



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA
Planning Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
April 29, 2025, 6:30 PM
Amedee O. "Dick" Richards Jr. Council Chambers
1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, CA 91030**

CALL TO ORDER

A Special Meeting of the South Pasadena Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Padilla on Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at 6:32 p.m. The meeting was held at 1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, California.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair: Lisa Padilla
Commissioners: Jason Claypool, Mark Gallatin, Amitabh Barthakur

Commission Liaison: Mayor Pro Tem Sheila Rossi

City Staff

Present: Roxanne Diaz, Esq., City Attorney
David Snow, Esq., Assistant City Attorney
Bradley Evanson, Interim Community Development Director
Elizabeth Bar-El; AICP, Interim Community Development Deputy Director
Robert (Dean) Flores, Acting Planning Manager
Lillian Estrada, Administrative Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved, 4-0.

DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS

Commissioners Claypool and Gallatin met with Staff as part of their Subcommittee duties; Vice-Chair Barthakur met with the City Consultant and Staff regarding the financial feasibility of the analysis.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Public Comment – General (Non-Agenda Items)

Greg S., a long-time resident, expressed concerns about a proposed ordinance regarding a change in the threshold for requiring a cultural heritage hearing from 200 to 500 square feet which was recently considered by the City Council. City Attorney Roxanne Diaz explained that the ordinance is currently under review by the Council, but has been remanded back to the Cultural Heritage Commission for further review. The resident was invited to contact Staff or City Attorney Diaz for additional guidance.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Consideration of Resolutions recommending to the City Council the adoption of proposed amendments to the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements, the Downtown Specific Plan, South Pasadena Municipal Code (SPMC) Chapter 36 (Zoning) and Zoning Map to adjust height, density, development standards and housing overlay boundaries and adopt an addendum to a previously certified Program EIR pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission conduct a Public Hearing and adopt the following draft Resolutions:

1. Resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an ordinance amending the General Plan Land Use Element (Attachment 1);
2. Resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an ordinance amending the General Plan Housing Element (Attachment 2);
3. Resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an ordinance amending the Downtown Specific Plan (Attachment 3);
4. Resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an ordinance to amend SPMC Chapter 36 (Zoning) (Attachment 4) and the Zoning Map.

Staff Presentation:

Interim Deputy Director Elizabeth Bar-El gave the Staff presentation, introduced the team, including Consultants Philip Burns and Margaret Muñoz of the Arroyo Group, and acknowledged the stellar contributions of Interim Senior Planner Ben Jarvis and former Acting Director Alison Becker.

Technical issues delayed the presentation, leading to a brief pause while the issues were resolved.

Interim Community Development Director Bradley Evanson introduced himself and was welcomed by the Commissioners.

Interim Deputy Director Bar-El provided an overview of the purpose and context of the proposed amendments and explained that the amendments aim to correct errors in the current Housing Element Table, adjust programs and establish heights and densities to support development. The proposed changes include eliminating the Housing Opportunity Overlay in certain areas, reducing densities in some zones, and adjusting development standards for multi-family and mixed-use projects. The purpose of the amendments is to implement the changes consistently and ensure internal General Plan consistency.

Consultant Burns presented a detailed analysis of proposed densities and heights, explaining the rationale behind the recommendations. The current allowable densities were reviewed, with proposed changes to the Housing Opportunity Overlay and densities along Mission Street and Fair Oaks Corridor. A more detailed analysis was conducted by income level, removing the National Register Historic District and other sites from the inventory. The revised Zoning Map and Capacity Table were presented, showing the proposed changes and their impact on Housing Element compliance and were reviewed in detail.

Questions for Staff:

The Commissioners raised questions about the proposed amendments, including the impact of height changes in the National Register Historic District and the feasibility of development standards.

Public Comment:

Dwight Bond, a long-time resident who runs an architectural practice at the Ostrich Farm, discussed the updates to the Housing Element and General Plan with concerns about protecting the single-family zones from the potential of over development and making sure that development can happen by removing roadblocks to good design and development.

Steven Lawrence (via Zoom) expressed concerns about the impact of development on traffic and infrastructure and removing restrictions and limitations to building.

Mr. Swanborn (via Zoom) thanked the Subcommittee for their substantive in-depth work on the Zoning Code. He expressed several concerns, including clarification about heights and the density of the zones.

Chair Padilla acknowledged receipt of several thoughtful public comments and questions submitted to Staff and the Commission and emphasized the importance

of providing responses. Staff will provide responses addressing the questions and concerns to help ensure a thorough understanding of the recommendations.

Consultant Burns addressed comments raised by Ms. Lisa Pendleton.

Commissioner Discussion:

The Commissioners and Interim Deputy Director Bar-El engaged in a robust discussion regarding economic questions, density and height summary and about capacity by income levels.

Assistant City Attorney Snow clarified density bonus law and the two different vehicles available for a developer to exceed or not have to comply with any development standard, including height.

The Commissioners discussed the importance of balancing development with community character and the need for clear regulations to guide future development.

The Commissioners engaged in a robust, thoughtful, detailed discussion, including but not limited to, the impact of development standards on unit sizes and efficiencies, clarified that height limits must accommodate base density and inclusionary units, with flexibility for density bonuses; the methodology for determining site capacity by income level, the impact of inclusionary units on overall capacity, the feasibility of different height limits and the potential for mezzanines and pitched roofs; the removal of maximum stories and floor area references from the Mixed-Use Overlay, focusing on objective design standards; and the need for clear communication of height limits and non-habitable spaces/projections.

Subcommittee Commissioners Claypool and Gallatin explained that their recommendations and those made by Staff sometimes differ, emphasizing the need for Commissioners to review and discuss those recommendations. The Commissioners also discussed maximum building length and façade articulation; building entries above or below the sidewalk; semi-subterranean parking and the potential for unattractive street facades; addressing issues through design standards rather than specific Code language and the appropriateness of minimum building heights for certain typologies, such as one-story bungalow courts. The Commissioners emphasized the importance of balancing height limits with architectural flexibility and community character, and appropriate design standards for different building types and street contexts.

The Commissioners decided to continue the meeting for further discussion on the remaining topics – including, but not limited to, setbacks, open space and unit size.

Chair Padilla reopened the Public Hearing and continued it to May 7 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

3. Adjournment to the Special Planning Commission meeting scheduled for May 7, 2025, at 4:30 pm

There being no further matters, Chair Padilla adjourned the meeting at 11:30 p.m.



Lisa Padilla, Chair