



STAFF REPORT

DATE: OCTOBER 27, 2021

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION ON THE SOUTH FAIR OAKS SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the staff report and provide feedback on the draft South Fair Oaks Specific Plan (SFOSP). There is no action required at this time. Subsequent to this study session, staff anticipates returning to the Planning Commission early next year with the proposed SFOSP for review and recommendation to City Council.

BACKGROUND:

In 2018, the City initiated the *Our Pasadena – Putting the Plan in Motion* program to review and update the City's eight specific plan areas. The program's primary objective is to establish neighborhood-specific design and land-use goals resulting in a refined set of permitted uses, residential densities, buildable area, and development standards and guidelines that will shape the built environment along the City's major commercial and mixed-use areas within the eight planning areas in accordance with the City's General Plan and Guiding Principles. The SFOSP is the third Specific Plan to be presented to Planning Commission; the Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan was recommended for approval in June and the East Colorado Specific Plan in September of this year.

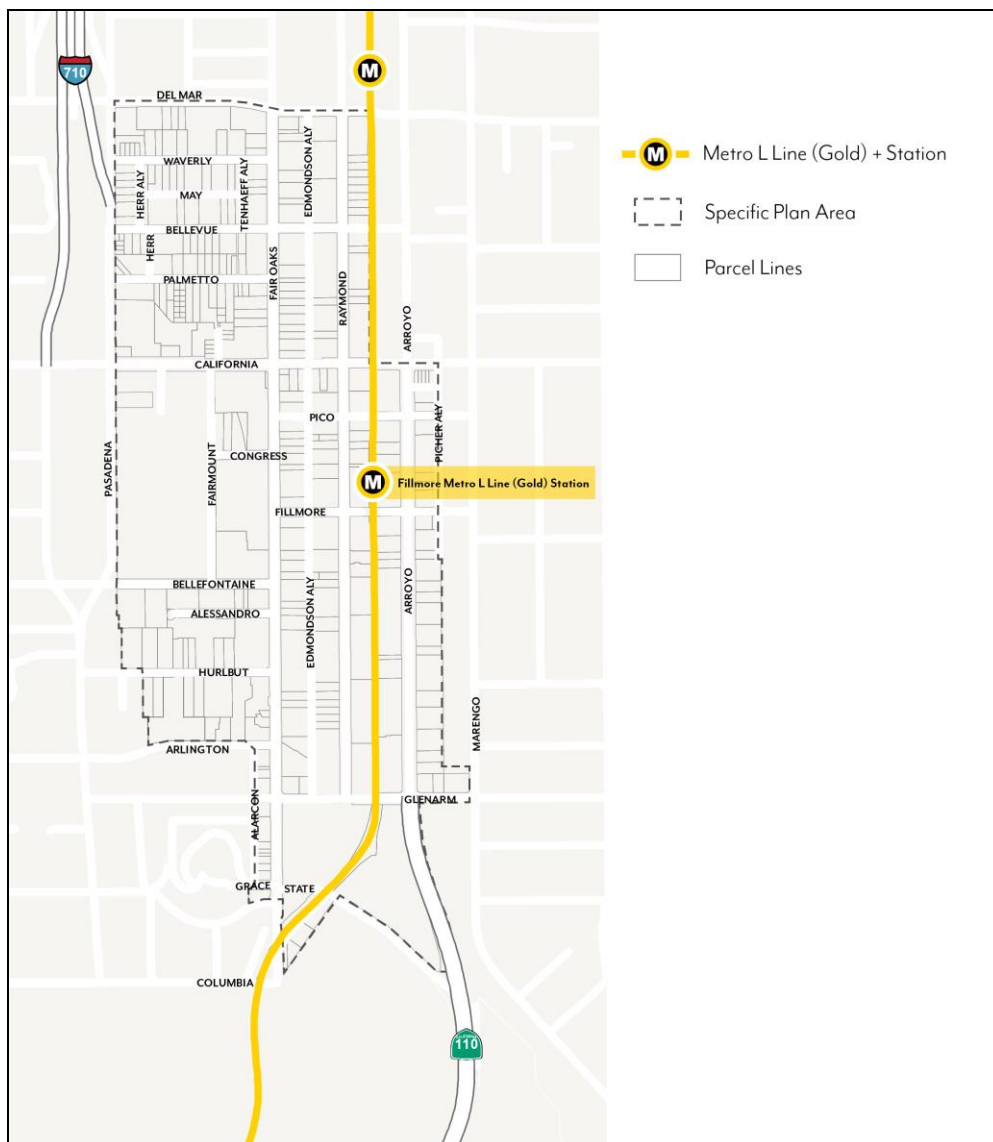
On October 18, 2021, in response to City Councilmembers' concerns about State legislation further encroaching on local planning authority, staff presented the City Council with an overview of recent State legislation in the context of the General Plan and Specific Plan updates. At the conclusion of that discussion, the City Council directed staff to proceed with the Specific Plan Update program with adjustments to the proposed densities presented during the Round 3 workshops that account for State density bonus laws.

