



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** JANUARY 10, 2024

**TO:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**FROM:** JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** STUDY SESSION #2 ON THE NORTH LAKE SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the staff report and staff presentation and provide feedback on the North Lake Specific Plan (NLSP) update. There is no action required at this time. Following this study session, staff anticipates returning to the Planning Commission in Spring 2024 with the proposed NLSP for review and recommendation to City Council.

#### BACKGROUND:

On May 24, 2023, staff presented an update to the Planning Commission on the NLSP. The presentation provided an overview of the planning process, plan vision, and subarea concepts. The discussion focused on the historical background of the area, refinements to the plan boundary, the impact of State housing legislation on the area, the need for streetscape improvements, particularly trees, pedestrian/bicycle accessibility and safety, the necessity for comprehensive and timely implementation of the plan, and redevelopment opportunity sites (*Food 4 Less*, the former *Big Lots*, *CVS*, and the former *Kaiser Permanente*). A summary of feedback received is provided in Attachment A.

#### NORTH LAKE SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE:

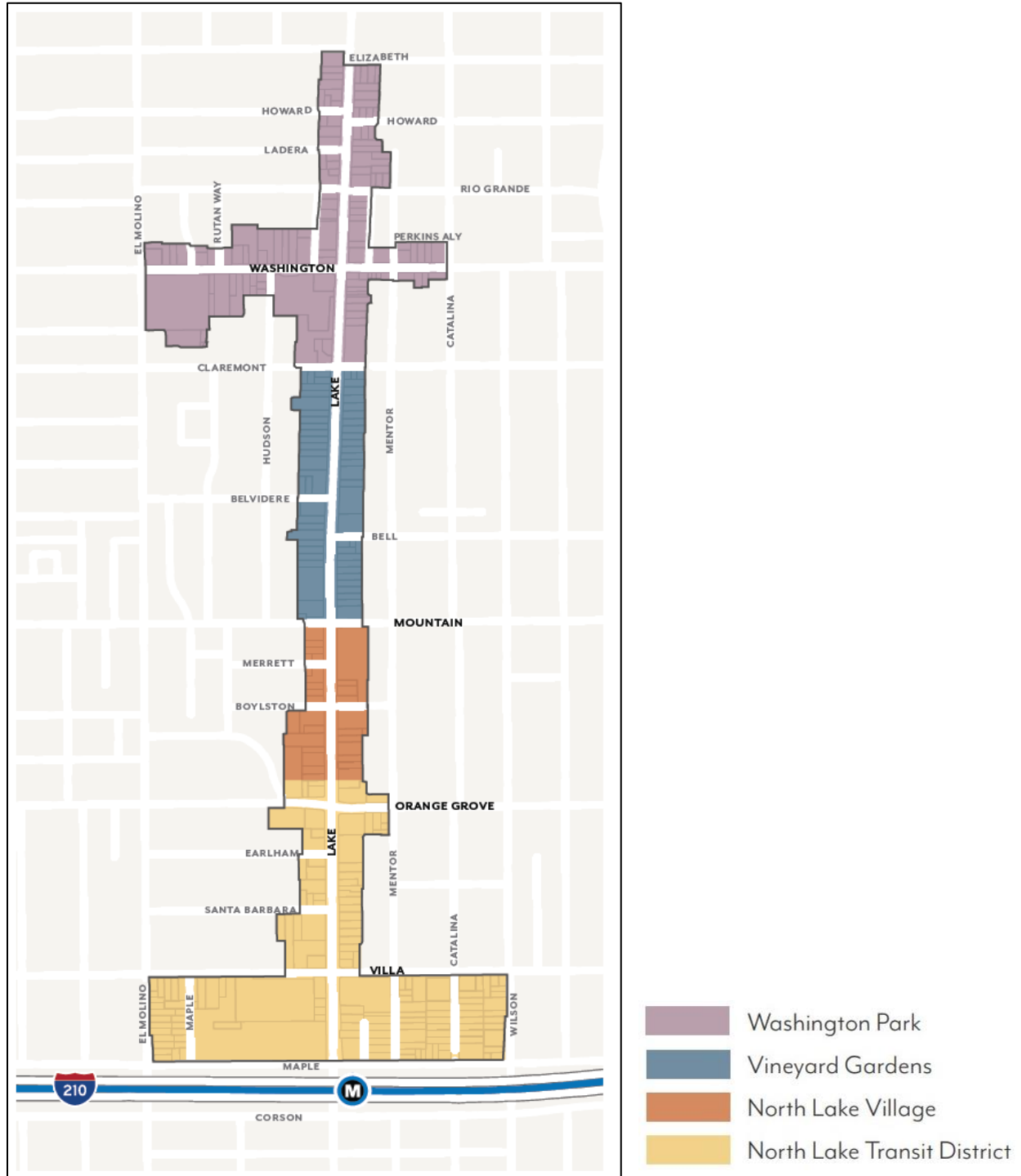
##### Plan Boundary

The NLSP area generally encompasses North Lake Avenue, north of the I-210 freeway, from E. Maple Street to Elizabeth Street. Also included are the area bounded by E. Villa Street to the north, N. Wilson Avenue to the east, E. Maple Street to the south and El Molina Avenue to the west, and the area along E. Washington Boulevard, between N. El Molino Avenue and N. Catalina Avenue. Staff presented potential refinements to the plan boundary at the Study Session in May. Based on the comments, staff proposes the boundaries shown in Figure 1.

**Key changes from the last draft:** Notable removals from the NLSP area are the eastern portions of the surface parking lots at CVS and La Villa Lake Apartments that front N. Mentor Avenue. Both were removed in order to ensure consistency with their existing Low Density Residential (i.e., single-family) land use designation on the Land Use Diagram and

corresponding RS-6-LD-1 (Residential, Single-Family Landmark District 1 (Bungalow Heaven) zoning district. Two additions into the plan area include the western rear portion of the McDonald's site along Boylston Street and the western rear portion of the Pasadena Covenant Church site, between Santa Barbara Street and E. Villa Street, both of which are parking lots for their respective uses. Details of all proposed boundary changes will be presented at the meeting.

Figure 1 – Revised Plan Boundary and Subareas for NLSP Area



## Plan Chapters

The NLSP will consist of seven chapters:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Background
- 3) Vision, Goals & Policies
