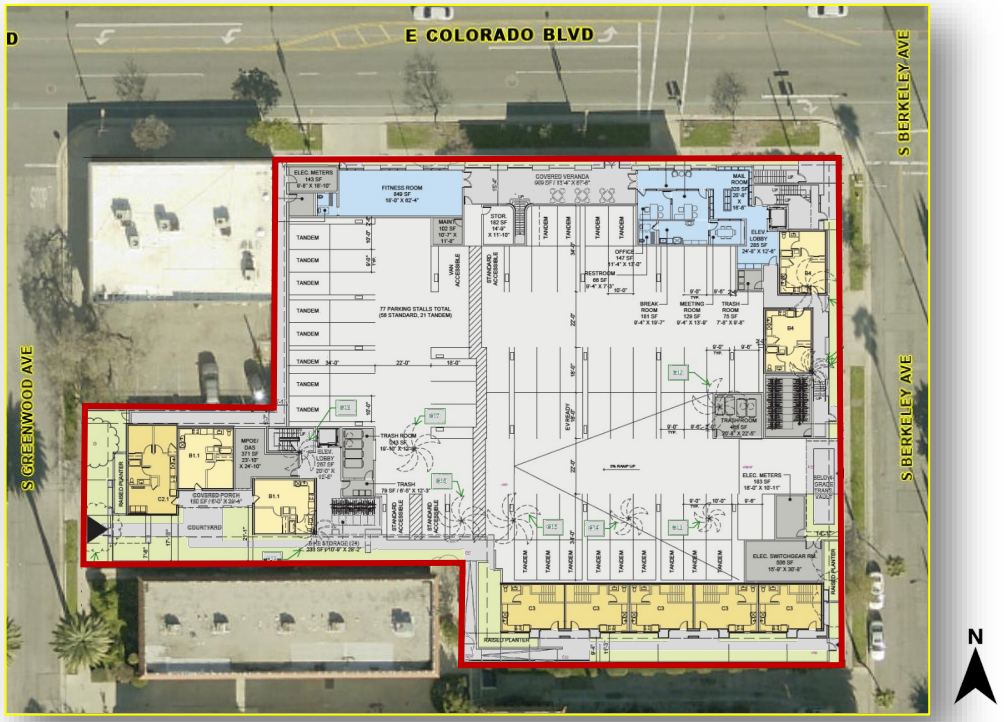
- 90 units (100% affordable)
- 140 units/ac (120% bonus)
- 2,000 SF commercial
- 21 parking spaces



1946-1976 E. COLORADO BLVD.

- Preliminary Consultation completed
- 1.07-acre site
- 4-6 stories

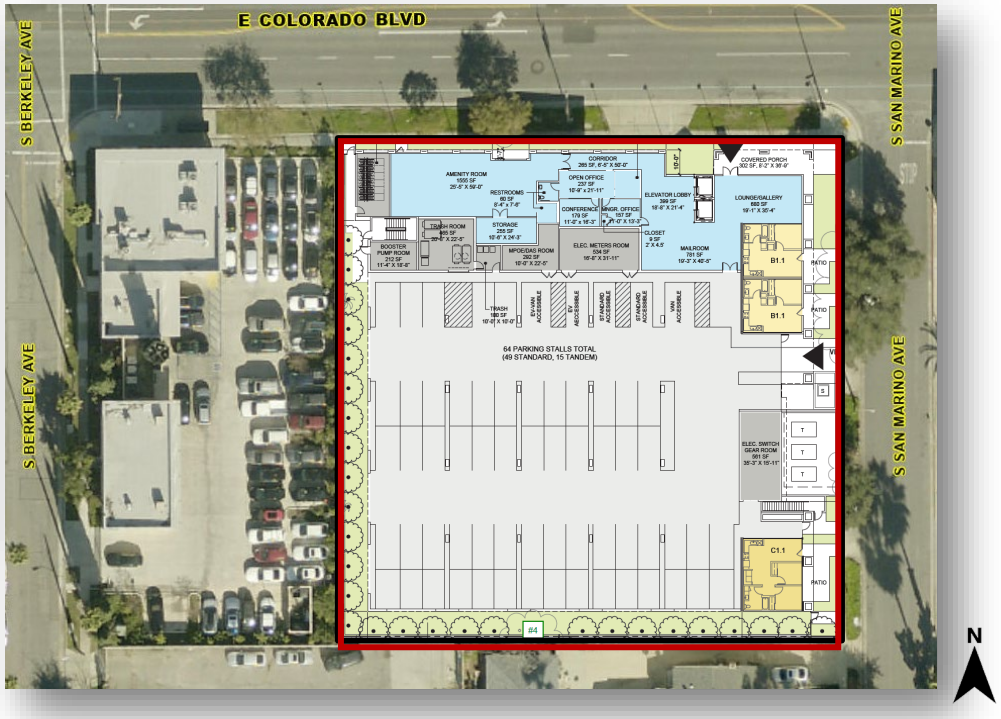
- 154 units (100% affordable)
- 144 units/ac (330% bonus)
- 77 parking spaces



