

NORTH LAKE SPECIFIC PLAN

*City Council Hearing
November 24, 2025*



OUR PASADENA
PUTTING THE PLAN IN MOTION

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION



Planning Commission Recommendation (September 2025)

Recommended approval of the proposed North Lake Specific Plan (NLSP) as presented by Staff with following changes:

1. Change timeframe for Implementation Action PA-4 (Temporary Art Installations in Empty Storefronts) from 'Medium-Term' to 'Short-Term'. Included in Staff Recommendation
2. Increase residential density for 701 & 709 N. Mentor Avenue and 919 E. Orange Grove Boulevard from Low Density Residential (RS-6) and Medium Density Residential (RM-16) to Medium-High Density Residential (RM-32 & NL-RM-32). Included in Staff Recommendation
3. Remove the PK (Parking) overlay for two properties outside the NLSP, 1311 & 1321 N. Mentor Avenue: RM-12-LD-1 (Residential Multi-family, two units per lot, Bungalow Heaven Landmark District). Included in Staff Recommendation

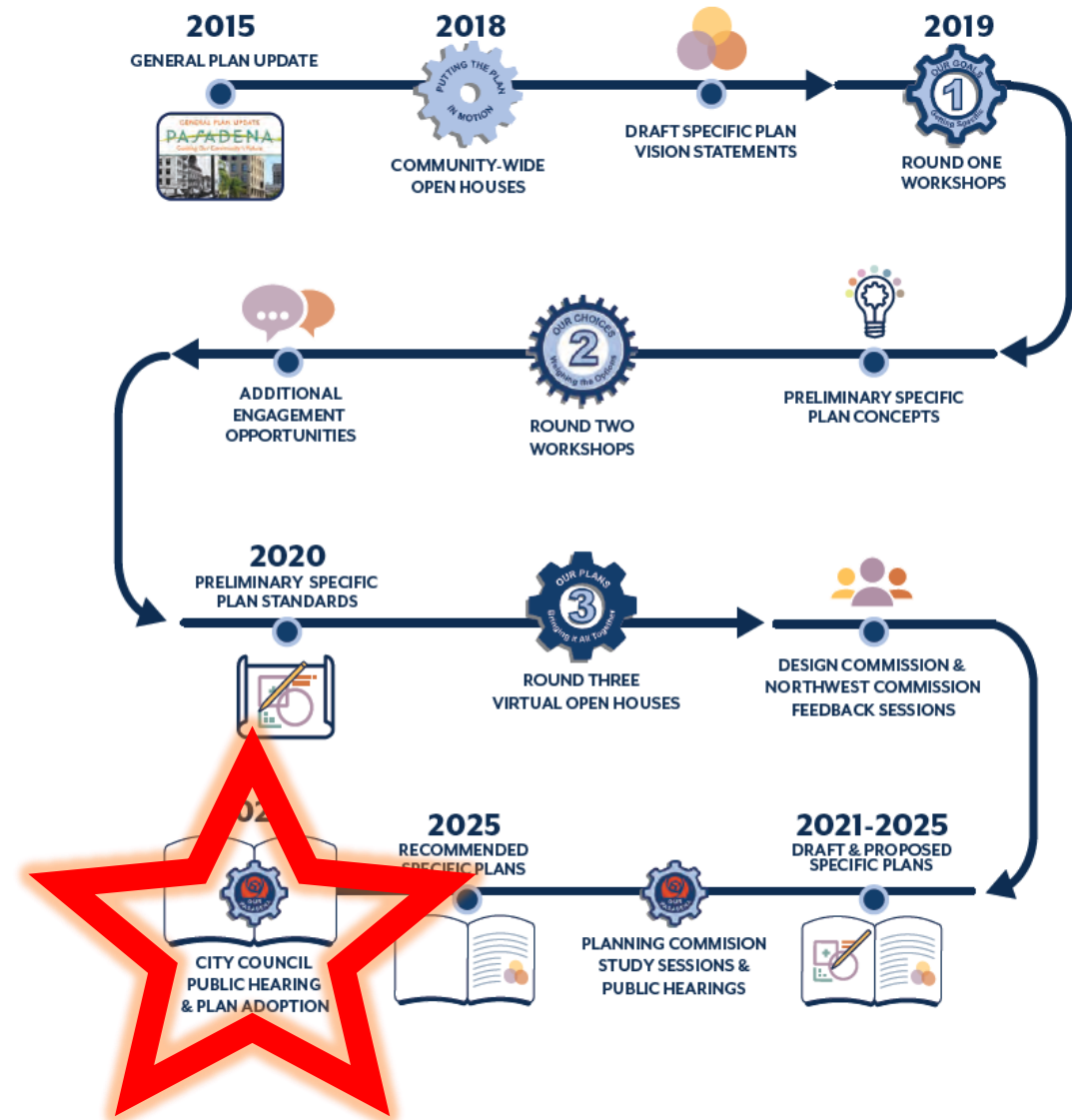
Staff supports these recommendations.

PLANNING PROCESS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Planning Process & Community Engagement

- Citywide Open Houses: 3 (2018)
- Round 1 Workshop (2018)
- Citywide Youth Summit (2019)
- Community Walking Tour (2019)
- Round 2 Workshop (2019)
- Round 3 Virtual Open House (2020-2022)
- Live Webinar (2020)
- Northwest Commission (2021)
- Design Commission (2021)
- Planning Commission Study Sessions: 6 (2023-2025)
 - Public Realm Subcommittee (2024)
- Planning Commission Public Hearing (September 2025)
- City Council Public Hearing (November 2025)

