

NEWS

West Pasadena Residents' Association

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

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WINTER 2008

Pasadena Beautiful Replacing Historic Palm Trees on Orange Grove



By Vince Farhat

The City of Pasadena is partnering with the Pasadena Beautiful Foundation to raise needed funds to replace historic palm trees on South Orange Grove Boulevard. The WPRA encourages West Pasadena residents to support this important project.

South Orange Grove is a distinctive and historic residential neighborhood featuring generous setbacks and street trees. In the late 1800s, magnolia and palm trees were planted on South Orange Grove to create the familiar and historic streetscape that we all enjoy today.

Many of the trees on South Orange

Grove were planted over a hundred years ago. They are now reaching the end of their life span. The City of Pasadena regularly receives tree planting grants for broad leaf trees such as magnolias. These grant funds have been used to replace magnolia trees on South Orange Grove. According to the City's arborist, however, grant funds typically are not available for palm trees. As a result, the City has not been replacing palm trees on South Orange Grove as they age and die. Currently, at least ten palm trees need to be replaced, with more vacancies expected as time goes on.

The Pasadena Beautiful Foundation was founded in 1960 to protect and enhance Pasadena's urban forest and historic streetscapes. Pasadena Beautiful is an all-volunteer organization that has planted thousands of trees throughout Pasadena, its parks and schools. The City works with Pasadena Beautiful on numerous beautification projects.

The City is now supporting the efforts of Pasadena Beautiful to replace historic palm trees on South Orange Grove. West Pasadena residents and Orange Grove condominium associations can contribute money to a fund that will be used to replace palms trees as they die. All contributions to Pasadena Beautiful are

tax-deductible. The WPRA supports this partnership between the City and Pasadena Beautiful, and encourages residents to donate funds.

For more information, please contact Darya Barar, City of Pasadena Parks & Natural Resources Program Coordinator. She can be reached at (626) 744-3846 or DBarar@cityofpasadena.net. To learn more about Pasadena Beautiful, please call (626) 795-9704 or visit www.pasadenabeautiful.org. ■

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Win A Prius!

WANTED Beautiful Buildings

The Pasadena Beautiful Foundation will be honoring Commercial Buildings, Condominiums and Apartments, City and Institutional Buildings and renovated or converted buildings that exhibit outstanding landscaping and beautification efforts.

If you would like to nominate a building, please e-mail us at president@pasadenabeautiful.org or call us at: (626) 795-9704.

Please include the address of the building and any information you may have on it. The deadline for accepting nominations is February 18th, 2008. The winners will be honored at a Banquet in late spring.

San Rafael Elementary School, the only school in the WPRAs service area has an enrollment of 400 children in grades Pre K – 6. While the school's Panda mascot is cute and furry, those at San Rafael Elementary are "down to serious business." Mark Mastromatteo provides us with some insight on the goals and methods of those who aim to make San Rafael the best it can be.

The Power of the Panda - San Rafael Elementary is on a roll!

By Mark Mastromatteo

The threat of closure

Just a couple of years ago, there was talk in the community and among PUSD board members that San Rafael Elementary School might be closing. In fact, four PUSD schools did close in 2006, due to the declining enrollment brought on by rising real estate prices and the subsequent departure of about 3000 students to less expensive parts of the West.

For a short period, those closure rumors stifled any talk of the future at San Rafael among both parents and teachers. "It did affect morale for awhile" says Nella Abelson, PTA President at San Rafael. "Once we realized that San Rafael was staying open, and for the long term, people took a few months to realize that we really were faced with an opportunity to reinvent parent and community participation at our school."

Involvement and leadership create stability

Enrollment at San Rafael jumped last fall, with many families coming over from the Allendale and Linda Vista campuses, which were closed. "These new families, in combination with the Kindergarten families and our own active parents, seemed to poise the school for takeoff." says Nella.

With the help of core PTA members, teachers, and outside volunteers, the San Rafael PTA quickly became one of the larger and more active groups inside any PUSD school. "We

raised thousands of dollars for valuable arts and music programs, and to see everyone pitching in together was probably even more valuable to us and to our kids."

Key to the revitalization is new Principal Alyson Beecher. When Beecher opened the school last fall, she was the fourth Principal at San Rafael in five years, so creating a sense of stability was her priority during year one. "I spent a great deal of time in the neighborhoods early on, fielding questions and listening to complaints. What I really want to do is to build a great collaborative relationship between our neighbors and our San Rafael families, as I see benefits all around. I know that will take time, but it is worth the effort."