- 4) Zoning & Land Use
- 5) Public Realm Standards
- 6) Private Realm Standards
- 7) Implementation & Administration

Chapters 1 and 2 (Attachment B) were presented at the Study Session in May and were revised based on feedback. Revisions are highlighted in the document. New Chapters 3 and 4 (Attachment C) are included with this report and Chapters 5 through 7 will be included with the staff recommendation when the entire NLSP is presented to the Planning Commission in Spring 2024.

### *Chapter 1 – Introduction (Revised)*

This chapter explains what a specific plan is and describes the area of the NLSP. It also includes Land Use Element policies specific to the NLSP and identifies how the NLSP relates to other planning documents such as the Bicycle Transportation Action Plan, Pasadena Street Design Guide, Master Street Tree Plan, and Pasadena Climate Action Plan.

**Key changes from the last draft:** Additional comments were added to the specific plan, related to public transportation safety, a positive pedestrian experience, and accessibility in the public realm.

### *Chapter 2 – Background (Revised)*

This chapter gives a brief historical background of the NLSP area and the surrounding historic districts, both local Landmark Districts and National Register Historic Districts, along with a list of individual properties designated or eligible for designation in and surrounding the NLSP. The chapter also describes the existing built environment, including types of buildings, land uses, and publicly accessible spaces for the NLSP area's four subareas. The four subareas are Washington Park, Vineyard Gardens, North Lake Village, and North Lake Transit District, as shown in Figure 1.

**Key changes from the last draft:** The subarea names for 'Washington Neighborhood', 'Belvidere Gardens', and 'Commercial Corridor' were changed to 'Washington Park', 'Vineyard Gardens' (acknowledging 'Lake Vineyard Avenue' as the original name for Lake Avenue) and 'North Lake Village', respectively. Additional historical details were incorporated into this chapter, achieving a more comprehensive context for the NLSP area and its historical significance in the region.

### *Chapter 3 – Vision, Goals & Policies (New)*

This chapter sets forth the NLSP's vision, goals, and policies, which identify the desired outcomes of the NLSP and the general direction to achieve them. The 'vision' statement identifies the intended future of the NLSP area, with seven supporting vision objectives. The 'goals' describe what outcome is desired with supporting 'policies' that provide a course of action to achieve the associated goal.

The vision of the NLSP area is to create a vibrant and visually cohesive corridor with several distinctive districts that serve the surrounding neighborhoods and community while being accessible to transit and pedestrians. New development will contribute to the community's cultural and architectural history with complementary-designed buildings, enhanced sidewalks, street trees, and public open spaces.

