



**City of South Pasadena  
Planning Commission  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, July 21, 2020, 3:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A Special Meeting of the South Pasadena Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Janet Braun on Tuesday, July 21, 2020, at 3:04 p.m. This meeting was held via Zoom, in accordance with AB 361.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**City Staff**

**Present:** Joanna Hankamer, Planning and Community Development Director  
Teresa L. Highsmith, City Attorney  
Margaret Lin, Long-Range Planning and Economic Development Manager

**Council**

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Vice-Chair Lesak motioned, seconded by Commissioner Tom, to approve the agenda as submitted.

**Motion carried, 5-0.**

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

No site visits were reported by the Commissioners.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Manager Lin reported that multiple written comments and three voicemails were received. The letters were posted and available for review on the City website located under the Additional Documents section for this Commission meeting. The voicemails will be played at the end of the discussion of this item.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. 2021 Housing Element Update – Preliminary Sites Analysis**

#### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Review and provide direction regarding the 2021 Housing Element Update – Preliminary Sites Analysis;
2. Provide recommendations to the City Council regarding considerations to place a ballot measure on the November 2020 Special Municipal Election to increase the building height limits in specific locations to keep options open while Housing Element policy development progresses; and
3. Review and provide direction regarding a potential Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and Update to the Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance.

#### **Presentation**

Manager Lin introduced the City Consultants Amy Sinsheimer and Woodie Tescher of PlaceWorks who gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2021 House Element Update – Preliminary Sites Analysis.

#### **Questions by Commissioners**

Vice-Chair Lesak had questions regarding site selection and the associated chosen income categories. In addition, he wanted to know what was considered a non-vacant site.

Consultant Sinsheimer explained that sites that are zoned for lower density are assumed to accommodate moderate and above moderate-income levels. She also clarified that non-vacant sites included any lot that was not completely vacant.

Commissioner Dahl had questions regarding the ADU numbers, and stated that she thought they were optimistic and overestimated. Consultant Amy Sinsheimer explained that ADU projections were based on numbers from jurisdictions with aggressive ADU strategies as well as based on guidance from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

In addition, Commissioner Dahl had questions regarding the selected sites and how they were determined. Consultant Amy Sinsheimer stated that only the best candidates, which were highlighted in the presentation, have been analyzed. She noted that there are additional sites that have not been included and outreach to property owners is ongoing.

Commissioner Tom asked how staff and consultants identified community opposition and asked what types of sites were eliminated due to perceived or actual opposition. In addition,

Commissioner Tom asked about single-family rezoning. He also asked about the strongest non-vacant candidate sites.

Director Hankamer explained that assumptions were based on outreach conducted related to the Downtown Specific Plan and General Plan Updates. She further explained that re-zoning single-family areas is considered a last resort and that current evaluations in the Housing Element Update do not include projections for that strategy.

Commissioner Padilla had questions regarding historic sites and how they were evaluated in the site analysis.

Director Hankamer stated that staff and consultants were aware that the majority of historic properties were excluded due to the potential impact on historic resources and to reflect community values.

Chair Braun asked how the median income was determined.

Consultant Amy Sinsheimer explained that those figures are published annually by HUD and provided the data points.

Chair Braun asked if the stables had been considered.

Chair Braun noted that the Commission should consider the impacts of increased development on Monterey Road before implementing a road diet. Further, she noted that the City might need to consider an aggressive ADU policy or allow overnight parking on residential roads due to growth in ADU development.

### **Presentation Continued**

PlaceWorks staff continued their PowerPoint presentation.

### **Questions by Commissioners**

Commissioner Tom asked about the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and whether or not it would be adopted before the Housing Element is adopted.

Director Hankamer confirmed that the goal was to receive feedback on the Ordinance so that they can return to the Commission with a draft and have it adopted in advance of the Housing Element.

Commissioner Tom further asked about the set-aside percentages and how they compare to other cities. In addition, he asked what other tools and incentives might be available for promoting the construction of new affordable housing.

Consultant Sinsheimer explained that the set-aside percentages were a little more aggressive for meeting State goals. Director Joanna Hankamer explained that some cities will partner with low-income housing developers to construct affordable housing or will have a Housing

Authority that helps to generate funding. She explained that the City of South Pasadena is part of the San Gabriel Valley Regional Housing Trust, which pulls together funding from the State for affordable housing. She added that the City of South Pasadena also has the potential through a partnership to look into the surplus Caltrans properties. Because the City does not have the money to do this, the City is really reliant on outside money and partnerships.

Chair Braun asked how the Caltrans houses fit into today's presentation – could they count as lots toward the RHNA numbers or count somehow as part of low-income housing or housing available to low income.

Director Hankamer said they have put in a bid for them with a partner, but she did not have an answer.

Vice-Chair Lesak had questions regarding senior and supportive housing and how they might be impacted by the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

Consultant Sinsheimer explained that due to the structure of many supportive and senior housing projects, they would not meet the definition of stand-alone units and therefore, would not be able to be counted towards RHNA numbers.

### **Presentation Continued**

PlaceWorks staff continued their PowerPoint presentation.

### **Questions by Commissioners**

Vice-Chair Lesak requested more information on the baseline assumptions for the Vons site. In addition, he requested more information on how parking requirements were considered and the amount of parking provided by example sites.