San Rafael events and projects

In 2007-08 Beecher hopes to have three or four school events where the neighborhood is enthusiastically invited to take part. "I envision a Fall Festival, possibly something around Earth Day that focuses on the environment, and a couple others. This past June, we had our first event, a Pancake breakfast. We had a fantastic participation level from our school community, plus the Fire Department, Humane Society, the great folks at California Credit Union, plus food from Trader Joe's and the Nutrition Network. We did let the neighbors know about it, and many stopped by and seemed to have a great time!"



"Last year's highlights for me included the great work that our students did in raising money for local charities. As our first priority, our academic programs moved ahead last year, and our test scores rose again. Our teachers are so dedicated and with our community coming together, I think that San Rafael will soon be among the best performing schools in the District." Student projects include: Top PUSD fundraiser, March of Dimes "Pennies for Patients" program, recycling and tree planting projects.

"Our community really saw that it could mobilize. With one of the highest participation rates of any PUSD PTA, we were able to start a number of new projects this year that I hope to see evolve as we go forward."

A Message from Principal Beecher – What WPRAs members can do to help

I am particularly pleased to be able to have greater contact with our WPRAs neighbors. As the only public elementary school in the WPRAs membership area, we would greatly welcome your support and your time.

First, I would love to meet with WPRAs members at San Rafael Elementary and show you all that we

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Rose Bowl Stadium Renovation Project

by Mic Hansen

Now that the NFL is out of the picture for the Rose Bowl, its future is in the hands of Pasadena's citizens and officials. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that was completed for the NFL proposal and certified in 2006 has been updated to respond to the newly proposed renovation options. The revised Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) was recently completed and is available on the Rose Bowl website. For configuration details and renderings, please refer to the SEIR on the Rose Bowl Stadium website at http://www.rosebowlstadium.com/RoseBowl_dseir.htm.

The purpose of the renovation is to ensure Rose Bowl's future by making it financially viable and structurally secure, and physically comfortable, while maintaining its character-defining features and historic status. The renovations will address the infrastructure of the stadium, including safety, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems. The renovations will also consider patron experience and comfort as well as address facility operations, improvement of storage facilities and improved crowd circulation—while seeking to protect its National Landmark designation. One of the priorities of the project will be the replacement of all seating. The proposed project also calls for the demolition of the existing outbuildings (current concession stands and lavatories), the construction of a new press box and club level suites, new ancillary facilities, a new museum and store, and improvements to the entry plaza.

The project cites three alternatives for stadium renovations.

Option A: Construction of a New Concourse at the Horizon Level

—A new concourse would be constructed circling the rim of the stadium which would provide a walkway on the perimeter of the top level of the stadium. This new walkway would extend approximately 22 feet from the current rim wall and would be anchored by external structures—possibly columns—that would not be directly attached to the stadium's exterior. New exit aisles would be added inside the stadium midway between the existing aisles that would funnel spectators up to this new horizon level concourse. In turn, the concourse would be connected to the plaza level via external vertical circulation towers at four locations, one on each side of the new press box on the West side, and two on the East side of the stadium. This alternative would result in the removal of approximately 2,800 seats.

Option B: Tunnel Widening and Internal Concourse

—This option would widen the existing 28 tunnels to double the exiting capacity, as well as add exit aisles inside the stadium located midway between existing aisles. (Currently the tunnels are only able to handle 54% of the capacity required by code.) According to the project plan, appropriate shoring of the tunnels would be required to allow for excavation, expansion, reconstruction, and resurfacing of the walls. This option would result in the removal of approximately 4,300 seats.



Option C: Horizon-Level Concourse, Tunnel Widening, and Internal Concourse

—is a combination of options A and B above. This would go ahead with the construction of the 'horizon concourse' around the rim while also widening the tunnels, thus giving the greatest exiting capacity. If all the tunnels are affected, this option would also require the loss of 4,300 seats.

Findings related to mobility, access, traffic circulation, and parking certified in 2006 for the original EIR still apply to this project. Areas of review will include safeguarding the historic integrity of the Rose Bowl as a National Historic Landmark as well as impacts—particularly visual—on adjacent residential neighborhoods. Pending approval, it is estimated that the design phase could be completed in late 2008. The construction phase would vary, depending on the option chosen and would be phased over several years.