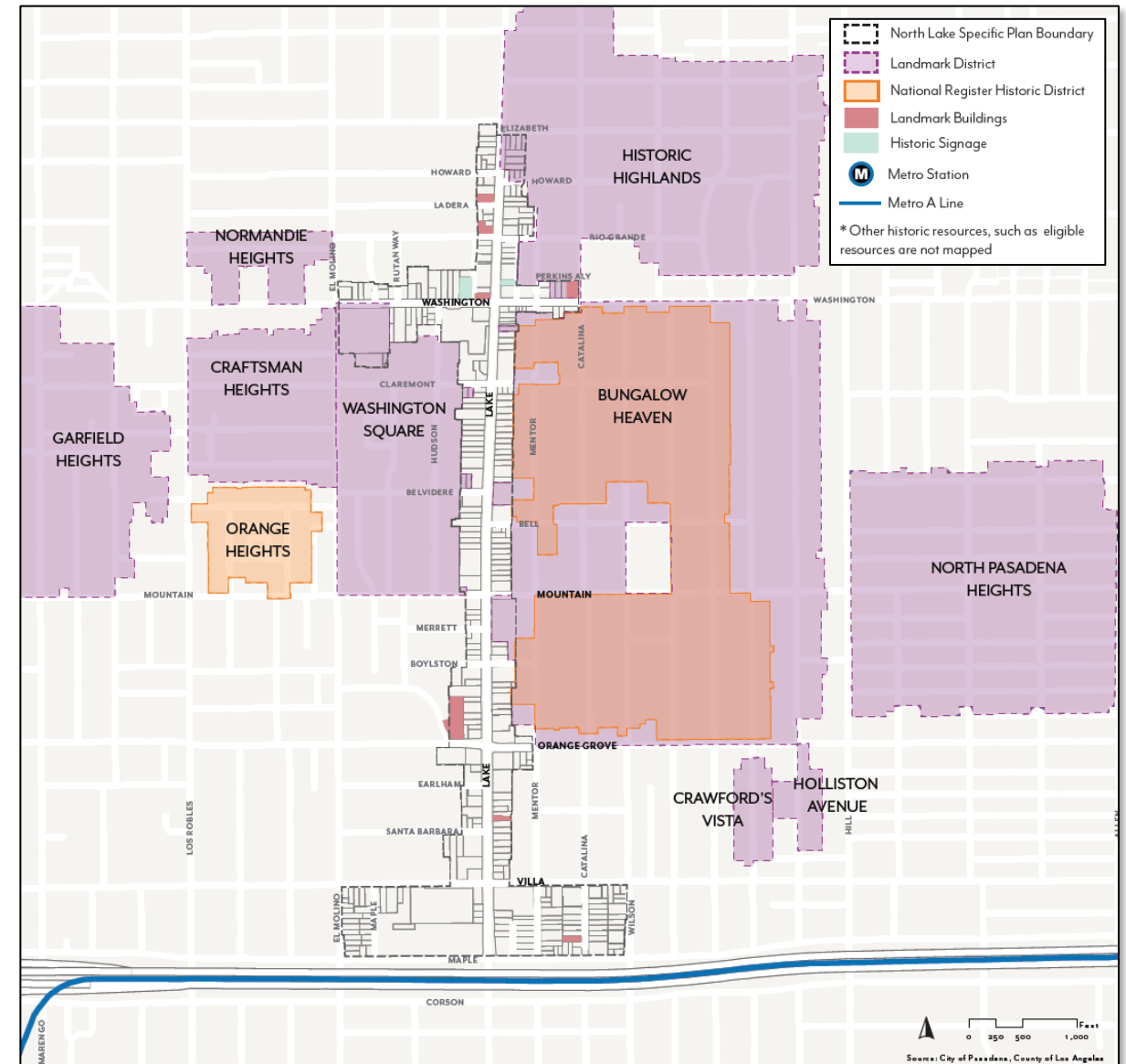


RECOMMENDED SPECIFIC PLAN



North Lake Specific Plan Area

- Plan area is in northwest Pasadena, north of the 210 Freeway
- Predominately a commercial corridor
- Southern portion of the Plan area is within 1/2 mile of the Metro A Line Station
- Plan area is surrounded by various historic resources, including Bungalow Heaven, Washington Square & Historic Highlands



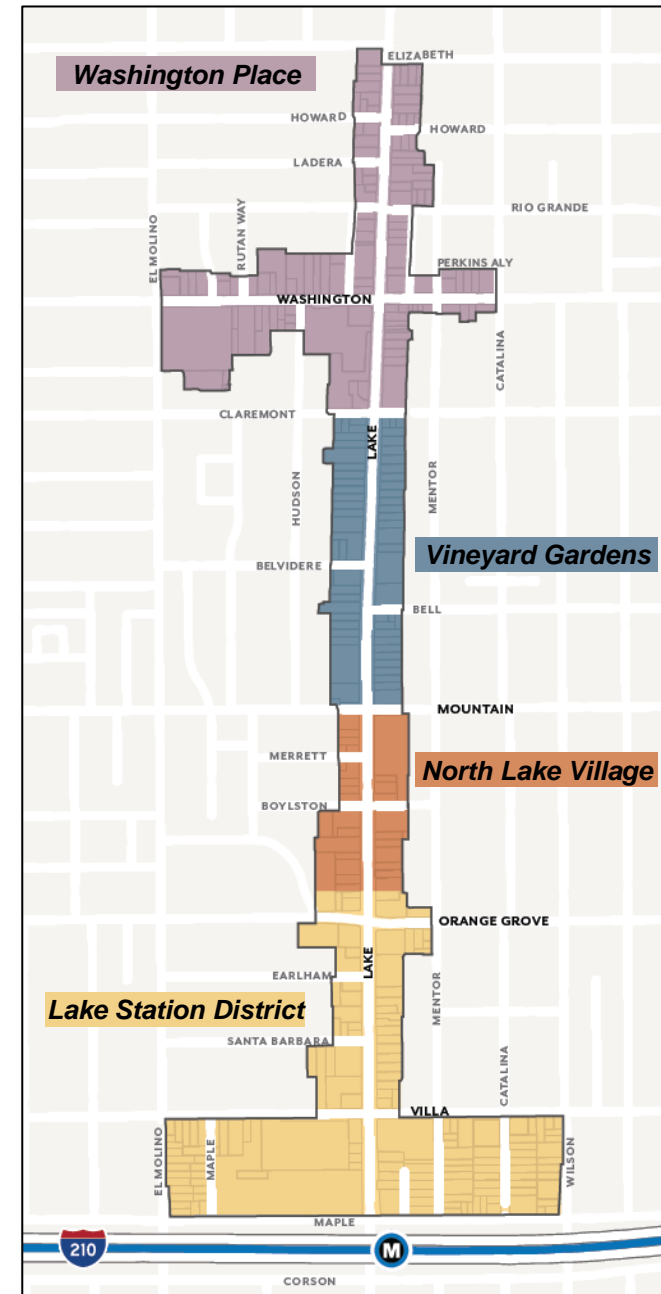
North Lake Specific Plan Vision Statement



North Lake will be a vibrant and visually cohesive corridor, weaving together several distinct pedestrian-oriented districts that complement and build upon the cultural and architectural history of the community and surrounding neighborhoods.

North Lake Specific Plan Vision

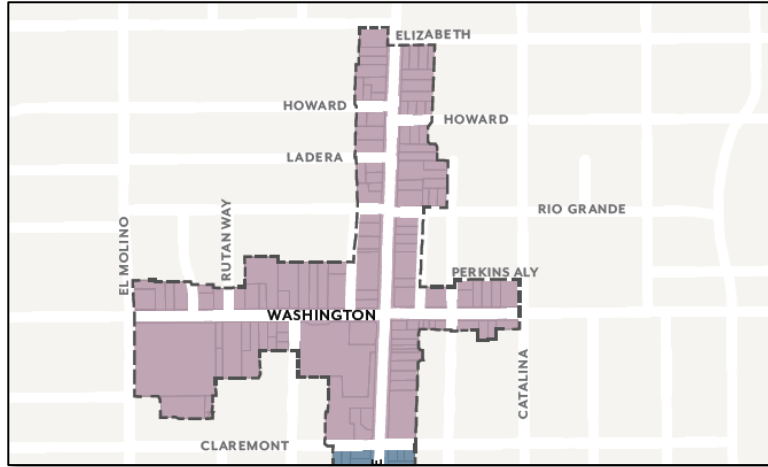
- Plan vision organized into four Subareas:
 - **Washington Place** (Elizabeth to Claremont)
 - **Vineyard Gardens** (Claremont to Mountain)
 - **North Lake Village** (Mountain to north of Orange Grove)
 - **Lake Station District** (north of Orange Grove to Maple)



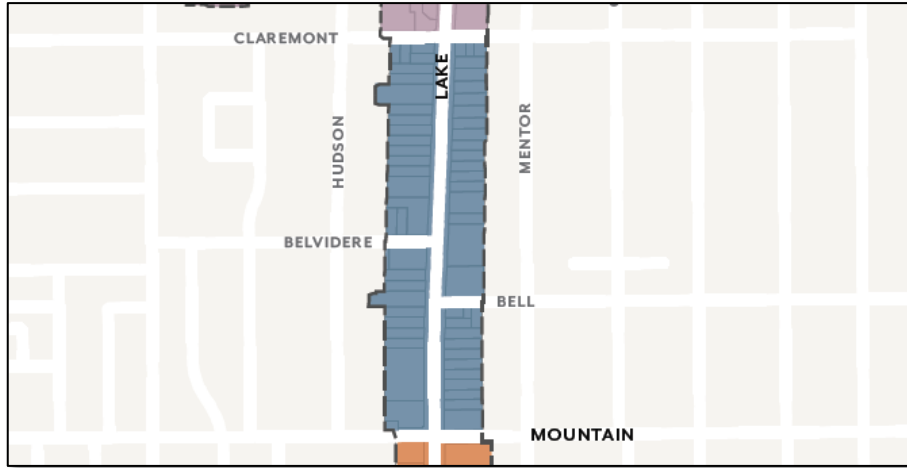
Washington Place Subarea Vision

❑ Subarea Goals:

- **Active, walkable, neighborhood-serving gateway** to North Lake Avenue, with development that respects and reinforces **neighborhood's rich history**.
- Reinforce **historic pedestrian-oriented commercial character** of Lake/Washington intersection.
- Support addition of **marked crosswalks** and related infrastructure that **reduces crossing distances**, **slows vehicle speeds**, and **improves pedestrian connectivity and safety** along East Washington Boulevard.
- Allow building heights that support commercial development and provide **appropriate transitions to adjacent Landmark Districts** such as Historic Highlands, Bungalow Heaven, and Washington Square.



