



DATE: August 16, 2015

TO: Pasadena City Council

FROM: West Pasadena Residents' Association

SUBJECT: Support for Reasonable General Plan Density Objectives

WPRA urges you to accept the Planning Commission recommendations for reasonable density expansions, rather than the outsized density recommendations in the Final EIR of the City of Pasadena's General Plan Land Use Element.

The development caps recommended by the Planning Commission are 6,365 residential units (du) and 5,825,000 nonresidential square feet of development allocated across the seven Specific Plan areas. This is far superior to the outsized and concentrated recommendations in the Final EIR, which are 7,905 residential units and 7,675,000 square feet of development with 62% of the residential units and 44% of the development concentrated in the Central District.

While Pasadena's growth may be inevitable; it needs to be managed so it is beneficial for all residents to live and work in areas that include diverse housing choices, open spaces, recreational and educational facilities, public and private services, and accessible modes of transportation.

WPRA offers the following points to the City Council as it deliberates growth and its possible outcomes:

1) Realizing the vision to build an adequate supply of diverse housing opportunities

Pasadena is a city where development can only grow up not out. Pasadena is recovering from the Great Recession with a resurgence in residential and non-residential development. The effects of this resurgence have not yet fully been realized. Much of the new construction is unoccupied and many approved projects have not yet broken ground. In developing their original density recommendations, City planners did a very thorough job analyzing the city's potential for absorbing development and balancing the need for growth with the desire for clean air, open space, city views, and historic preservation, to name a few factors. We urge you to support reasonable growth alternatives so that all residents of Pasadena can access an improved vibrant urban core without enduring the unhealthy, unmitigated consequences of traffic, noise, poor air quality, and more importantly, the permanent loss of Pasadena's rich cultural heritage.

2) Excessive density will produce excessive traffic.

Pasadena's General Plan Guiding Principal #5 is "*Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without cars.*" The issue of cars and transportation is fraught with many questions, not the least of which is the issue of the unfinished 710 connector. As Pasadena, along with our numerous regional neighbors, grapple with solutions, it is obvious that Pasadena may not be in control of its own destiny. Pasadena may plan for higher density living in neighborhood and transit villages, but until the people who LIVE in Pasadena, WORK in Pasadena, or until public transit expands to the point where it can efficiently move people into, around, or through the city, the idea that Pasadena will be reducing car trips any time soon is an incorrect assumption.

An outsized growth cap producing more cars and car trips does not foster a higher quality of life for Pasadena residents. We urge the City Council to trust the analysis of its city planners and housing commissioners. Adopt the reasonable cap growths and save our city from paralyzing gridlock and dirtier air.

3) Pasadena as a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable community

A higher density population does not necessarily meet the criteria of a greener Pasadena. Pasadena's General Plan, Guiding Principal #4 contains the following: *Pasadena will be a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable community.*

Lower density growth is more consistent with Pasadena's strong commitment to the environment. The City has already taken a number of significant actions to become a greener city, such as:

- Adoption of an Environmental Charter;
- Endorsement of the United Nations Green Cities Declaration and Urban Environmental Accords;
- Endorsement of the US Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement;
- Adoption of a Green City Action Plan;
- Adoption of ordinance creating an Environmental Advisory Commission;
- Adoption of a Green Building Program;
- Adoption of a resolution in support of Green Cities California.

Pasadena's General Plan Land Use Element should align with Pasadena's commitment to environmental sustainability. A reasonable growth cap is more consistent with our core values in protecting the environment, as opposed to the outsized density that would aggravate adverse environmental impacts.

In conclusion, we believe the City Planning Department and our Planning Commissioners have done their homework and devised the best benefit-for-all vision for growth. In time, the issues of transportation, higher density living spaces, affordability, diversity, and economic opportunities will begin to mature, presenting a clearer, more solid base on

which to build. We urge you to accept their recommendations for reasonable density growth while preserving the unique qualities and characteristics that have drawn generations of diverse residents and business owners to make Pasadena their home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Geoffrey Baum
President, West Pasadena Residents' Association