



***Department of  
Community Development***

## **Responses to Questions received at the January 14 and 28, 2025 Community Listening Sessions**

Below are responses compiled by Community Development staff to questions asked of staff at the two events held to provide information about the department's long-range planning activities and housing initiatives in 2025. This list includes comments that do not constitute questions, and in such cases no responses are provided.

The comments have been grouped by topic for convenience.

### **Affordable Housing**

- Community services buildings, is there an opportunity for affordable housing?
  - The City Yard, adjacent to the Community Services Building on Mission is currently being studied as a site for an affordable housing project.
- Displacement-hard to show financial ability to qualify for housing? Can the City step in?
  - The City can refer residents to third party resources that may be able to help meet eligibility requirements. We encourage displaced residents to reach out for information about resources that may be available depending on the circumstances.
- Caltrans homes- Can the City buy the homes that need remodeling and rent them as affordable housing?
  - Purchasing and renovating the homes requires significant funding as many of the homes are in disrepair. Under SB 381, the City can sell the homes at fair market value and use the funds generated to reinvest in affordable housing.
- Need a mix of unit sizes
- Provide more bike parking in residential
- Rental car services (ride share) within the City
  - The City supports diverse housing and sustainable transportation options. These features are reviewed on a project-by-project basis.
- New housing buildings should have underground parking requirements.
- Senior Buildings-concern about affordability covenants ending

- When affordability covenants are due to expire, the City can assist with exploring options to preserve long-term affordability through partnerships and/or funding opportunities – depending on the circumstances.
- Will new housing include units for a mix of incomes? What would be the percentages of low, middle, etc.?
- South Pasadena's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance encourages the development of on-site affordable housing units based on the 15% requirement. Rental projects must include an equal mix of low- and very/extremely low-income units, while ownership projects can provide either rental or moderate-income ownership units to fulfill the requirement.
- Do we have an option to fight against building housing element requirements?
  - The City is obliged to comply with the housing element mandate to provide opportunities to build housing to satisfy the RHNA. This means that City zoning requirements must facilitate these opportunities, and provide streamlined processing for them. The requirements for Housing Elements are set at the State level and non-compliance can result in penalties, including loss of funding and legal action. The City is working to meet these requirements while balancing community priorities.
- Community would not like affordable housing concentrated in one location. A preference to have affordable housing mixed in with other market rate development.
  - The City encourages a balanced distribution of affordable housing and supports the integration of affordable units alongside market-rate units through its inclusionary housing ordinance. Additionally, zoning districts in which these units may be built are located in areas across the city.
- Preference for inclusionary units to be on site. Paying in-lieu fees delays getting the units... some comments to remove the in-lieu fee. Seen as a waste of time and money.
  - The City's inclusionary housing ordinance prioritizes construction of on-site inclusionary units. However, by law, the ordinance must provide alternatives for compliance. The City adopted an ordinance four years ago that established the circumstances in which an in-lieu fee could be used as an alternative to providing some portion of the inclusionary obligation in the project. The City's current consideration of the amount of that fee is a follow-up to the decision made at ordinance adoption.
- Fees should be high to actually build units
  - The City's in-lieu fees are designed to be relatively higher to encourage/incentivize the construction of on-site affordable units. *(NOTE: Following these sessions, the Council adopted the in-lieu fee in February.)*
- In-lieu fees don't get the housing in place and kick the can down the road-need to actually build units
- Will the housing trust fund ever accumulate enough money to fund affordable housing units in the City?

- It is important to note that city housing funds are most often used to leverage other funding sources, working with partners (usually non-profit) who are putting together a financing package to build housing. As such, any funding built up in the fund may be useful toward achieving a successful low-income housing project. Also, the City is not precluded from considering additional funding sources for its housing trust fund, such as proceeds from the sale of homes formerly owned by Caltrans, or state/federal funding opportunities, provided that the conditions attached to those sources are fulfilled.
- Concerns about the City not having enough resources to properly manage the trust fund.
  - The City is committed to responsible oversight and execution of the housing fund. The fund is managed by the Community Development Housing Division.