Vineyard Gardens Subarea Vision



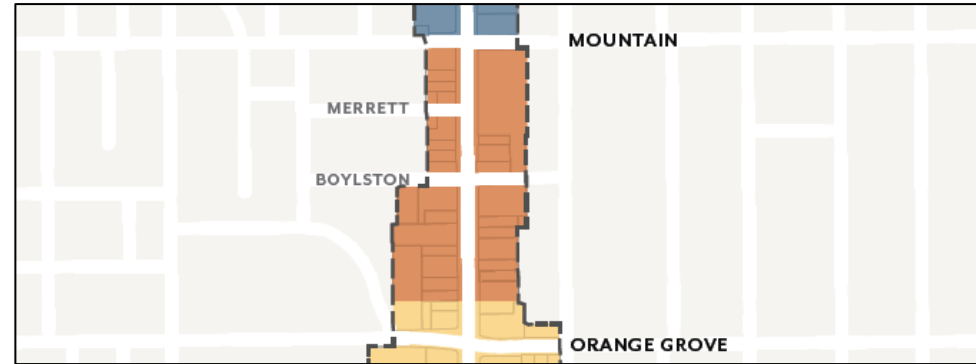
❑ Subarea Goals:

- **Residential mixed-use corridor** that encourages traditional architectural forms and details behind landscaped setbacks, **reinforcing the historic character** of the existing homes and adjacent neighborhoods.
- New development should **complement the existing architecture** and reference architectural styles such as **California Bungalow, Mission Revival, and Minimal Traditional** styles.
- Encourage **sensitive reuse** of existing buildings to achieve preservation and **rehabilitation** of both designated and undesignated historic properties.
- Increase setback area to provide **additional sidewalk, amenities**, aesthetic enhancements to **activate the public realm** and transition to residential uses.

North Lake Village Subarea Vision

❑ Subarea Goals:

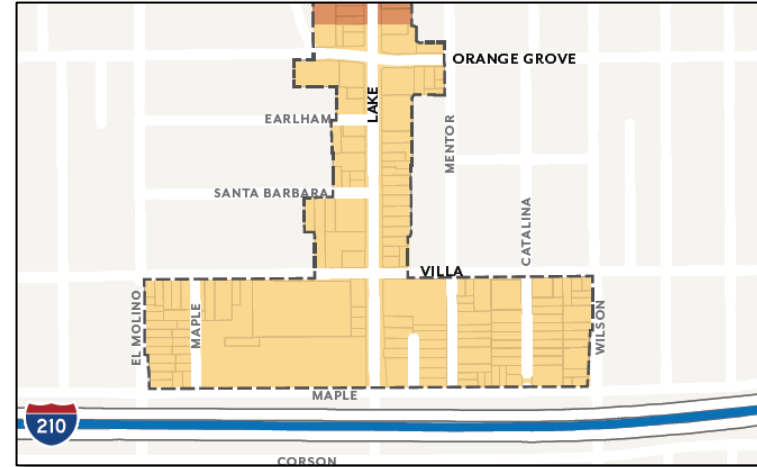
- **Commercial mixed-use corridor** supported by **enhanced streetscape** that promotes opportunities for **gathering spaces** and **neighborhood connections**, designed with sensitivity to adjacent landmark districts.
- Allow **mixed-use projects** in the area to expand housing opportunities and promote the **revitalization of underutilized land**.
- Require that **commercial and mixed-use development** along Lake Avenue provides **appropriately scaled transitions** to adjoining lower density residential neighborhoods, including the Bungalow Heaven Historic District.
- Support implementation of the City's **North Lake Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Plan** through **sidewalk improvements** and **high visibility pedestrian crossings**.



Lake Station District Subarea Vision

❑ Subarea Goals:

- **Higher-intensity mix** of retail, office, and multi-family housing uses that create vibrant, **transit-oriented southern gateway** to North Lake Avenue corridor.
- Support higher density residential and commercial development that **encourages transit use** and provides **new housing opportunities**.
- Encourage development of **publicly-accessible open space**, such as paseos, in the subarea, particularly near the intersection of North Lake Avenue and Villa Street.
- **Minimize building setbacks** to establish a street wall and use any setback area to provide additional sidewalk, amenities, or aesthetic enhancements to **activate the public realm**.
- Balance higher-intensity commercial development standards with **stepbacks** that provide **appropriate transitions** to adjacent residential properties.



KEY PROVISIONS IN THE RECOMMENDED SPECIFIC PLAN



Land Use Regulations

❑ Expand Housing Opportunities:

- **Allow housing** in more areas of the corridor, specifically between East Orange Grove Boulevard and East Mountain Street.
- Focus greater **residential density** at the south end of the corridor, near the Metro A Line station.
- New residential development with **private and common open spaces** for gathering, recreation, and respite that contribute to enhanced livability within an urban setting.
- Setbacks and upper floor stepbacks that provide **sensitive transitions** to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

❑ Promote Economic Vitality:

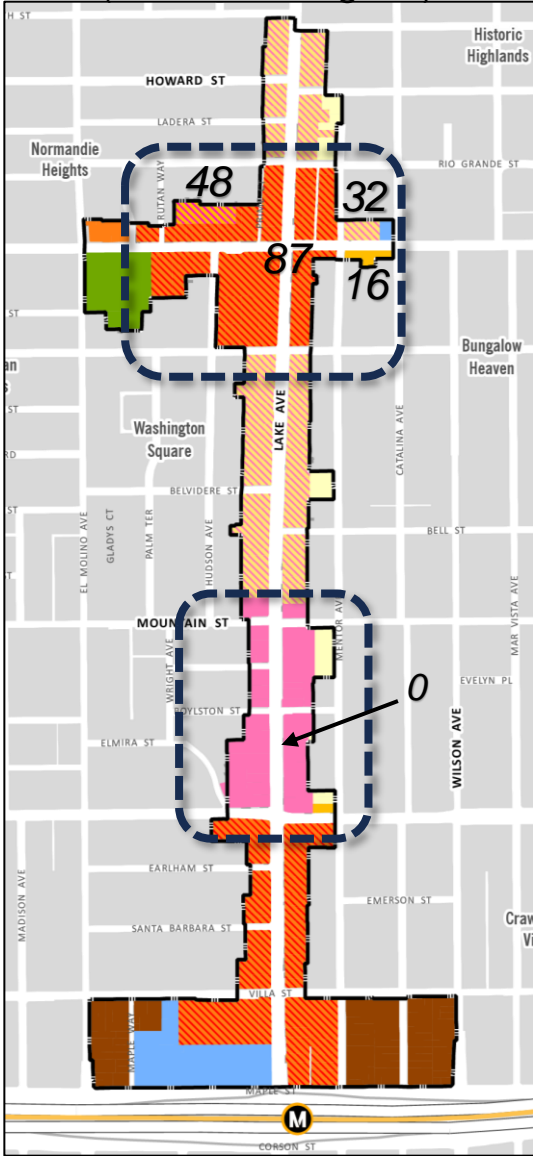
- Allow a wider range of complementary and **neighborhood-friendly commercial uses** throughout the plan area.
- **Simplify parking standards** and exempt small businesses from costly parking requirements to lower barriers to entry and enable greater flexibility for changing uses amid economic factors.
- Focus **commercial uses** on the ground-floor at the **Villa and Washington nodes** to support existing businesses and encourage new ones, to support surrounding neighborhoods.
- Allow, **but not require**, ground floor commercial uses for all other street frontages.
- **Reduce requirements** for ground floor commercial space.