2006-2030 E. COLORADO BLVD.

- Preliminary Consultation completed
- 40,000 SF site
- 6 stories

- 143 units (100% affordable)
- 157 units/ac (390% bonus)
- 64 parking spaces



2155 E. COLORADO BLVD.

5

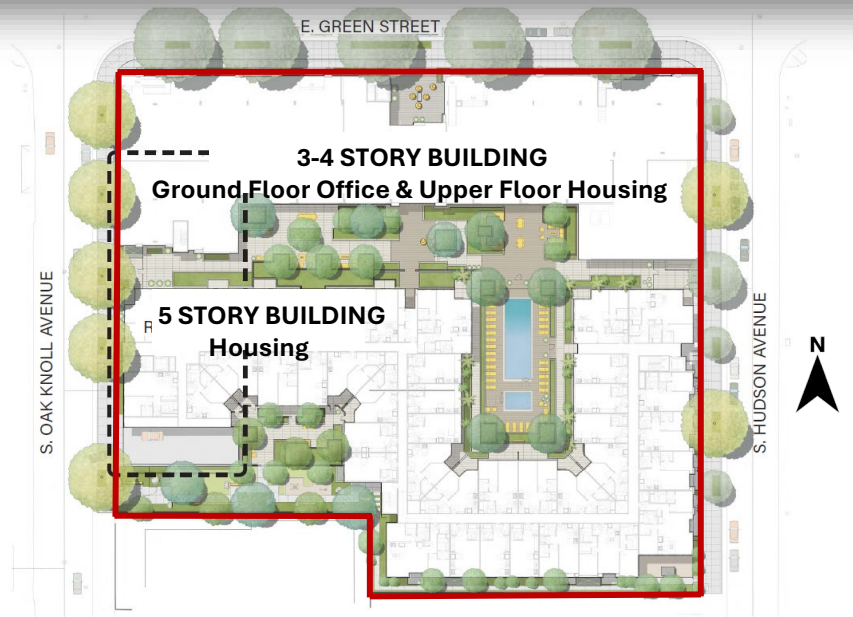
- Consolidated Design approved
- 1.44-acre site
- 6 stories