## Design Review

- DRB Reform: Residents are worried that the design of projects will be impacted if the DRB is dissolved. How will the City maintain architectural quality? Will qualified candidates in design be appointed to the PC if the DRB is dissolved, so as to ensure that design is thoughtfully considered?
  - City staff will continue to utilize the City's Design Guidelines to inform Architectural design and quality. The proposed ordinance also includes a new process for Planning Commission Chair review, as well as new criteria to ensure that the Council continues to appoint architects, planners and other professionals to the commission. Additionally, staff review processes will continue to utilize design guidelines and work with applicants, along with the City architect, toward high quality projects.
- High density should be beautiful
- Design review process through Planning Commission?
  - The DRB's responsibilities are proposed to be delegated to the Director in most cases and above the 500 square foot threshold to the Planning Commission Chair, through a new process described in the draft amendments. The final recommendation proposes that new single-family structures require Planning Commission approval.
- Concern that the public won't be able to provide comments on large multifamily development.
  - Public noticing and community input will not disappear entirely. To the extent permitted consistent with State law, projects will include public notice.
- Can the City honor state requirements for streamlining and objectivity, but also allow a public review where the public can provide their comments on development?

- The department is in the process of evaluating the best way to inform the public of projects that have been approved or larger projects undergoing staff review.
- Design Review should be done by PC for new buildings constructed under Measure SP.
- Fear of losing residential character.
- Desire to lower permit fees?
  - The City of South Pasadena permit fee schedule is in line with the fee schedules of other municipalities in the San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles County as a whole. The Council sets the fees annually, in consideration of the City's expenses involved in processing fees. This is done through a process that is open to the community.
  - The Council also sets development fees, which are implemented by the Building Division through the plan check process.

## **Measure SP**

- What is the height that goes with each proposed density?
  - Staff is proposing a range of heights that are feasible for each density level. These were shared with the public at an Open House that took place on February 18th. This will be the main topic of discussion at a Joint Council/Planning Commission study session.
- When do we estimate the senior housing building? Height?
  - The City's project in partnership with Related on the City-owned Mound Street site will be subject to the density and height levels established in the DTSP.
- Density within 45ft is possible: what is the purpose of higher height limits?
  - Certain density may be accommodated within a 45-foot height limit, but not all densities currently in the Code or proposed for adjustment can be achieved at a 45-foot height level. Furthermore, allowing the very minimum size possible affects the project's ability to provide a diversity of unit sizes and open space within the project. Additionally, the feasibility of providing parking must be considered, and subterranean parking has become much more costly in recent years. A higher height limit can provide bigger unit sizes, more open space, and additional units.
- Can limiting parking above ground level be codified?
  - Yes, if the Council wishes to do so.
- Look and feel is critical especially on Mission St. (DTSP)
- Renters didn't understand what they voted for and how this would affect them.
- Community wants visual examples of du/acre and possible building types that would accommodate 70 units per acre.
  - Renderings were provided at the February 18<sup>th</sup> open house and will be included in upcoming presentations.

- Relevant communications and documents that were displayed reference different architectural and design styles, as well as potential unit counts, locations, and massing details.
- Some community members want there to be a restriction on above-ground parking on large developments. Some residents only want subterranean or ground level parking in an effort to help keep building heights lower.
  - Community members can advocate for below-grade parking where feasible.
- Can the City require more landscaping for large developments? Green buildings - incorporate landscaping into the building. Roof top garden requirements?
  - Although this is not a standard being discussed in the Post Measure SP implementation effort, this is a possibility if Council directs its consideration in a future zoning code update.