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY & OTHER DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

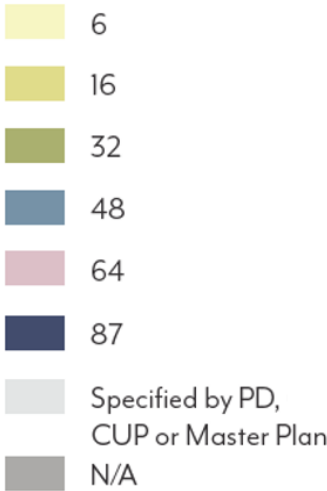
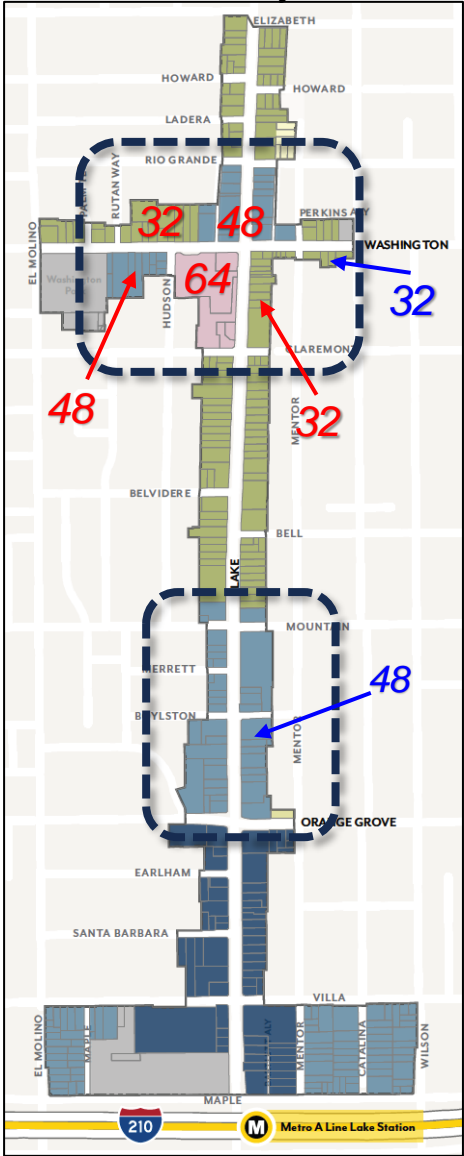


Residential Density

Existing Residential Density
(Land Use Diagram)



Proposed Residential
Density



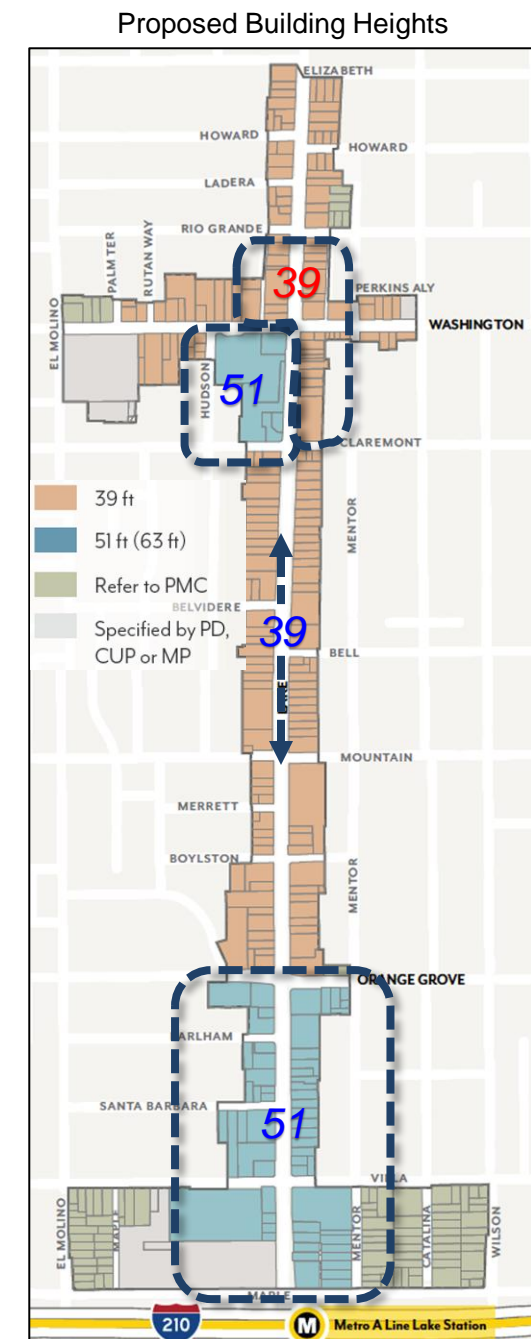
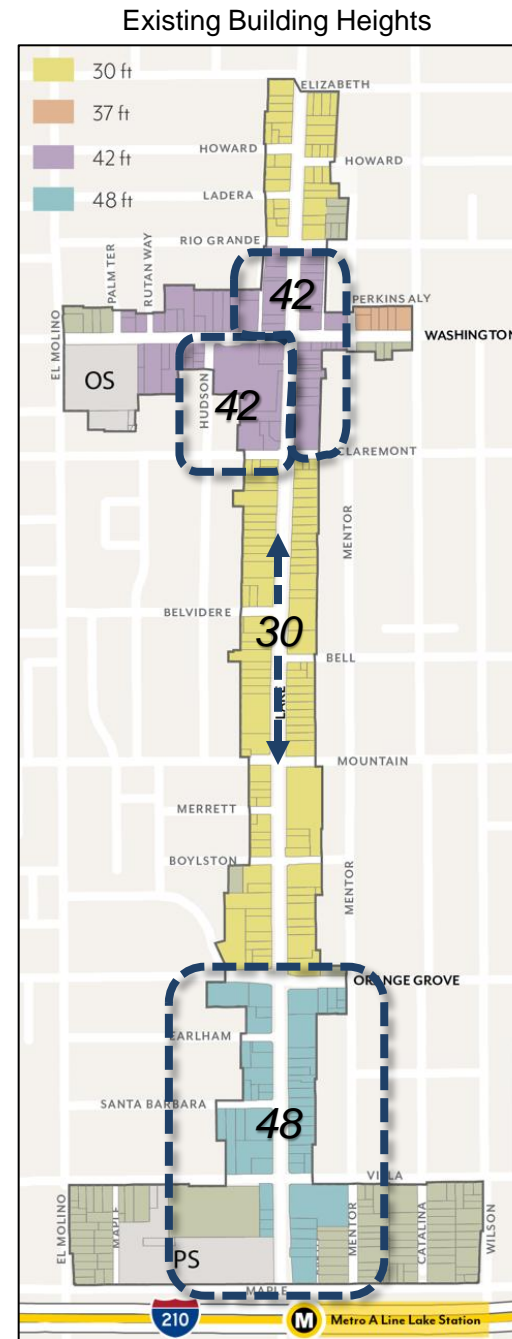
Land Use Diagram