As this newsletter goes to press, the Planning Commission is scheduled to review the project at its meeting January 23. The City Council is expected to review the project in March or April. To receive regular updates, please send an e-mail to update@wpra.net. ■

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SECTION

In this, the Planning and Development section of this quarter's newsletter, we continue looking at issues impacting development going on here in Pasadena. District 6 Councilman, Steve Madison, furnishes us with valuable information on the constraints placed by the state on California cities as they attempt to accommodate the population increase in California.

Local Control of Land Use - Fact or Fiction?

By Steve Madison, Pasadena City Councilmember, District 6

One of the truly amazing features of land use policy in California is that cities have virtually no control over a critical step in determining the number of residential units that may be built in the city. Through a process known by the acronym "RHNA," the State forces cities such as Pasadena to allow new development if the surrounding region is experiencing population growth—irrespective of existing density, local zoning initiatives or the vision of current residents and their elected representatives! When I first learned about this process I was in disbelief and denial; it seemed almost un-American. But it's the truth. Here's how it works.

Housing: SCAG and RHNA

California law requires that cities prepare a land use "blueprint" called the **general plan**. The general plan must include a **housing element**, which in turn must include a description of local housing programs intended to meet the city's "fair share" existing and future housing needs for all income groups. The California Department of Housing & Community Development assigns a total housing need to each region in the state. In our region, the agency responsible for assigning "fair share" targets to each local jurisdiction is the Southern California Association of Governments ("**SCAG**"). The 76 local elected officials who sit on SCAG's Regional Council calculate

the number of housing units needed in each member city during housing element cycles. Cities are then required to develop policies and programs to foster the development of housing to accommodate the needs SCAG has determined exist. This process is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation, or **RHNA** ("**reena**"). If cities do not build in the necessary flexibility to accommodate its RHNA projections, the city risks a lawsuit and/or can lose housing funds administered by the State. Cities can appeal their RHNA allocation but very few such appeals are ever granted (Pasadena appealed its 2007 allocation, unsuccessfully).

Ramifications of SCAG and RHNA Approach

There are, of course, several problems with this approach. First, many object to a process whereby, with all due respect, persons at SCAG or in Sacramento can impose on Pasadena the requirement that the city give real estate developers incentives to build additional housing units, no matter how dense or built-out we may already be or how desirous its residents are of limiting density, traffic and congestion. Put another way, if hundreds of thousands of new residents wish to relocate to Southern California from other parts of the U.S. or the world, why should a fully built-out city like Pasadena have to compromise its quality of life and overwhelm its infrastructure to make

room for them? Note also that the agency with authority over Pasadena, SCAG, disagrees with many in Pasadena on certain critical issues like the construction of the Long Beach freeway through Pasadena and South Pasadena (SCAG supports the completion of the freeway).

Further, the RHNA numbers are estimates, and are sometimes based on regional growth projections that turn out to be wrong because the region's population does not increase as much as predicted. Finally, these laws seem to be selectively applied and enforced, if they are enforced at all. For example, our neighbor to the south, San Marino, seems to have somehow complied with their RHA mandates without developing much if any multi-family housing to speak of. One reason for these discrepancies is that RHNA takes into consideration the number of jobs each city provides; Pasadena, with over 100,000 jobs, gets a larger allocation of housing units because there are so many. Note also that RHNA does not require actual construction of new units, just that a city's general plan allow for new construction. In a strong market, though, aggressive developers use these entitlements to the maximum extent possible.

Challenges Presented by State Legal Requirements

As difficult as urban planning decisions within a city are, these legal requirements potentially restrict our

continued on next page

ability to be the master of our own destiny. Analogs to the lack of home rule evidenced by RHNA include State legislation recently that required Pasadena to terminate a moratorium on second units (i.e., “Granny flats”). (The City Council imposed strict limits on the number of such units that should be constructed, and where and under what conditions they may be constructed, but notwithstanding these parameters, Pasadena can expect to see more construction of second units than has been the case in recent years.) Another example is state law’s requirement that local streets be surveyed and speed limits set based on how fast drivers are going; so if everyone is exceeding the current speed limits the limits are raised even if they are undesirable in terms of safety, noise and other neighborhood impacts!