## Development

- Housing Opportunity Overlay: show cultural resources within the overlay as constraints to new development
  - Although not shown on the map, in the City's analysis of potential housing units to count for satisfying the RHNA, historic properties were not included as it is understood that there are constraints on such properties.
- When we are looking at the Arroyo, is there an opportunity to add more recreational facilities? (open space zones)
  - This is not part of the current planning effort, but the Community Services Department is undertaking a project that looks at open space in the city.
- Annexation of a parcel by the wash for housing?
  - The City Council can initiate a request to annex the parcel between the freeway and the wash from the City of Los Angeles. This process would be overseen by the Local Agency Formation Committee (LAFCO). Annexation requests typically take several years to complete.
- Is it possible to incorporate a theatre into the old school district building?
  - While live entertainment and nightlife-oriented uses are included in the approved plan entitlement, the approved plans do not include a theatre.
- Storage facility by Metro station: an opportunity for mixed use development?
  - The owners of the Extra Space Storage site have stated that they have no current plans to redevelop the site.
- Carrows Restaurant: what are the unit sizes in the new development proposed? Need more family-sized units, especially with displacement concerns after the recent wildfires.
  - The most-recent plans submitted for 815 Fremont Avenue reflect a proposed unit mix of approximately 21 1-bedroom units, 26 2-bedroom units, and 9 3-bedroom units.
- Are there unit size requirements for larger development?

- The minimum unit size in the Building Code is 400 sq/ft. However, most projects propose considerably larger units.

## **Tenants' Rights/ Concerns**

- Displacement of existing tenants for new housing-what can City do?
  - Local and statewide tenant protections are in place to help minimize displacement, including eviction protections. In the event that a proposed project could result in impacts on existing tenants, there are options and processes in place for the City to address such impacts.
- Renters impacted by measure SP-Can the City have more community meetings with renters? (more engagement)
  - The City is committed to increased engagement and will explore opportunities for additional outreach, workshops, and meetings to address renter concerns.
- Implementation of housing element programs that support renters
  - The City's Housing Division is now staffed and is moving forward on the Housing Element's various programs that can support renters.
- More resources for the Community Development Department to help with all Planning initiatives.
  - The City recognizes the need for additional resources and is exploring partnerships that could enhance housing and planning initiatives.
- How will renters be protected by possible development under Measure SP?
  - Developers are required to follow local and statewide tenants' protections, including eviction protections and relocation requirements. In the event that a proposed project could result in impacts on existing tenants, there are options and processes in place for the City to address such impacts.
- Can the City look at rent stabilization or cap? Tenant protection programs are overdue.
  - Although the Council recently opted to to pursue a rent stabilization ordinance, AB 1482 is a state law that provides a degree of rent stabilization in South Pasadena and mandates a cap of either 5% plus cost-of-living, or 10% - whichever is lower - for annual rent increases. The City is exploring other policy and program options that could also support renters.
- City's lack of engagement with renters is a concern.
- Need more resources for housing/ CD

## **Other**

Some of the questions below concern matters not within the scope of the Department's planning initiative work plan, and in these cases, no answers are provided.

- Impacts of fires on our planning initiative processes.

- The City is continuing on schedule with the Planning efforts in this year's workplan.
- Are there ADA requirements for new buildings so people can age in place?
- More parks, green spaces, gathering places-less commuting
- AHTF great idea
- Providing affordable housing is more important than worrying about design
- Setbacks-building against property lines can encroach on privacy.
- Resiliency within General Plan? (South West Monterey Hills-high fire zone)
  - Prioritize Specific Plan for SWMH due to high fire zone (General Plan pg.67)
- Discretionary approvals: Is it possible if the City can notify the public of ongoing projects, in the pipeline, etc. Perhaps by providing an online resource?
- What are the parking requirements for commercial zones that impact nearby residential zones?
- Employee parking for commercial spaces?
- Need offsite parking, public transportation-to handle higher foot traffic of employees.
- Residents do not want employees of commercial centers parking in their neighborhoods.
- How do we deal with infrastructure for new buildings?
- Can you post the consultant's work on the website?
  - As work products are determined to be ready for public consumption, staff will post them on the webpage. It is always important to ensure that information provided has been vetted to be accurate and responsive to the community's needs.