- 214 units (100% affordable)
- 148 units/ac (362% bonus)
- 109 parking spaces

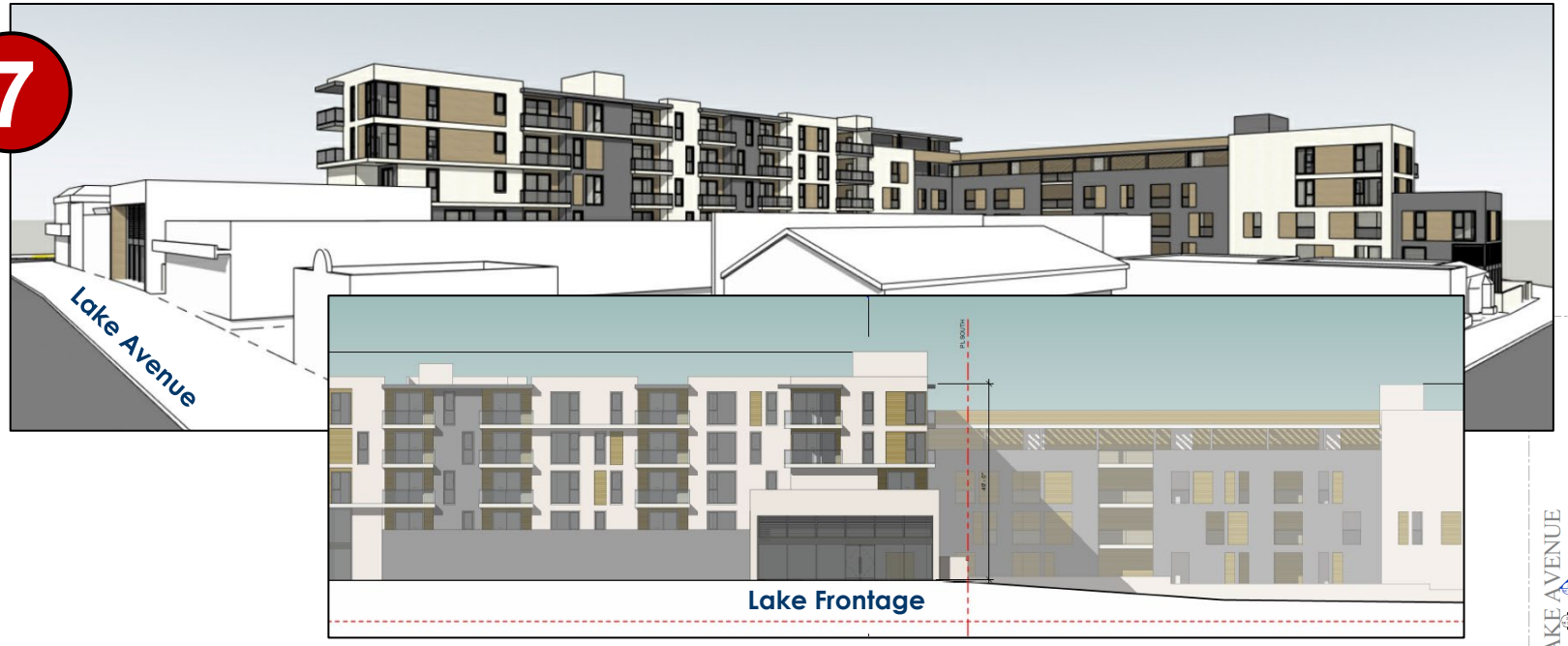
740-790 E. GREEN ST.

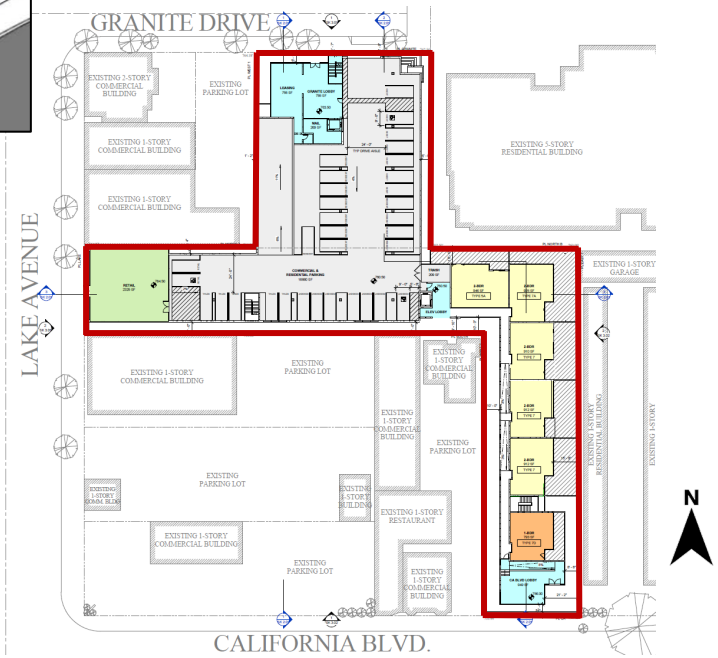
- Final Design Review approved
- 2.33-acre site
- 3-6 stories

- 263 units (41 affordable)
- 113 units/ac (30% bonus)
- 14,000 SF commercial
- 414 parking spaces