Pasadena and California’s Growing Population

Pasadena has a population base of 134,000 according to the 2000 census and has built approximately 3500 housing units in the last eight years. At 2.5 people per unit that means we have added about 8,750 people. On a base of 134,000 this is about 6.5%. (The California Department of Finance estimated in 2007 that Pasadena had grown even more, to 147,000.) Given that Southern California has been one of the most desirable places on earth to live over the last 100 years or so, Pasadena is likely to continue growing. Pasadena is clearly part of a “macro migration”—a state and regional challenge. But many current residents reasonably ask, “Why should Pasadena’s current residents be subject to increased density to accommodate newcomers, and or, is there no limit?”

Development Raises Issues That Must be Addressed

On many levels, the high demand for new development in Pasadena is encouraging—it means Pasadena is a desirable place to live, work, study and play. Pasadena has been honored by the Environmental Protection Agency with a “National Award for Smart Growth Achievement,” and *Outside Magazine* declared Pasadena one of the 18 most livable cities in the country.

Yet many are understandably anxious about the unintended consequences of new development and its impact on the great quality of life Pasadena offers. They wonder how, if as we’ve been told Pasadena is “fully built-out,” the City’s infrastructure—from public safety to waste disposal to water and power—can keep up with these rapid increases in our population. Where will the new families who move here—overwhelmingly into multi-family developments, not single family homes with yards—recreate? Isn’t Pasadena already “underparked” as it is? Will new buildings have the gracious sense of design and the public art on which Pasadena prides itself? And perhaps most importantly, will there be adequate mitigation for the additional traffic and congestion that results (and has already resulted) from adding thousands or even tens of thousands of new residents to a fully built-out “town” of 142,000?

Can We Slow Development?

One wonders, “When is enough, enough? Can’t we slow down and take stock?” Regrettably, I was the only Councilmember to vote to lower the “caps” on residential units for the Central District when the Central District Specific Plan was revised. So

there are still several hundred units allowable—after Sares Regis and it’s 800+ net new units (again, passed by my colleagues over my objection). In her seminal book, “The Death and Life of Great American Cities,” Jane Jacobs wrote, “Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design.” Pasadena has been a very busy laboratory indeed. If Jacobs were here I am sure she would agree that the residents and their elected representatives—not legislators far away in the capital, or regional governmental bodies like SCAG—should determine which experiments should be performed in our laboratory! Yet under RHNA, developers receive a windfall in the form of an unfunded mandate that cities such as Pasadena absorb net new development.

Our Quality of Life

Regarding the RHNA process, Pasadena should comply with State law but strive to ensure that our codes require the complete mitigation of all impacts of any new development. We should make the case in Sacramento that zoning and urban planning is properly the role of the elected officials in the jurisdiction involved, who presumptively are more knowledgeable about the residents’ vision of their city, and directly accountable to those residents. Finally, the permitting of new development must include a comprehensive review of all impacts and the full mitigation of those impacts, so that Pasadena does not fall victim to creeping “incrementalism,” development-wise. The quality of life at stake is ours, after all. ■

Note: Portions of this article adapted from “Whither Pasadena,” the District 6 “white paper” on growth and development in Pasadena, which can be found on the District 6 website at www.cityofpasadena.net.

In the last issue of this newsletter, Floor Area Ratios (FARs) were defined and their use as a development intensity measure explained. In this article, the author lays out how FARs and Density Caps are used to promote land use compatibility and reduce potential conflicts between existing and future uses.

Caps and FARs and Managing Growth

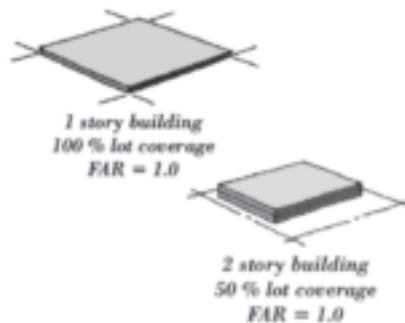
By Mic Hansen

FARs are a development intensity measure. They are a means to forecast project impact as well as serve as a tool for apparent building mass and scale. Development “caps” are customarily used to limit the number of residential-unit building permits issued in a given area of a community.

Caps

Caps are put into place when shifting population patterns, increased demand for housing, and accelerated development put pressure on a city’s infrastructure, utilities, natural resources, community character, and public services. Caps may be used to direct growth—not only control the amount of growth—by their implementation in selective areas or with a combination of other measures. Typically, projects that respond to greater social benefit, such as senior housing or affordable housing are exempted under development caps.