The goal for the Washington Park subarea is to be an active, walkable, neighborhood-serving as the northern gateway to the North Lake Avenue corridor, with mixed-use development that reinforces the surrounding neighborhood's cultural and architectural history and provides public places for gathering. The Vineyard Gardens subarea will be a residential and commercial neighborhood that encourages architectural styles that are mindful of the residential character of adjacent neighborhoods. The North Lake Village subarea will be a commercial corridor with an enhanced streetscape and public realm that includes a variety of indoor and outdoor dining options in addition to other neighborhood-serving commercial uses, designed with sensitivity to the adjacent residential neighborhoods and supporting a walkable environment. Lastly, the North Lake Transit District subarea will be a higher-intensity mix of retail, office, multi-family, and institutional uses that expand the customer base for local businesses and create a vibrant, transit-oriented southern gateway to the North Lake Avenue corridor.

#### *Chapter 4 – Zoning & Land Use (New)*

This chapter includes the zoning and land use regulations to guide the development of the NLSP area to achieve the plan's vision. A total of nine zoning districts are proposed to regulate the types of allowable uses within the NLSP area, as shown in Figure 2. The three 'NL' (North Lake) zoning districts that cover the majority of the NLSP area include the following:

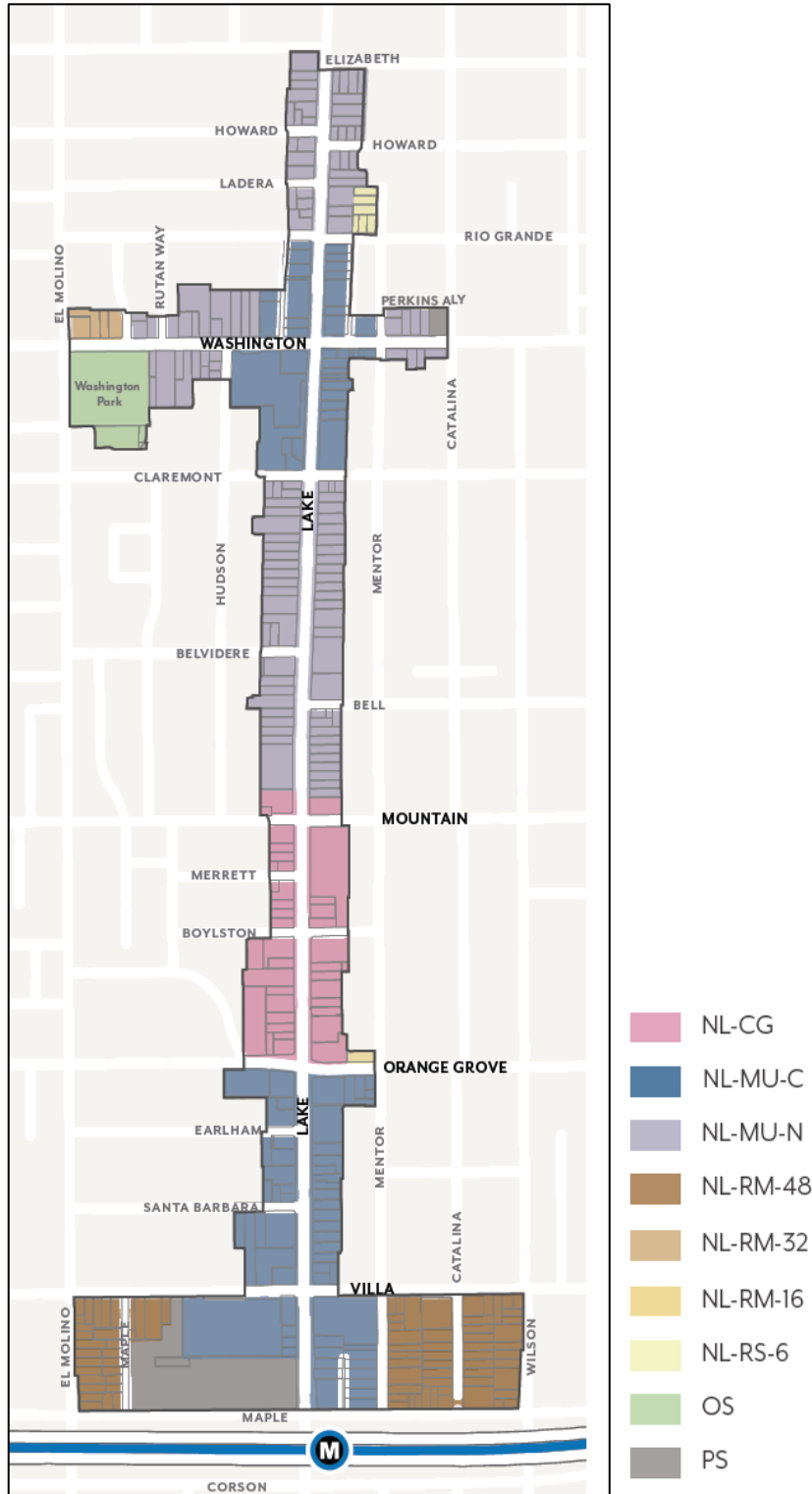
- NL-MU-C (Mixed-Use Core) – Located within the North Lake Transit District subarea and at the Lake/Washington node, it is intended to create mixed-use centers where projects are either entirely commercial or mixed-use with a variety of commercial uses.
- NL-MU-N (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) – Located in the Vineyards Gardens subarea and on the periphery of the Lake/Washington node, it is focused more on neighborhood-serving uses where projects are entirely commercial, entirely residential, or mixed-use.
- NL-CG (Commercial General) – Located between E. Orange Grove Boulevard and E. Mountain Street, it is a commercial-only zone focused on neighborhood and citywide services.