540 S. LAKE AVE.



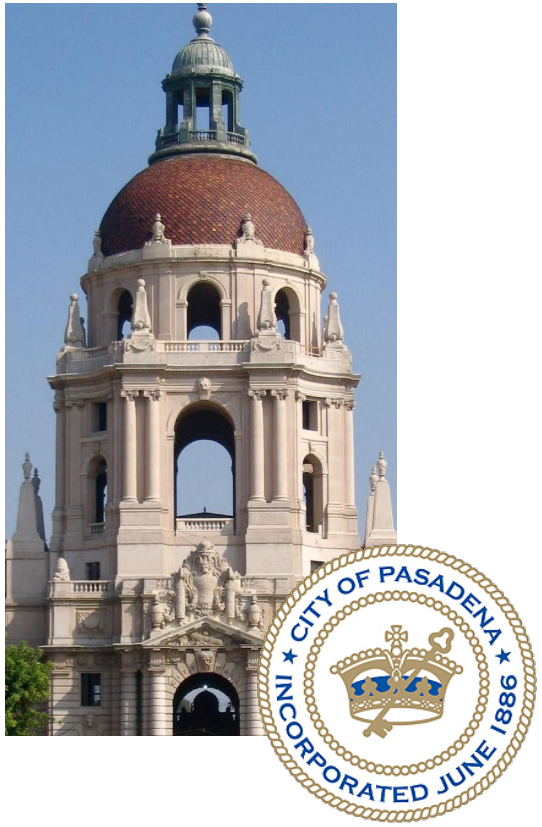


- Preliminary Consultation completed
- 42,000 site
- 1-5 stories

- 71 senior units (9 affordable)
- 74 units/ac (54% bonus)
- 2,300 SF commercial
- 91 parking spaces

LOCAL AND STATE LANDSCAPE

LOCAL REGULATIONS



General Plan
(Guiding Principles)

Housing Element
(2021-2029 RHNA: 9,429 units)