- Low Density Residential 6 du/ac
- Medium Density Residential 16 du/ac
- Medium-High Density Res. 32 du/ac
- High Density Residential 48 du/ac
- Low Mixed Use 1.0 FAR, 32 du/ac
- Low-Medium Mixed Use 1.75 FAR, 48 du/ac
- Medium Mixed Use 2.25 FAR, 87 du/ac
- Low Commercial 1.0 FAR
- Institutional
- Open Space

Building Heights

- **Proposed Height**

- 51 feet (4 stories) at southwest corner of Lake Ave & Washington Blvd (compared to 42 feet in the 2007 NLSP)
- 39 feet (3 stories) at other corners of Lake Ave & Washington Blvd (compared to 42 feet)
- 51 feet along Lake Ave south of Orange Grove Ave (compared to 48 feet)
- 39 feet elsewhere in commercial areas (compared to 30 feet)



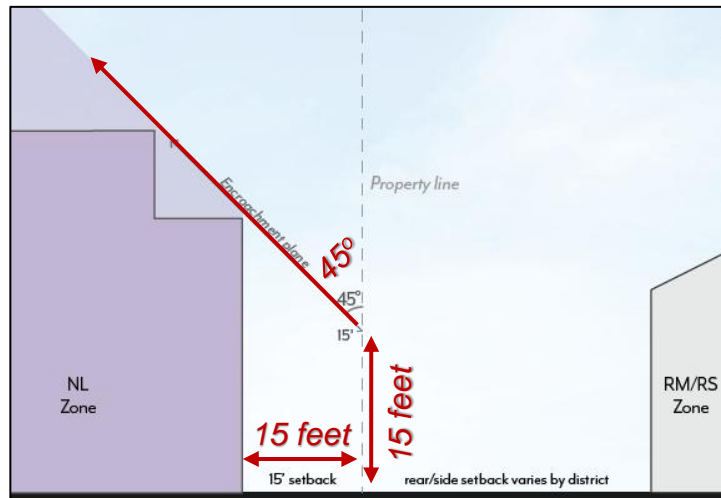
Building Setbacks / Stepbacks

- **Proposed Street Setbacks**

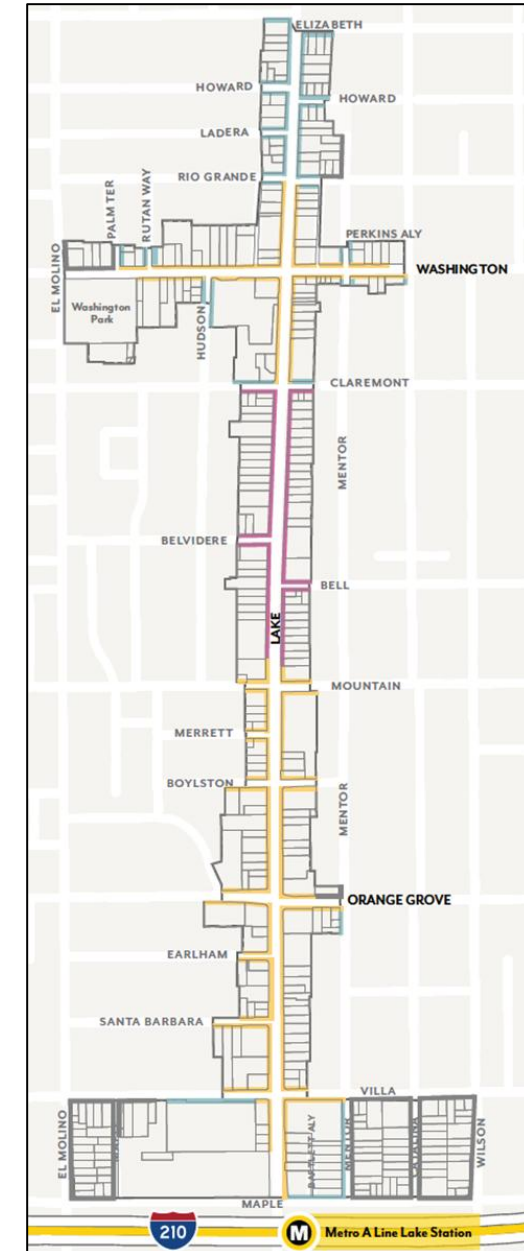
- For most of Lake Ave & Orange Grove Blvd: 3 to 5 feet
- For interior streets, & areas north of Rio Grande: 5 to 10 feet
- On Lake Ave between Claremont & Mountain St: 10 to 20 feet

- **Proposed Interior Setbacks and Stepbacks**

- Applicable if adjacent to RS/RM zoning district
- Setback: 15 feet
- Stepback: Encroachment Plane (15 feet above existing grade at 45-degree angle)



Proposed Street Setback



Other Development Standards

- Floor Area Ratio
- Historic Adjacency
- Modulation
- Ground Floor Frontages
- Ground Floor Design
- Transparency
- Shade Structures
- Arcades & Galleries
- Walls & Fences
- Balconies & Roof Decks
- Open Space
- Parking



PUBLIC REALM VISION & STANDARDS



Planning Commission Subcommittee

- **Planning Commission Subcommittee on the Public Realm:**
 - Formed by Planning Commission (April 2024 Study Session)
 - Met with City staff and community members
 - Recommended Goals, Objectives & Policies considered by Planning Commission (November 2024 Study Session)
 - Sense of place, attract businesses and housing, streetscape plan, mobility options, pedestrian safety, landscaped medians, paseos and green spaces, reducing parking, etc.
- **Recommendations incorporated throughout NLSP**
 - Goals were incorporated in Chapter 1 as ‘Community Priorities’
 - Objectives were incorporated as Implementation Actions in Chapter 7
 - Policies were incorporated as part of Vision, Goals & Policies in Chapter 3, as guiding principles & Public Realm Standards in Chapter 5, and/or as Implementation Actions in Chapter 7



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

for Transformative Placemaking and Streetscape Design on North Lake Avenue

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| » Sense of Place: Create a Great Street with a strong sense of place through public realm design that offers safe and visually interesting pedestrian connections, generates community gathering and activity, and respects, preserves, and celebrates North Lake Avenue's historic fabric and context. | » Traffic Calming: Support strategies to calm traffic movement along North Lake Avenue such as public realm infrastructure and streetscape design that promote pedestrian travel and bicycle use and safety. | » Sustainable District: Advance climate change mitigation goals, reduce environmental impacts, and support a walkable and sustainable environment through strategies that de-emphasize single-occupancy vehicles, reduce impermeable paving, increase tree canopy, and create memorable and delightful experiences for pedestrians. |
| » Mixed-Use District: Foster a supportive environment for investment in businesses and development of mixed-use projects that help meet housing and retail service needs within the NLSP area and its surrounding neighborhoods. | » Managed Congestion: Encourage a metered pace of travel along the corridor that reflects North Lake Avenue's identity as a pedestrian-scaled social and economic destination via all modes of transportation, not simply a vehicle thoroughfare. | » Green and Creative Landscaping: Promote creative and sustainable landscaping techniques that beautify the corridor while mitigating the environmental impacts of stormwater runoff. |
| » Well Maintained Corridor: Provide a high standard of care and maintenance that contributes to a clean and safe environment along the entirety of the corridor and uplifts North Lake's feeling of community pride and ownership. | » Accessible Destination: Reinforce North Lake's identity as a destination by improving public and active transportation connections to and within the NLSP area rather than prioritizing movement through the area to other destinations. | » Public Art and Community Identity: Encourage murals and public art programming that reinforce a strong sense of place and continuity between North Lake's past, present, and future. |

Public Realm Standards & Guidelines

Towards a Great North Lake Avenue

GREAT STREETS are more than transportation corridors—they are dynamic public spaces that foster community, support local economies, and invite people to gather, linger, and return. They are places people want to be.