Development caps were established in Pasadena as a response to a growth-management initiative enacted in the late 1980’s, a General Plan approved in 1994, and revised in 2004. The approval of the 2004 revision in February of 2005 also included the adoption of FARs. The General Plan targeted growth away from residential neighborhoods toward downtown, and around transit-corridors within seven Specific Plan areas. The Land Use Element established intensity standards for net new housing units and net new non-residential square footage in each of these seven areas,



defining “Development Intensity Standard” as the housing units and square footage allocated to each specific plan area.

FARs and Development Allocation

All private development projects compete within the balance of each specific plan area to obtain a development allocation. When development accelerated in these areas, floor area ratios were introduced to more equitably serve both developers and the needs of the community. The impact of FARs on each project may differ depending on its size. Used with Caps, setbacks, height limits, etc. —the number of actual units constructed within the combined FAR/caps envelope may vary from the specified limits. For example, on smaller parcels the combination of maximum number of units together with setbacks, heights, etc. usually results in fewer but larger units—caps limiting the number of units. On larger sites, FARs may create a more restrictive envelope than the allowable maximum residential density (unit caps), resulting in smaller and/or fewer units.

Unlike residential caps that are applicable within Specific Plan areas, FARs are applicable throughout the city, and affect all development. They help serve as a moderating factor for development adjacent to single-family and low-density residential areas. For example, in an area where commercial may be adjacent to residential, restricting the FAR tempers the size and bulk of the structure.

Central District

In the past seven years, a great deal of development has occurred in the Central district, and the above tools have been used to both manage and influence the pace, volume, and amount of the build out. Currently, the Central District Specific Plan has a cap of 5,095 net new housing units. Under the established caps, it is estimated that as of last fall, 62% of the units allocated had received building permits, and another 30% potentially used by projects in the pipeline, leaving 425 units available for future projects.

The 2004 General Plan revision states that the land intensity/density standards, as implemented through the specific plans and Zoning Code revisions are designed to promote land use compatibility and reduce potential conflicts between existing and future uses. The above tools are two means to achieve these objectives. ■

Focus on the West Gateway Specific Plan

By Cheryl Auger

A great deal of development has occurred in Pasadena over the past decade, a sizeable portion of it in West Pasadena and the Central District, impacting our neighborhood. More remains in the pipeline. WPRA watches current practices and ordinances and where appropriate, intercedes in identifying potential impacts that may compromise quality of life. Over the last several months we have been reviewing the West Gate Specific Plan (WGSP) and the Land Use Element of Pasadena's General Plan. The WGSP is a document directed specifically at a circumscribed area—Pasadena's West Gateway—that spells out the parameters and provides standards for uses (commercial, residential), setbacks, building size, height limits, etc. (Note: The WGSP area is roughly an area bounded by Colorado, St. John, Orange Grove and Green Street.)

Because we have been concerned with the number of units allowed within the central district's caps and the encroachment of commercial enterprises into our neighborhood, we reviewed the WGSP and the land use element what follows is a summary of proposed changes we would like the Planning Commission and the City Council to consider within the next couple of months.

Changes proposed to section 17.36.020 — Purpose of WGSP Zoning Districts

"Optimizing economic development" is stated as part of the purpose of the current WGSP. The WPRA is advocating that this be removed, since we think it is important to preserve the neighborhood zoning and provide

for commercial development in areas more suitable for the purpose.

The WPRA requested that the City not only "provide" but also "enforce" guidelines and manage development to respond to market demand. This could occur through development caps, optimization of residential/ commercial ratios, and a gradual build-out schedule.

The Orange Grove/Colorado intersection is considered as the symbolic western gateway into Pasadena. The existing plan calls for the development of this area. WPRA requested that the City restrict massing and density in this area along Colorado Boulevard to preserve views of the Rose Bowl Parade by limiting heights and the obstruction of sight lines.

Currently the WGSP plan calls to "Encourage and facilitate appropriate development by streamlining the development process in a manner consistent with the West Gateway." The WPRA recommended that the City "Strictly enforce City of Gardens Zoning Codes and Ordinances for multiple-unit housing."

