



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA  
Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 6:30 PM  
Via Zoom Teleconference**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

A special meeting of the South Pasadena Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Lesak on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 6:31 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Chair: John Lesak  
Vice-Chair: Lisa Padilla  
Commissioners: Amitabh Barthakur, Janet Braun and Laura Dahl

**City Staff**

**Present:** Andrew Jared, Assistant City Attorney  
Joanna Hankamer, Planning & Community Development Director  
Kanika Kith, Planning Manager  
Margaret Lin, Long Range Planning Manager  
Elizabeth Bar-El, Principal Management Analyst

**Council**

**Present:** Council Liaison: Diana Mahmud, Mayor

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Approved, 5-0.

**DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS:**

None.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

- 1. Study Session: Progress on the 2021-2029 Housing Element and General Plan/Downtown Specific Plan Update.**

**Staff Presentation:**

Director Hankamer introduced the project – *General Plan/Downtown Specific Plan Update & 2021-2029 Housing Element*. LRP Manager Lin, Principal Management

Analyst Bar-El and Consultants Jonathan Nettler and Amy Sinsheimer from PlaceWorks participated in the presentation.

**Public Comment**

Staff received one (1) written comment and one (1) verbal comment, both from Josh Albrekton, which was played for the Commissioners.

**Questions for Staff:**

Commissioner Braun asked staff for their reaction to the public comment.

Commissioner Barthakur inquired about affordable housing units.

Commissioner Padilla asked about the lower income inventory and the affordable housing overlay and if there was a map reflecting the overlay. Director Hankamer explained that the overlay was a tool used for rezoning. She remarked that it was a strategy to explore high density and medium density residential properties not necessarily in the downtown area. She noted that a map is in development.

Commissioner Dahl reminded the Commissioners they had received a letter in their last Planning Commission packet that included a lengthy general comment very specific to the discussion tonight.

Vice-Chair Padilla asked about the scoping meeting and would there be a summary of the comments. Jillian Neary from Psomas responded that it had been a Zoom meeting and the presentation was recorded. The comments could easily be summarized and emailed to the Commissioners.

**Commissioner Discussion:**

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the *Planning Commission Discussion Questions* slide in the presentation, including City-owned property, Affordable Housing Programs, church sites supporting affordable housing units, higher densities and possibly conducting a tour or site visits as a Commission.

They also considered ADU strategies and incentives and suggested a possible program for homeowners – such as a pre-permit ultra-high interest/commitment to an ADU. A separate suggestion was to consider a structure for applicants to pay more for expediting service.

The Commissioners were supportive of the overlay strategy (with enough clusters of parcels for the overlay to make sense) and would not automatically rule out all historic sites. They discussed increased densities in the downtown and Ostrich Farm areas, and the possibility of having a minimum density. The PlaceWorks consultant commented that a minimum density proposal was part of the draft plan submitted to HCD.

The Commissioners discussed calibrating affordable housing production in terms of density against inclusionary housing or the state density bonus or other incentives related to affordable housing that already exist.

The Commissioners expressed concern about staff capacity to process all of these programs. A suggestion was made to consider having a housing department or housing staff dedicated to producing housing and affordable housing.

They also spoke about residential demolitions, a reminder to keep the balance of what is allowed to be demolished and the scope of the environmental impact.

The Commissioners all felt the history and context of the presentation and packet information were considerable, informative and well done.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **2. Comments from City Council Liaison:**

Council Liaison Mahmud spoke about staffing challenges. She expressed concern about staff burnout. With the passage of Measure A, City Council will be able to augment the staff once budget stability has been determined. She remarked that a more aggressive publicity of the ADU Amnesty Program would be beneficial. She inquired if HCD acknowledged in anyway the challenge the City is facing with the huge 3000 plus percentage increase in the number of units assigned pursuant to the RHNA analysis, particularly given that the City is only three and a half square miles where we do not have very much open space.

### **3. Comments from Planning Commissioners:**

Commissioner Dahl stated that she was available and supportive of an additional meeting in June or whenever.

Commissioner Braun thanked Director Hankamer and staff for all the great work they are doing.

Commissioner Barthakur echoed thanks for the great work. The study sessions are informative and the materials will help the public as well. He echoed the offer of willing to meet an additional time to delve into the details.

Vice-Chair Padilla echoed her fellow Commissioners and thanked everyone.

Chair Lesak reiterated that the presentation was excellent and it was impressive how they condensed a lot of information into a relatively short amount of slides. He also appreciated staff and consultants having the informational meeting with HCD. He thought it was a good strategy and appreciated the effort. He appreciated the slide on senior housing. Supportive housing for disabled people is also something that is important to many residents in town.

**4. Comments from Staff:**

Director Hankamer appreciated tonight's comments. She will forward an email to check on availability for a subsequent meeting. She was happy the Commissioners have the staff report and the attachments to dig into a little bit deeper. She announced that staff had posted the presentation online.

Assistant City Attorney Jared explained there are two ways to have a walking tour or field trip visit consistent with the Brown Act. It requires posting where you are going to go, actually showing up and essentially reconvening a meeting at a specific spot at a specific time. He recommended against traveling together from site to site (as in a quorum) because that travel time together, three or more in a car or van, creates its own sort of mini meeting that could occur. If going to a site, go in pairs or individually. Alternatively, as with most Planning Commission meetings, there are site visits that individuals take and then just report on them and discuss your findings.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**5. Adjournment to the Regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled on June 8, 2021:**

There being no further matters, Chair Lesak adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.



\_\_\_\_\_  
John Lesak, Chair