The Planning Commission Subcommittee's vision for North Lake Avenue aims to transform the corridor into a 'Great Street.' This vision prioritizes the creation of a cohesive and inviting streetscape, and the public realm standards outlined in this chapter were developed to support the Subcommittee's long-term plan for North Lake Avenue. The sidewalk and parkway requirements of the NLSP will facilitate the establishment of a high-quality public realm that's capable of accommodating various uses and users, enhancing North Lake's identity and sense of place.

Placemaking is a collaborative, community-centered approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces that turns a space into a place, prioritizing people and their experiences. Instead of focusing solely on aesthetics or infrastructure, placemaking asks: How do we create spaces where people want to gather, interact, and feel a sense of belonging? Placemaking can improve not just the physical environment of a space, but the social and economic health of a community as well.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit dedicated to creating and sustaining public spaces that build strong urban fabrics through placemaking, defines the following ten qualities of a Great Street. By applying these principles, North Lake Avenue can become not only functional but also a place of community connection and everyday life.



1 Attractions & Activities

People are drawn to places that offer engaging activities—and they're more likely to come back. Without things to do, spaces stay empty and can fall into decline. Successful destinations offer a diverse range of experiences that appeal to all ages, genders, times of day and year, and group sizes. A well-planned destination links these experiences along an inviting path that encourages exploration and repeat visits.

2 Unique Image & Identity

The most memorable streets have an individual identity, shaped by their architecture, history, culture, or even the type of businesses they host. This image should feel authentic and be reinforced through signage, public art and street design, as well as upkeep, as cleanliness and maintenance are crucial to preserving a positive image and sense of pride. Local stories, materials, and design elements that reflect the community's character should be celebrated.

3 Active Street Edges

The ground level of buildings should engage the street, with features that promote interaction between indoor and outdoor spaces. Active uses like shops, cafés, or galleries make streets more vibrant and walkable than blank façades or empty lots. At a minimum, the edges should offer visual interest and transparency; blank walls, parking, and other dead zones along the sidewalk should be avoided. Uses should be designed for year-round activity and help tie both sides of the street together.

4 Essential Amenities

Well-designed amenities support a lively and functional street. These include lighting, shading, trees, landscaping, bus shelters, bike racks, waste bins, and different seating options such as single seats, benches, and café chairs. Giving people choices in where and how they sit is often overlooked but essential. Grouping amenities together encourages use and enhances comfort and convenience.

Elements of a Great Street

FURNITURE



A variety of permanent, temporary, and/or modular furniture should be widely accessible and distributed throughout, inviting people to stop and stay in the public realm.

PUBLIC ART



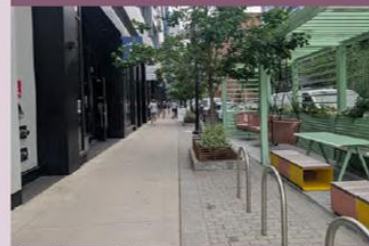
Murals, sculptures and other forms of art can be incorporated into all kinds of projects, including streetscape plans, development projects and infrastructure works.

SHADE



Shade trees and human-made shade structures offer protection from the sun and can contribute to pedestrian comfort in the high heat of summer.

BIKE FACILITIES



Bike racks, corrals, lockers create an environment where people feel encouraged to use alternative modes of transportation (and confident in the security of their bike).

LIGHTING



Street lamps and other forms of lighting, from string lights to building-mounted sconces to ground lighting, play a major role in the identity and safety of a street after dark.

WAYFINDING



Signage with directions and walking distances to nearby destinations and landmarks, biking and transit routes, and/or other local and historical information can help orient visitors.



5 Ongoing Management

Effective management is the backbone of a successful street. This involves more than maintenance—it includes tenant coordination and programming regular events to keep the space active. Programming can range from small performances and sales to larger civic, cultural, or seasonal events. Frequent small-scale events—like musicians, walks, or pop-up vendors can help build habit and presence.

6 Seasonal Strategies

To maintain vibrancy year-round, especially in places with less formal management, seasonal events like holiday markets, festivals, and recreational programs are vital. These strategies help draw people in during different times of the year, keeping the street animated regardless of season. Temporary elements such as seasonal installations or decor can keep the street dynamic and fresh.

7 Design for Diverse Users

A Great Street is for everyone. It should serve a mix of ages, cultures, income levels, and physical abilities. Public space feels truly vibrant when everyone feels welcome and no single group dominates. To best achieve this from the start, spaces should be designed with input from community members, including those historically excluded from planning processes, in order to ensure the design reflects their needs, values, and desires. It's about equity, representation, and flexibility.

8 Balanced Transportation

A successful street supports multiple modes of transportation, ensuring safe access for all by prioritizing walking, biking, and public transit. Use traffic calming strategies (like narrowed lanes, curb extensions, and reduced speed limits) to ensure that vehicles don't overwhelm the space. Pedestrian safety and comfort should come first; intersections and crossings must be safe spaces for people.

"The best streets are comfortable to walk along with leisure and safety. They are streets for both pedestrians and drivers. They have definition, a sense of enclosure with their buildings, distinct ends and beginnings."

— Allan B. Jacobs, author of *Great Streets*

9 Blended Spaces

Public life often happens where public and private spaces overlap. Patios, sidewalk cafés, retail displays, and shared street designs help blur this boundary, with businesses like shops and restaurants spilling onto sidewalks. Encouraging this interaction adds energy to the street and supports local businesses.

10 Neighborhood Integration

Great streets don't exist in isolation—they connect to the broader urban context of the city. Thoughtful transitions from district to district (e.g., commercial businesses to quieter residential neighborhoods) help maintain community character and reduce conflicts. Simple measures such as changes in scale, building type, street width, or landscaping can signal this shift in pace and use.

Adapted from *Qualities of a Great Street*, Project for Public Spaces.

Public Realm Standards & Guidelines

• Public Realm Standards address:

- Minimum sidewalk widths
- Sidewalk Zones
- Parkway & Street Trees
- Landscaped Medians
- Stormwater Management

Diagram 1: 12' Active Sidewalks

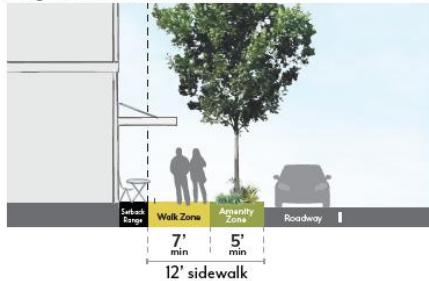


Diagram 2: 12' Residential Sidewalks

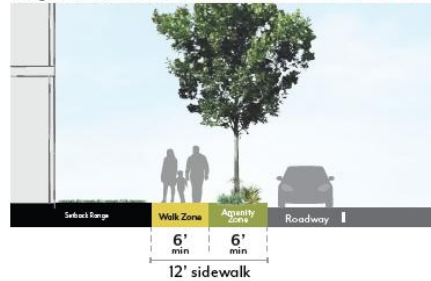
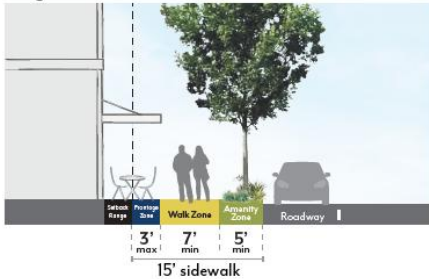


Diagram 3: 15' Active Sidewalks



TYPES OF SIDEWALKS

Active sidewalks, used in more commercial and mixed-use areas, have a wider Walk Zone to accommodate higher levels of pedestrian activity.