We also requested the following additions to WGSP

- Preserve and protect current open and green space and promote the acquisition of additional open space.
- Devise and develop elements of mobility that ensure safety of cyclists.
- Preserve the Norton-Simon Museum, the historic Rusnak buildings, and the Elks Lodge in addition to the Worldwide Church of God property which includes the Ambassador Auditorium.

The WPRA requested that the City modify the following definitions used in the WGSP section 17.36.040

- The TDR conversion formula currently allows transfer between residential to nonresidential units. The WPRA stressed that there be no transfer between commercial and residential units.
- The density numbers that currently enable existing units to be excluded from the total caps—including assisted living and affordable housing—should be included into the total development numbers. These impact all resources and services, regardless.

The WPRA requested modifications to 17.36.060 — WGSP General Development Standards

- Currently, the WGSP allows the transfer of development from one parcel to another and from commercial to residential and vice versa. We think this should be disallowed since it may skew the balance within the WGSP footprint.
- Currently, the WGSP states that an owner of a property may obtain a demolition permit without having obtained a building permit for a replacement project on the site. We think that no demolition, underground excavation, removal of trees or historic structures, or removal or alteration of site and building features should begin until a replacement building permit is approved. ■

In the following article, Tim Wendler, Pasadena Recreation and Parks Commission member, issues a call to action after explaining the benefits of open space to our community. He asks for citizen support in finding funding mechanisms to ensure adequate open space in Pasadena. Please contact Tim at joandtim@charter.net if you have any questions or comments.

Pasadena's Parks and Open Spaces - What's Needed and How to Pay for It

By Tim Wendler, Pasadena Recreation and Parks Commission

Threatened Open Spaces

I've been on hikes with community members in a canyon area of Pasadena threatened by the proposed Annandale Canyon Estates. I have been amazed by the beauty of this special, natural place and disturbed by the imminent possibility that it could be lost to make way for 29 upscale homes. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has committed \$2.5 million towards the purchase of this property. Will Pasadena be willing to do what it takes to seal the deal?

In eastern Pasadena, many of us have been concerned that an open space corridor owned by Southern California Edison may be replaced by a string of storage units; dashing the vision of a regional trails and open space corridor (we have narrowly averted the loss of two cherished community nurseries). And we all live close to a local park that could use some support; in my neighborhood, the Washington Park master plan calls for a community house that has yet to be funded. All of this reminds me of the great need we have in Pasadena for more open spaces and urban parks.

Open Space Necessary to Maintain a Healthy Community

Unfortunately, California is tightening its fiscal belt. In these times, people focus on their highest priorities, public safety (police and fire) and public education. We also

must put a high priority on parks and open spaces. Parks actually support public safety by providing an opportunity for youth to spend their time in productive ways via sports and other recreation. Open spaces provide an escape from the increasing traffic and noise of everyday life, this will be increasingly important as Pasadena continues to urbanize. And these open spaces contain the last critical wildlife corridors. Many of us use these areas for hiking, biking, riding horses, playing, walking dogs, and relaxing. The last open spaces are disappearing every day and the ones that remain will be even more expensive when our state government starts paying attention again and seeks to bring them into public ownership.

The Recreation and Parks Commission has completed its work updating the Green Space, Recreation, and Conservation Element of the City's General Plan as well as a Master Plan of our parks system. These companion documents generated extensive community input and detailed our current understanding of our parks and recreation resources, as well as the gaps and needs in the system. These will soon be considered for approval by the Planning Commission and the City Council. Soon a task force will be created to focus on a new Open Space Element of the General Plan, which will include a detailed survey of the remaining

open spaces in our community and a vision for preserving them.

Funding Solutions Needed

Now that we understand our needs, what funding alternatives do we have for open spaces and parks? We need to find new, consistent revenue sources, which mean taxes or fees. But will people be willing to pay new taxes? Experience shows that people are willing to spend more if a clear need is defined and a tangible benefit will result. In addition to general funds from the state and local governments (which are at the mercy of the economy and the will of our elected officials,) our options include a local bond measure, a land parcel tax, or a benefit assessment district.

A benefit assessment district requires approval by a simple majority of property owners. These have been used for decades by communities to fund capital projects through additional property taxes. As an example, La Cañada is currently funding sewers using assessment districts. What's new is using this approach for open-space acquisition. The Santa Monica Mountains area of the City of Los Angeles has approved assessment districts, under oversight of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, that will cost the average property owner about \$40 per year and will preserve significant open space threatened by development. See www.preserveopenspace.org for more information.