Commissioner Dahl expressed concern about asking the voters to approve very specific sites and the possibility that someone might recommend other sites that the Commission had not thought of. She stated that it is unclear how the sites were selected over others that might be selected and inquired if there had been outreach to the property owners.

Director Hankamer clarified that conversations had occurred with property owners of the sites. She added that consideration had been given to choosing sites that would be desirable for location, proximity to transit, size, and so on.

Commissioner Tom had questions regarding increasing height limits and asked what the reasoning was for having voters vote on specific sites that could have an increased height limit in order to meet RHNA numbers.

Director Hankamer explained that the strategy was to use these sites to meet RHNA goals while maintaining the vision of the City and lessening the impact of development elsewhere.

Commissioner Padilla stated concern that current strategies promoted smaller units and stated that ideally, there would be a variety of unit mixes to accommodate families and a variety of residents in South Pasadena.

Consultant Tescher explained that if the City were to increase the height limits, the sites and projects would be able to accommodate larger-scale units and a greater mixture of unit types.

Chair Braun thanked the presenters and stated that she wanted community input on the site selection. In addition, she stated that she believed a ballot initiative to increase the building height limit was premature and added that the City should challenge the RHNA allocation. She also advocated for more community outreach. She could not recommend to City Council that this item go on the ballot.

Council Liaison Mahmud stated that she had spoken with SCAG and does not think there is any traction to challenging the RHNA allocation. She noted concern for the ramifications of not allowing staff to try to meet the current allocation numbers. In addition, Council Liaison Mahmud asked what the City needed in order to put an initiative on the ballot.

City Attorney Highsmith stated that you could certainly be less site specific regarding raising the maximum height.

Director Hankamer clarified that there were two options. One recommendation was to allow an increased building height across the five selected sites. The second option was to increase the allowable building height along Fair Oaks, unrelated to RHNA specifics, as part of the Downtown Specific Plan Update, with regard to the appropriate height of a four-story building for daylighting and sustainable design. In addition, the Commission could consider just the Ostrich Farms site and increasing the height on Fair Oaks.

### **Public Comments**

Manager Lin reported that 22 written comments had been received, one of which had 81 signatures, and three audio comments. The 22 written comments were included in the agenda packets. The three audio comments were played for the Commission.

### **Audio Comments**

1. Jan Marshall, with the endorsement of SPRIG 2.0, a grass roots non-partisan coalition of individual residents and mergers dedicated to ensuring that broad-based representative decision-making is used in determining the future of South Pasadena, stated that the initiative to increase building heights should not be placed on the ballot. She added that the initiative is premature because: 1) the RHNA numbers are unreasonable when considering the City's infrastructure and ability to accommodate that growth; 2) the Housing Element process needs to rely on public participation and should be considered within the current height limit first; 3) the form-based development codes are still under review and will not be completed until Fall; and 4) the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) needs to include a feasible alternative analysis on accommodating growth within the current height limits.

2. Megan Kiser stated that the infrastructural capacity of the City needs to be addressed before increasing height limits and overloading the system. In addition, she stated that the City needs to consider the pressure increased growth will place on the school system and that traffic conditions need to be addressed before absorbing that many new residents.
3. Joanne Nuckols stated opposition to the ballot initiative to increase building heights. She added that the 45-foot height limit is necessary for maintaining South Pasadena's small town character and should be codified in the General Plan.

**Commissioner Discussion**

Vice-Chair Lesak limited his comments to just the ballot measure suggestion. He thanked staff and the consultants for identifying the sites - they have land available and are strategically located - and their hard work stated concern for impacts to the school district and that more time is needed before placing something on the ballot.

Commissioner Dahl concurred with Vice-Chair Lesak. She added that she is open to increasing heights in certain areas but stated more time is needed to educate and work with the community, and more conversations with the public are needed to explain how it is a good idea, before placing it on the ballot.

Commissioner Tom supported statements by Vice-Chair Lesak and Commissioner Dahl. He added that the issue needed to be more thoroughly vetted with more analysis before presenting it to voters. He agreed that strategically identifying locations is the right way to do it.

Commissioner Padilla thanked staff and consultants and agreed with her fellow Commissioners. She added that the City needed to do the best with the hand they were dealt (the RHNA numbers), and stated that any ballot initiative to increase height in a limited way should be done to allow flexibility, while still giving the City control over density and design.

**Decision:**

Chair Braun motioned, seconded by Vice-Chair Lesak, that the Commission does not recommend that the height limit issue be put on the November 2020 ballot. However, the Commission generally supports the staff's and consultant's efforts to strategically identify properties that may in some way benefit from a one-time specific height limit that has to be considered within the confines of density and location and consideration of infrastructure and other impacts. It is worth considering increases in height limits for specific properties as long as it is considered and analyzed in a bigger context. The Commission's comments should be shared with the City Council.

**Roll Call:**

Vice-Chair Lesak	Aye
Commissioner Dahl	Aye
Commissioner Tom	Aye
Commissioner Padilla	Aye
Chair Braun	Aye

**Motion passed, 5-0.**

Due to time constraints, further comments were curtailed, along with the remaining agenda item – Item 1.3. Review and provide direction regarding a potential Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and Update to the Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance – which will be discussed at the next regular Commission meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Braun adjourned the Special Planning Commission meeting on July 21, 2020 at 5:59 pm to the next regular Planning Commission meeting to be held on August 11, 2020.

  
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Janet Braun, Chair