Residential sidewalks, used in lower-density and less commercialized areas, have wider parkways to soften the street with more landscaping and help buffer a roadway's traffic.

PARKWAYS & STREET TREES

Parkways and street trees provide numerous benefits and are an indispensable part of the NLSP environment. Most obviously, landscaping enhances the visual quality of the area. But parkways bring sustainable benefits such as stormwater capture, while street trees provide cooling effects and contribute to the spatial definition of the street that creates a human-scaled space with a comfortable sense of enclosure. Trees also provide overhead cover to pedestrians, offering shade and reasonable protection from the sun and rain. In general, parkways and street trees add a gracious quality to Pasadena.



Existing parkways should be maintained or expanded with the use of California native plants, softening the public realm and providing opportunities for stormwater capture.



Consistent tree size and spacing along a sidewalk creates a pleasant rhythm and reinforces the space of the street.

LANDSCAPED MEDIANS

Street medians may be used to incorporate landscaping and additional trees, providing many of the same benefits as landscaped parkways, while enhancing the street's overall shade canopy, visual character, and safety. Flowering accent trees in street medians complement street tree recommendations and add to the streetscape's distinct identity and seasonal variation.



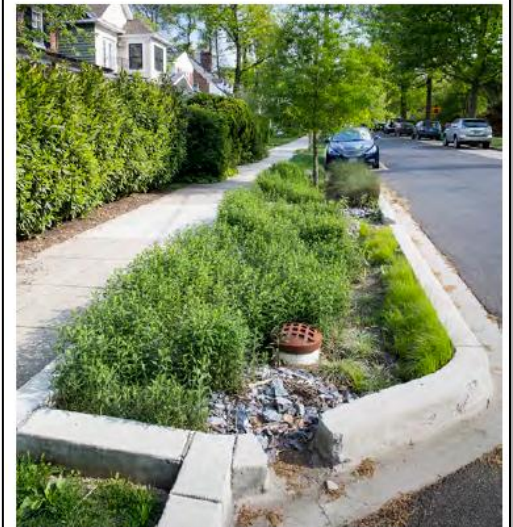
Landscaped medians add a variety of benefits including visual interest, cooling, stormwater capture, and traffic calming.



While trees in the parkway should provide a pedestrian shade canopy, street medians are more appropriate for planting decorative trees that provide visual accent and add to the streetscape's distinct identity.

STORMWATER & IRRIGATION GUIDELINES

- » Parkway should be designed to treat and/or capture stormwater run-off from the adjacent to the greatest extent feasible given soil conditions.
- » Suspended pavement systems are encouraged as a means of controlling runoff volume and should be implemented under and adjacent to large pedestrian walkways.
- » If impermeable surfaces are used within parkways, they shall be constructed to drain to permeable areas.
- » Low-volume, sub-surface/drip irrigation or other non-spray irrigation systems or hand-watering is preferred where irrigation is needed.



Mid-block curb extensions can be used for street trees and stormwater retention.

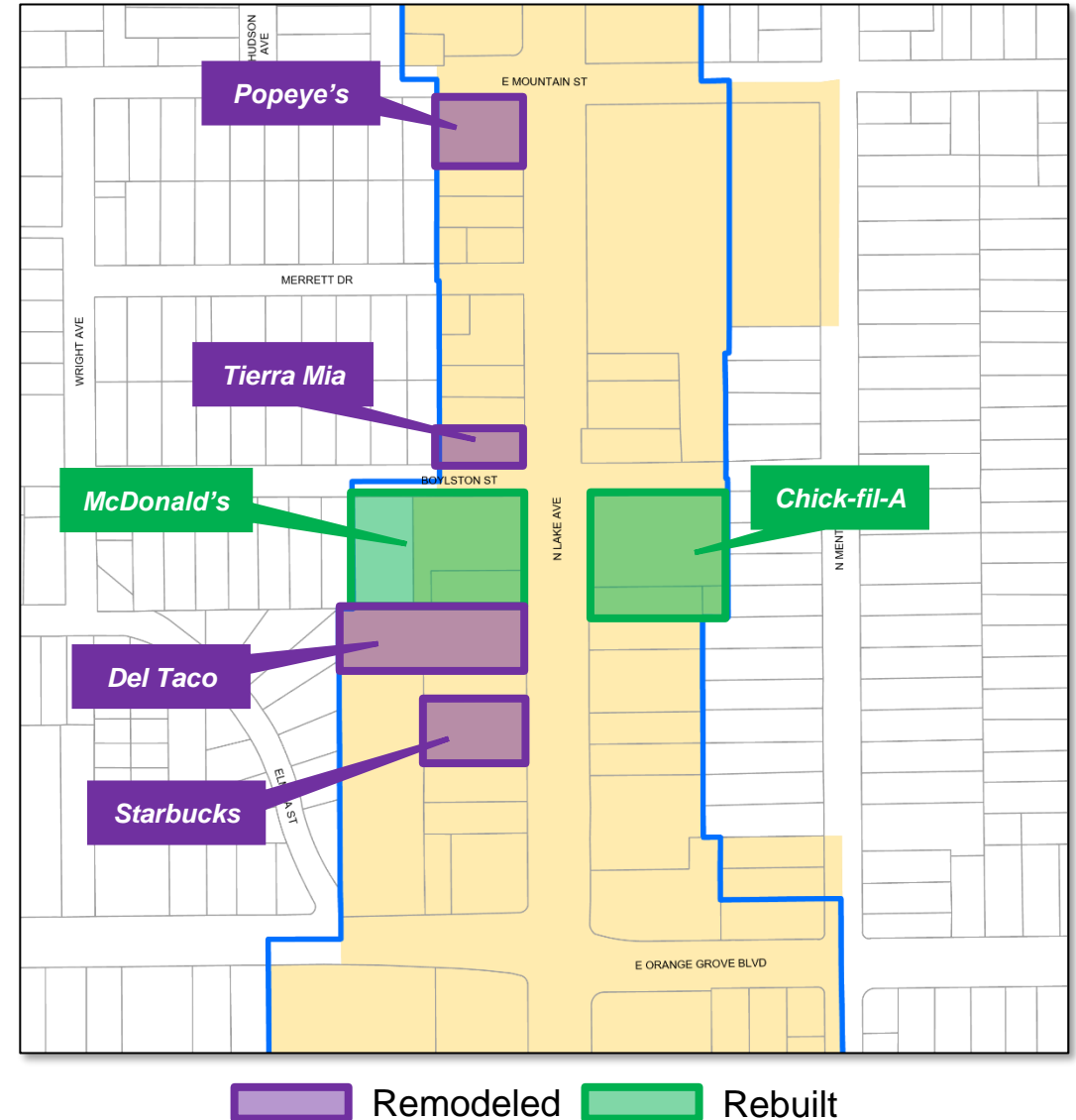
DRIVE-THROUGH BUSINESSES



Drive-Through Businesses

- **Current NLSP regulations**

- New drive-through businesses (restaurant/non-restaurant) have not been allowed since 1997
- NLSP amended in 2007
 - Allow existing drive-through businesses to be demolished & rebuilt with CUP
 - Cannot exceed original building size
 - Number of queuing positions/service windows may be increased with CUP
 - Cannot exceed original building size
- **Six permitted drive-through businesses are located between Mountain & Orange Grove**
 - Rebuilt: *McDonald's*, *Chick-fil-A*
 - Remodeled: *Popeye's*, *Del Taco*, *Starbucks*, *Tierra Mia*