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Give Your Feedback

The first step in determining whether a benefit assessment district or other funding mechanism is politically viable is to conduct a detailed

phone and mail survey of our community. Please join me in urging our City Council to make this first step in committing to fund the parks and open spaces that our community

needs to breathe. Let me know your thoughts on making this vision a reality at joandtim@charter.net. ■

West Pasadena Transportation Update *By Vince Farhat*

City Hires New Transportation Director

In December 2007, Fred Dock joined City Hall as Pasadena's new Director of Transportation.

Joyce Amerson, the City's former transportation director, left Pasadena last Summer to accept the position of deputy director of public works for the City of Irvine.

Prior to his appointment, Dock worked as the principal in charge of Iteris Inc., a transportation consulting firm in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Iteris develops advanced technologies that reduce traffic congestion and improve street safety. Dock's former employers include Parsons Transportation Group in Minneapolis and TJM Transportation Consultants in Pleasanton, California. He earned a bachelor's and master's degree in civil engineering from University of California, Berkeley.

In announcing the appointment, former City Manager Cynthia Kurtz said: "Fred Dock has a strong background in transportation planning and development. He has a reputation as an exceptional manager and is sensitive to community-based traffic and transportation issues." Dock will oversee the Pasadena Transportation Department, which includes parking management, transit planning and

operations, transportation planning and development, and traffic engineering. The department has 47 employees and a \$28 million annual budget.

TAC Puts the Brakes on Speed Limit Increases

Late last year, the Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) rejected a proposal to raise speed limits on selected residential streets throughout Pasadena. In West Pasadena, City staff originally wanted to increase speed limits on the following residential streets, among others: La Loma Road (western City limit to Arroyo Boulevard) from 25 mph to 30 mph; Lida Street in Linda Vista from 30 mph to 35 mph; Pasadena Avenue from 30 mph to 40 mph; and Columbia Street from 30 mph to 35 mph.

More than 85 Pasadena residents contacted TAC regarding staff's speed limit proposal. After considering public comment at a special meeting in September, TAC unanimously voted to oppose raising speed limits. TAC opposed staff's proposal because of concerns that increasing speed limits would negatively impact safety, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, and negatively impact neighborhood quality of life. The

proposed speed limit increases also are inconsistent with the City's adopted General Plan and the General Plan Mobility Element. TAC believed that further study was needed to address speeding issues, including how the Police Department should enforce existing speed limits.

TAC and staff formed a joint committee to study the issue and to examine the City's options in enforcing existing speed limits. In December, staff presented a revised speed limit proposal to TAC. The revised proposal eliminated speed limit increases on a number of streets. Specifically, under the revised proposal, the City would not increase speed limits on La Loma Road and Lida Street. However, staff still wants to raise speed limits on Pasadena Avenue and Columbia.

As this newsletter goes to press, TAC is scheduled to have a special meeting on January 29 to review and comment on staff's revised speed limit proposal. Residents also will have the opportunity to comment on the proposal. The City Council is expected to take up the issue in February or March. For more information, please send an e-mail to update@wptra.net. ■

Editor's Note: Vince Farhat is Chairman of the Transportation Advisory Commission. Vince has been on the WPRA Board of Directors since 1997, and served as President from 2001 to 2003. He can be contacted at vince.farhat@sbcglobal.net.

Time for Neighborhood Watch!

“Crime is on the rise in our community.”

According to a recent LA Times article, serious offenses in LA County were up 4% in 2007 and this crime increase was driven by aggravated assaults, burglaries and other property crimes. Many of us in District 6 have been victims or know of neighbors who have been. So, it is time to be vigilant and informed about what is going on in our neighborhoods. It is time to get involved and be part of the solution to this growing problem.

One of the most successful measures in crime prevention is the Neighborhood Watch Program, in effect for over thirty years in towns, cities and rural areas across the country. Neighborhood Watch Programs



help reduce residential crime when the citizens join local police departments and work with them to observe and report crime. By taking an active role in the protection of their families

and possessions, residents are better able to discourage criminal activity and keep their neighborhoods safe.

