



August 17, 2010

Via Email & Hand Delivery
Michael J. Beck, City Manager
100 N. Garfield Ave
Pasadena, CA 91109

Re: Pasadena Planning Director Search

The West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA) commends the decision to split the Planning and Development Department into two separate departments, one under a new Pasadena Planning Director and the other under Assistant City Manager Steve Mermell. The previous structure, which combined the two departments, created inherent conflicts of interests, since City staff was called upon to act both as project advocate and project planner.

Regarding opinions on "the ideal qualities the next planning director should possess and the issues the director should be prepared to undertake," we offer the following:

The Planning Director needs to have demonstrated experience appropriate for the vibrant, historic community that is Pasadena. Specifically, the Planning Director must:

1. Ensure that our efforts in zoning, planning, and citizen involvement are effective. The planning director represents the community, not the developer.
2. Set the tone and standard for community involvement. Developers need to work with the community, not just with City staff, and need to do so early in the process.
3. Provide guidance to planners to ensure that planners listen to the community and follow the rules, not insert their own views or represent those of the developer.

The Planning Director needs to be ready to face the following key issues:

1. Implement design review reforms. The current sets of different design guidelines are confusing. As a result, many recent projects have failed to take into account the architectural context of the environment surrounding the project. Pasadena's internal design review process is in need of reform.
2. Address the basic issues of how much future growth Pasadena can accommodate and what level of resources will be required to support future growth, especially in the areas of streets, water, sewers, waste and sanitation, and electricity.
3. Lay out a new process so that the general public and the Design Commission are brought into the planning process sooner. The current process, in too many cases, essentially nullifies desired and/or necessary changes, as the projects are too far advanced and often only minor or superficial modifications can be implemented.

Thank you for soliciting community input on this important decision.

Michael Udell, President

cc: Steve Madison, Steve Mermell, Takako Suzuki

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