



CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA

Planning Commission

Special Meeting Minutes

May 20, 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, May 20, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held at 1424 Mission Street, South Pasadena, California.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair: Lisa Padilla
Commissioners: Jason Claypool, Mark Gallatin, Arnold Swanborn
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
Robert (Dean) Flores, Acting Planning Manager
Lillian Estrada, Administrative Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved, 4-0.

DISCLOSURE OF SITE VISITS AND EX-PARTE CONTACTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

None.

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING ITEM

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 continued Public Hearing and:

1. Receive corrections to the proposed Zoning Map Amendment exhibit and discuss the Zoning Map and its relationship to density and height (Attachments 1 and 2 of the Staff Report),
2. Resume discussion of proposed development standard Amendments in the Downtown Specific Plan and Chapter 36 (Zoning Code), specifically setbacks,
3. Consider whether the Planning Commission would like additional information related to the density, height, development standards, or other proposed amendments, and
4. Continue the matter for further consideration on June 10, 2025.

Staff Presentation:

Acting Planning Manager Dean Flores provided a brief background on the process, including multiple public meetings and the collection of feedback from the May 7th meeting. The focus of the meeting was on the proposed Zoning Map Amendment, Housing Opportunity Overlay Zones, and height and density table. He also presented a corrected Zoning Map amendment, highlighting specific changes and corrections.

Questions for Staff:

The Commissioners made several detailed questions regarding the following: the Housing Opportunity Overlay zones and changes to it; the methodology used to determine the Housing Opportunity Overlay zones; changes to the Zoning Map from the Joint City Council and Planning Commission Study Session version and the map presented; the difference between the Housing Overlay maps and the Mixed-Use Overlay maps; the methodology used with respect to properties on Huntington Drive and Fremont Avenue vis a vis some of the other high RH areas; the State's regulations in regard to religious properties.

Consultant Philip Burns of The Arroyo Group addressed the Commissioners' questions, providing a detailed explanation of the methodology used to determine

the Housing Opportunity Overlay zones, explaining the focus and scope on the project has always been the Downtown Specific Plan, Ostrich Farm and Huntington Drive; and explaining about the applicability of SB-4 and affordable housing and the Methodist Church footnote exception.

Public Comment:

Dwight Bond, resident and architect, spoke about planning standards matching building code standards and expressed concern about building heights and the height limit.

Harry Knapp, resident, spoke about having cultural heritage resources listed on the Zoning Map, density bonuses, the Zoning Code, and down zoning.

Jennifer Abbot (via Zoom) – asked for clarification on the units per acre for a specific property on Monterey Road, and Acting Planning Manager Flores confirmed it remains within the Housing Opportunity Overlay.

Consultant Burns addressed the Public Comments, providing detailed clarification and commentary.

Acting Planning Manager Flores provided clarification on projects that have historic status and how those are protected as part of the review process and zoning. He added that typically the Zoning Map only shows zoning and overlay zones. However, if the Commission directs, the Staff could prepare a map depicting landmarks in zones as part of an exhibit.

The Commissioners discussed the importance of maintaining historic character while accommodating development needs.

Chair Padilla acknowledged that City Attorney Roxanne Diaz and Assistant City Attorney David Snow (via Zoom) had joined the meeting.

Chair Padilla acknowledged receipt of a written Public Comment from Yvonne La Rose and issues she raised – (i) whether certain revisions before the Commission could be put to a vote by citizens; and (ii) the need for an assessment regarding parking and parking locations.

Commissioner Discussion:

The Commissioners engaged in a robust, detailed discussion, including amendments to the General Plan, focusing on Zoning Map adjustments and Housing Overlay zones. The Commissioners debated the impact on historic preservation, suggesting a 50-foot height limit for the Historic District and maintaining 70 dwelling units (DUs) per acre elsewhere. They also discussed the need for consistent height limits along Mission Street and the potential for 100 units

per acre. The Commissioners emphasized balancing development standards with historic preservation and community character and focused on adjusting building heights and densities.

The Commissioners stressed the need for consistent development standards and discussed the potential impact of height averaging and the importance of clear height and density guidelines for public understanding.

The Commissioners agreed to analyze the impact of reducing the height and density on the properties west of Fair Oaks and north and south of Mission Street.

The Commissioners agreed to continue the discussion on the proposed amendments at the June 10 Planning Commission meeting.

Chair Padilla proposed discussing specific areas of the Zoning Map, starting with Mission Street and opened the discussion.

The Commissioners debated the appropriate height and density for different sections of Mission Street, considering the National Register Historic District and other factors, and discussed the importance of maintaining a consistent height limit across Mission Street to preserve its character.

Commissioners agreed to set a height of 50 feet for the National Register Historic District and 55 feet for other areas of Mission Street. The discussion included considerations for ground floor commercial use requirements and the potential impact on development standards.

Acting Planning Manager Flores and Consultant Burns provided clarifications on the shop front overlay and its implications for ground floor uses.

The Commissioners finalized their recommendations, ensuring they align with the current Zoning Map and development standards.

The Commissioners discussed making a large, detailed zoning map also depicting the two corridors and the densities available to the public for informational and educational purposes.

The Commissioners expressed consensus on changes in the Mission Street area – the National Register Historic District, 50 DUs per acre, 50 feet; and Mission Street west of Orange Grove, 50 DUs per acre, 50 feet, not 45.

The Commission recessed for 10 minutes and resumed at 10:05 p.m.

The Commissioners resumed their discussion of the development standards. Commissioner Claypool, as a member of the Subcommittee, along with Commissioner Gallatin, reminded everyone that there were five topics considered which included building heights, setbacks, open space, parking and unit size minimums. He set the agenda for the meeting, starting with unit size minimums with a recommendation to remove minimums.

The Commissioners agreed with the Subcommittee's recommendation and agreed to further investigation by the Subcommittee into unit mix, especially in consideration of larger families, instead of unit size.

The Commissioners next discussed parking, referencing the May 7 agenda packet, including parking ratios, tandem and compact parking.

The Commissioners discussed deferring a decision for further discussion with The Arroyo Group to make sure their recommendation coincides with The Arroyo Group modeling and does not pose a disadvantage when the recommendation is made to HCD (California Department of Housing and Community Development). Although the Commission did talk through several of the parking standards, the Commission decided further research is needed.

City Attorney Diaz recapped the ordinances – amending the General Plan Land Use Element, recommending the Council adopt an ordinance amending the General Plan Housing Element, and then adopting a resolution amending the Downtown Specific Plan, and the ordinance to amend the Zoning Code and the Zoning Map.

The Commissioners discussed dates for a public outreach event. Consultant Burns discussed the viability of having materials prepared within the suggested timeframe.

Chair Padilla reopened the Public Hearing and continued Item 2 to a date certain, which is June 10 at 6:30 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

3. **Adjournment to the Regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled for June 10, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.**

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



Lisa Padilla, Chair