During the Study Session in May, staff presented options for creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment within the North Lake Village that would complement planned streetscape improvements within the public realm. For example, one option was to require new development to provide a landscaped setback with plant materials and trees to provide a visual barrier and soften the look and feel of the built environment. Similarly, another option was to require new restaurants to provide landscaped outdoor dining areas.

However, given the potential for vehicular and pedestrian conflicts at drive-through restaurants, and their fundamental auto-orientation in this subarea, the Planning Commission was more concerned with whether these uses should continue to be allowed to be rebuilt, with particular attention paid to the recent reconstructions of *McDonald's* and *Chick-fil-A* at the southwest and southeast corners of N. Lake Avenue and Boylston Street, respectively.

The current and draft NLSP include a provision allowing the complete demolition and reconstruction of a drive-through business, provided the size of the new building is not larger than the existing building, subject to the approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

Figure 2 – Draft Zoning Districts for NLSP Area



*Chapter 5 – Public Realm Standards (In-Progress)*

This chapter will include similar standards in recently adopted Specific Plans, such as minimum sidewalk widths, parkway dimensions, street tree frequency (or spacing), and tree well dimensions. A design guide for tree selection with recommendations on alternative tree species will also be prepared. Information on the designated tree species in the City’s Master Street Tree Plan, inventory of existing street trees, and potential alternative tree species will be presented at the Study Session.

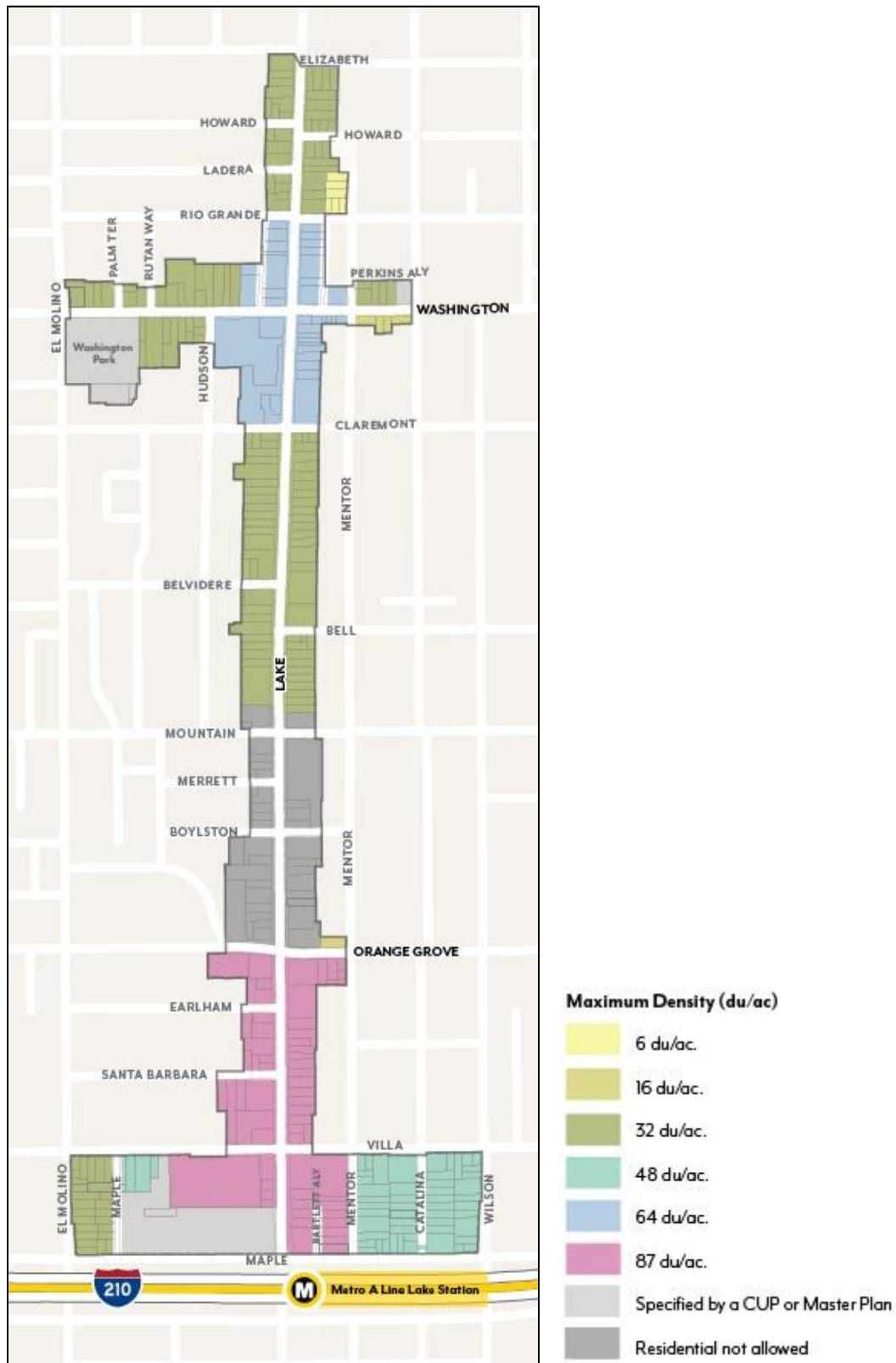
*Chapter 6 – Private Realm Standards (In-Progress)*