Zoning Code

Specific Plans

Design Guidelines

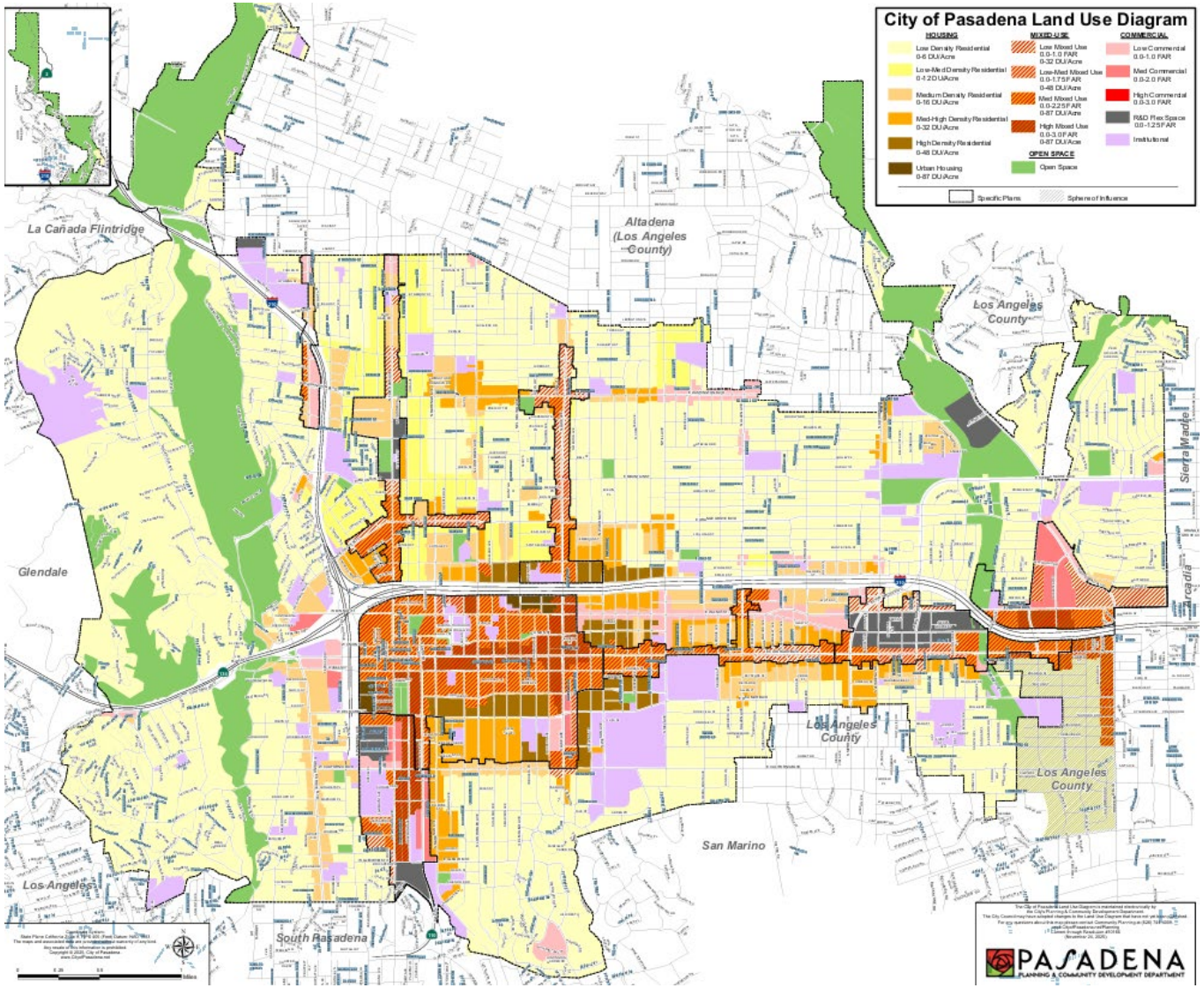
STATE AUTHORITY

Density Bonus

Recent State Bills

(parking, density, height, ADUs, CEQA, land division, processing times, number of meetings, fees)

PASADENA GENERAL PLAN



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Growth will be targeted to serve community needs.
2. Historic resources will be preserved.
3. Pasadena will be an economically vital city with job, services, revenues and opportunities.
4. Pasadena will be a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable community.
5. Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without cars.
6. Pasadena will be a cultural, scientific, corporate, entertainment and education center for the region.
7. Community Participation will be a permanent part of achieving a greater city.
8. Pasadena is committed to public education and a diverse educational system.

DENSITY BONUS LAW

RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE PROJECTS WITH 5+ UNITS

- Based on the principle that the private market will not produce units at affordability levels without incentives or subsidies.
- Allows developers to increase density in exchange for providing affordable housing.
- As housing costs continue to rise, density bonus is often not enough to make a project feasible.
- Applicants may also request any of the following:
  - **Concessions (up to 5)** to development standards that reduce the costs needed to provide the affordable housing (e.g., height, floor area).
  - **Waivers (unlimited)** of development standards that would physically preclude the development at the proposed density (e.g., setbacks, open space, parking).

DENSITY BONUS LAW

AMI FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY = $108,100 FOR A 4-PERSON HOUSEHOLD

- Very low income = <50% of AMI.
- Lower income = 50% to 80% of AMI.
- Moderate income = 80% to 120% of AMI.

- The more affordable units constructed and the lower the level of affordability, the greater the bonus.
  - 10% of the base units are very-low income = 32% bonus.
  - 30% of the base units are lower income = 50% bonus.
- 100% of the project is affordable = 80% bonus.
  - If located within ½-mile of a Major Transit Stop = unlimited bonus, a height increase of 33 feet, up to 5 concessions and no parking required.
- Senate Bill 79.
  - Allows 100 units/acre at 6 stories within ¼-mile of A Line Stations and 80 units/acre at 5 stories within ½-mile of A Line Stations. Can be combined with Density Bonus.

DENYING CONCESSIONS AND WAIVERS

BURDEN OF PROOF ON CITY – BASED ON SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Finding to Deny	Examples
Does not result in identifiable and actual cost reductions to provide for affordable housing costs or rents (concessions only).	Results in higher project costs.
Would have a specific, adverse impact on public health and safety or on a registered historic resource.	Safety-related examples: > Minimum visibility requirements at street corners. > Parking lot and pedestrian walkway lighting requirements. > Turning radius and ingress/egress requirements for off-street loading spaces. Historic resources examples: > Increased height for an addition to a designated historic resource, where it would significantly compromise its integrity.
Would be contrary to state or federal law.	To exempt certain ADA requirements.

CITY'S DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

THREE STEP PROCESS FOR MOST PROJECTS

Preliminary Consultation:
Informational only:
Site design, massing, architectural style, and surrounding context. Review for City standards and design guidelines.

Concept Design:
Main step in process:
Responses to preliminary consultation. More detailed designs provided. Concessions and waivers reviewed.

Final Design:
Final stage of review:
Construction details, building materials and colors, and landscaping.

Consolidated Design: >50% affordable: Concept and Final design combined as one step.

COUNCILMEMBER
JASON LYON

CITY OF PASADENA • DISTRICT 7