Drive-Through Businesses

- **Options Considered by Planning Commission**

- 1) No Change

- Demolish/rebuild existing, but not enlarge (CUP)
 - Increase number of queuing positions and/or service windows (CUP)
 - *Can impose site-specific conditions of approval*

- 2) Regulate as other legal, non-conforming uses citywide

- Alter and/or expand (Minor CUP)
 - *Can impose site-specific conditions of approval*

- 3) Add to the list of non-conforming uses in NLSP prohibited from expanding or rebuilding

- Minor exterior changes or maintenance improvements: new branding, paint colors, signage, landscaping
 - Cannot impose site-specific conditions of approval

- 4) Allow design alterations to the existing building (Minor CUP)

- No expansion of use
 - Includes building size, number of service windows, seating area, and/or onto adjacent site(s)
 - Number of queuing lanes/ spaces could be increased only if it resulted in improved site circulation (CUP)

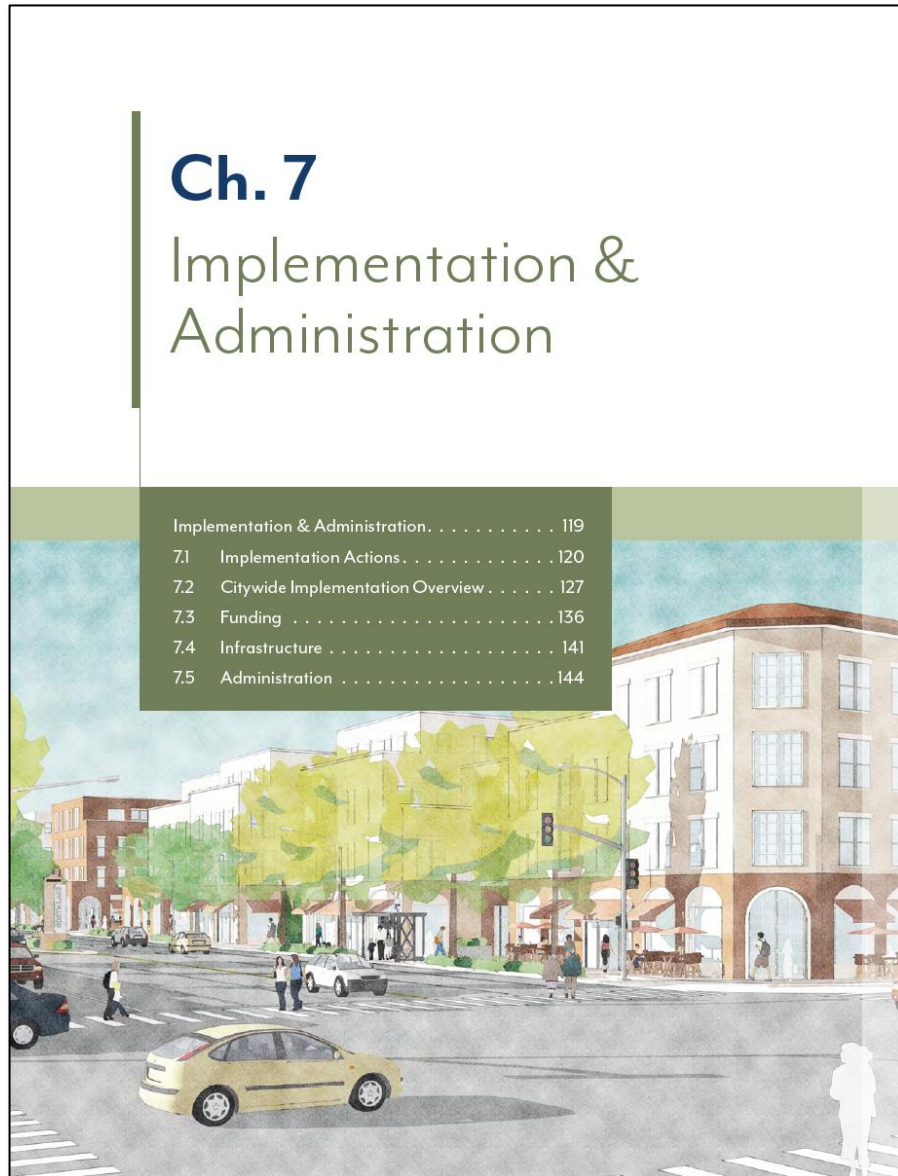
- **Planning Commission and Staff Recommendation**

- **#4** - Allow existing drive-throughs to be altered with Minor CUP to permit more extensive exterior building remodel to modernize design
 - City can impose site-specific conditions of approval

SPECIFIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



Specific Plan Implementation



• Implementation Actions

- Amendments
- Infrastructure, Mobility, and Sustainability
- Community Identity, Programming and Public Art

Action	Description	Timeframe	Potential Funding Sources/ Relevant CIP Programs	Depts.
Infrastructure, Mobility, and Sustainability (IMS)				
IMS-1: Master Street Tree Plan	Review street tree palette from the Master Street Tree Plan to consider tree designations that better address Specific Plan and Climate Action Plan objectives for climate resilience, shading, urban cooling, and carbon sequestration and which are complementary to adjacent development and uses. [Refer to A.2.]	Near-Term	General Fund	PWD
			Street Tree Replacement Deposit CIP: • Tree Replacement/Planting Citywide FY 2025-2029 (78959) ¹ • Street Tree Master Plan ²	
IMS-2: North Lake Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Project	Advance the North Lake Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Project to make walking along the corridor easier, safer, and more interesting. Implement pedestrian-oriented capital improvements such as continental crosswalks, curb extensions, pedestrian level lighting, leading pedestrian intervals, and strategies such as water-conserving low-impact development (LID) landscaping and smart irrigation techniques.	Near-Term	Gas Tax	P&CDD DOT PWD PWP
			Traffic Reduction Fee CIP: • Citywide Complete Streets Program FY 2025-2029 ³ • ADA Improvements Programs (73944, 73937, 73913, 73938) ⁴ • Installation of Leading Pedestrian Interval and Audible Signal and Signalized Intersections (75125) ⁵ • Citywide Continental Crosswalk Implementation (75917) ⁶ • Lake Avenue Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Enhancements from Mountain St. to Maple St. (75105) ⁷	

RECOMMENDATION



Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. **Adopt the Addendum** to the 2015 Pasadena General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and find that the Addendum properly discloses only minor technical changes or additions to the EIR, and none of the conditions triggering a subsequent or supplemental EIR are present, as set forth in State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15164;
2. **Make the Findings** for Approval for the General Plan Land Use Map Amendment, Specific Plan Adoption, Zoning Map Amendment, and Zoning Text Amendment (Attachment A) to adopt the recommended North Lake Specific Plan (Attachment B). The Zoning Text Amendment also includes technical changes in the previously adopted Central District and Lamanda Park Specific Plans for internal consistency;
3. **Adopt a resolution** approving the General Plan Map Amendment;
4. **Adopt a resolution** approving the recommended North Lake Specific Plan; and
5. **Direct the City Attorney** to prepare an ordinance for the Zoning Map and Text Amendments within 120 days consistent with the provisions set forth herein.



THANK YOU