This chapter will include standards for private development, such as residential density, building height, setbacks, historic adjacency transitions, building modulation, ground floor building frontages, design standards, parking, private and common open space for tenants, and publicly accessible open spaces. In May, staff presented preliminary standards for residential densities, building height, and setbacks for the NLSP area. The following are the densities that were presented at the Study Session, as shown in Figure 3.

- Washington Park Subarea –
  - Parcels zoned NL-MU-C located near the intersection of Lake Avenue and Washington Boulevard, the proposed density is 64 dwelling units per acre (du/ac). The Land Use Element of the General Plan designates a range of 0 to 87 du/ac.
  - Parcels zoned NL-MU-N along Washington Boulevard and on Lake Avenue north of Rio Grande, the proposed density is 32 du/ac. The Land Use Element designates a range of 0 to 87 du/ac.
- Vineyard Gardens Subarea –
  - Parcels zoned NL-MU-N along Lake Avenue between Claremont and Mountain Street, the proposed density is 32 du/ac. The Land Use Element designates a range of 0 to 32 du/ac.
- North Lake Village Subarea –
  - Parcels zoned NL-CG along Lake Avenue between Mountain Street and Orange Grove Boulevard, no residential density is proposed. The Land Use Element designated this area for commercial-only purposes.
- North Lake Transit District Subarea –
  - Parcels zoned NL-MU-C along Lake Avenue between Orange Grove Boulevard and Maple Street and portions of Villa Street, the proposed density is 87 du/ac. The Land Use Element designates a range of 0 to 87 du/ac.

A concept illustration showing the overall design intent of the preliminary standards, including the public realm standards, will be presented at the Study Session.

Figure 3 – Draft Residential Densities for NLSP Area



*Chapter 7 – Implementation & Administration (In-Progress)*

This chapter will include a list of implementation action items and potential funding sources that will help achieve the plan vision over time. An update on the North Lake Avenue Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Plan and information on other capital improvement projects will be presented at the Study Session.


**NEXT STEPS:**

This report provides an update on the NLSP for the Planning Commission and members of the public to use as a reference for the Study Session. Feedback received will inform the preparation of the proposed NLSP, that will be presented to the Planning Commission in Spring 2024 for its review and recommendation to the City Council.


Respectfully Submitted,

  
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Development

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Attachments: (3)

Attachment A – Updated Public Outreach Process and Feedback Received  
Attachment B – Revised Draft NLSP Chapters 1 and 2  
Attachment C – New Draft NLSP Chapters 3 and 4

Attachments are also available at the following link: [www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024](http://www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024)



**ATTACHMENT A  
UPDATED PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS AND FEEDBACK RECEIVED**

Can also be viewed at: [www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024](http://www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024)

**ATTACHMENT B  
REVISED DRAFT NLSP CHAPTERS 1 AND 2**

Can also be viewed at: [www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024](http://www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024)

**ATTACHMENT C  
NEW DRAFT NLSP CHAPTERS 3 AND 4**

Can also be viewed at: [www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024](http://www.ourpasadena.org/NLSP-PC-SS-011024)