Starting a Neighborhood Watch program is a relatively simple process. Here in Pasadena you can do so by contacting Police Specialist Cynthia Murphy, Neighborhood Services Unit/Community Services Section. She can let you know what is required to form a successful Neighborhood Watch group. You can reach Officer Murphy at 626-744-7657 or email her cmurphy@cityofpasadena.net

The success of any neighborhood watch program depends upon the combined efforts of the local citizenry. *So, let's get started.* ■

San Rafael Elementary

Continued from page 2

are doing. We have regular tours of the school on the second Tuesday of each month at 8:30 am, and I can also set up separate tours with groups.

Second, we are looking for volunteers with projects such as rolling reader, art docent, and other in classroom programs. As with any school, the presence of adult role models really enhances student achievement. We are also looking for those who have a special passion for an area of the arts and sciences. We are enhancing our access to performing arts programs, and we'd like to complement that with in classroom projects from caring adults in the community.

Third, as we look to expand our fundraising to create more field trips

and other enrichment opportunities, we can use your donations, and also your recyclables. We are currently accepting plastic bottles, soda cans, used ink cartridges, and old cell phones, which our sixth grade collects to help fund the very popular science camp.

With momentum growing and test scores rising, the future looks bright at San Rafael! ■

Editor's Note: Mark has been a resident of the San Rafael area of Pasadena since 2004. He is the current chair of the advisory board for PUSD's Partners in Education Program and serves on the Board of Leadership Pasadena and the Pasadena Southwest Little League. Mark ran for a seat on the PUSD Board of Education in 2007.



San Rafael Elementary School Contacts:

Alyson Beecher:
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Nella Abelson, PTA President:
negi@mycidco.com; 626-792-8627

Scott Phelps (PUSD Board contact for San Rafael):
sphelps@alumni.caltech.edu

Ambassador West Update

Background

Several years ago, after attempting to sell the former Ambassador College property to various developers, the Worldwide Church of God finally sold the Ambassador West Campus to a development consortium headed by Dorn Platz. Many people were involved in brokering the Ambassador West deal, including the WPRa and various city and community leaders. The vision of Ambassador West was to preserve many of the historic structures and gardens in the context of a relatively low-density project.

Last year, Dorn Platz announced that Standard Pacific Homes pulled out of the Ambassador West project. In early January, the WPRa learned that Dorn Platz also pulled out of the project, giving control of some of the West Campus to a hedge fund that originally financed the transaction. While no longer managing the project, Dorn Platz continues to own the Rankin House and the Villa Francesca Apartments. Maranatha High School has settled in to become a good neighbor, as has Harvest Rock Church. Moreover, Sunrise Senior Living is still moving forward

with their portion of the Ambassador West project for a 248-unit development, some of which will include assisted living.

WPRa Will Be Vigilant

The WPRa will closely monitor future developments regarding the West Campus to ensure that the historic gardens and walkways are not threatened by future development plans. We will be vigilant to make sure the intent of the original partners is realized. Please send an e-mail to update@wpra.net to receive weekly updates on issues concerning our neighborhood. ■



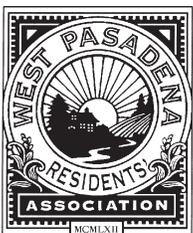
WPRa Wants You!

The WPRa is looking for volunteers to serve on committees and to get involved in neighborhood issues. Whatever your interests, we have many opportunities for involvement and are looking for dedicated West Pasadena residents committed to preserving our neighborhood quality of life.

The WPRa wants you and needs your help! For more information, please contact WPRa board member Vince Farhat at vince.farhat@wpra.net. ■

Win a Prius!

Call the Pasadena Educational Foundation 626-795-6981, ext 422, to get tickets to win a **2008 Prius** from Bob Smith Toyota! Tickets are \$25.00 and only 2000 will be sold. Drawing will be February 15th at Paseo Colorado. All proceeds will benefit teachers and students of the PUSD.



Join the WPRa Today

All membership dues are tax-deductible, and donations of \$100 or more are acknowledged in this newsletter. Please take a moment to complete this form and mail it with your check today!

Name _____

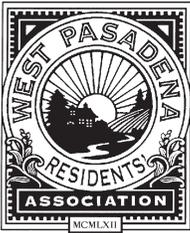
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The West Pasadena Residents' Association is a 501c3 non-profit public benefit corporation. Memberships and contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.



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Join the WPRAs Today

Your generous support will help the WPRAs publish its newsletter and keep you informed of issues affecting our neighborhood. So, please take a moment to join us and stand behind the WPRAs. Please contact Joan Hearst at membership@wpra.net

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