SOUTH FAIR OAKS SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE/DISCUSSION:

Plan Context, Boundary, and Existing Land Use and Form

The SFOSP area generally encompasses the area between Del Mar Boulevard to the north, State Street to the south (bordering the City of South Pasadena), Pasadena Avenue to the west, and Picher Alley to the east (See Figure 1). While surrounding neighborhoods, such as Raymond Hill and Madison Heights, are outside the plan area, these adjacent communities helped to inform policies and standards in the plan and are intended to benefit from its implementation.

Figure 1. Plan Area and Context



The SFOSP area is a primarily commercial, institutional, and medical district of the City that formed around early railroads and industrial development in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today, the original railroad right-of-way remains in use as the Metro L Line (Gold) track between Raymond Avenue and Arroyo Parkway, and many of the Specific Plan area's older light industrial buildings have been adapted into commercial uses, medical offices or clinics, and educational uses. In addition to the continued presence of historic buildings and design elements, the area experienced a steady increase in new, larger-scale development in the second half of the twentieth century, which also focused on a range of medical, retail, office, and educational uses, most notably the Huntington Memorial Hospital and ArtCenter College of Design South Campus. Both older and contemporary buildings are widely varied in their architectural styles and configurations, creating an eclectic urban scale and form throughout the SFOSP area.

The original SFOSP, adopted in 1998, covered a smaller area than this Specific Plan, as parcels north of California Boulevard and parcels east of the Metro Rail right-of-way (north of Glenarm Street) were included within the original Central District Specific Plan area. The 2015 General Plan Land Use Element included changes to the SFOSP boundary, which are reflected in the proposed boundary shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Plan Boundary Changes



Planning Process and Community Engagement

The update to the SFOSP is the result of an extensive three-year planning and public outreach process led by the Planning and Community Development Department. The planning process also involved coordination with staff from various City departments, including Public Works, Transportation, Economic Development, and the Accessibility Coordinator, as well as feedback from the Design Commission. Throughout the planning process, the Planning Department solicited input from residents, business and property owners, community leaders, and other stakeholder groups through a variety of outreach events, workshops, public meetings, and online engagement tools. Information on the engagement process, including public outreach methods and workshop meetings and materials is provided as Attachment B.

The following is a summary of the public outreach:

- Workshop 1 – listening and learning session to find out more about participants' experience living and/or working in, or visiting the plan area, and their ideas for how the plan could improve the area;
- Walking Tour – facilitated tour of specific areas of the plan to solicit input on participants' pedestrian experience in relation to use and the built environment;
- Pop-Up Event – an interactive pop-up event at the ArtCenter South Campus to inform students about the update process and solicit feedback on how they would like to see the plan area develop in the future;
- Workshop 2 – present emerging themes, draft vision, preliminary land use and urban form concepts that considered a number of factors, including community feedback;
- Youth Summit –engage and introduce young residents in the City of Pasadena to the planning process through the use of multimedia tools and interactive activities including a virtual reality station, large floor map activity, and video; and
- Workshop 3 (virtual open house) – refined plan vision and concept, along with preliminary draft land use regulations and development and public realm standards.
- Design Commission Meeting - solicit feedback, respond to clarifying questions from commissioners, and discuss various issues to be considered in the development of standards, policies, and implementation strategies for the next draft of the plan.

Participants shared a wide range of input throughout the outreach process, including the following recurring themes:

- Mixed opinions on the amount of density and height proposed for most subareas, with some calling for more housing density while others expressed concerns about increased development;
- Desire for more flexibility in allowed land uses, particularly at the ground floor of mixed-use buildings;

- Desire to allow more multi-family housing with a diversity of housing types, such as micro-units and senior housing;
- Mixed opinions on the appropriate amount of parking to require for new development, particularly near the Fillmore Station, where many support limited or no parking requirements;
- Concerns from some property owners regarding requirements for increased sidewalk widths, setbacks, paseos, and plazas and impacts of these requirements on development feasibility;
- Support for increased open space, landscaping, and an improved tree canopy that promotes shade and walkability;
- Concerns about increased traffic and impacts to surrounding neighborhoods;
- Desire to strike an appropriate balance of medical offices and facilities with housing, retail, restaurant, and other pedestrian oriented land uses so that one land use type doesn't dominate the plan area;
- Preserve historic resources and encourage adaptive re-use; and
- Explore the possibility of allowing housing along portions of Arroyo Parkway that currently only allow commercial uses.

In addition, the Design Commission provided the following comments:

- Interest in allowing residential uses in the Arts & Innovation Flex subarea;
- Desire to see more flexibility in ground floor commercial requirements;
- More emphasis on creativity, innovation, and 24/7 activity in the district;
- Support for encouraging eclectic character and infusing different uses beyond institutional uses;
- Interest in promoting wellness of uses from architectural standpoint, including WELL building standards;
- Support for east-west paseos to create more linkages in the district; and
- Interest in supporting Raymond Ave. as a multi-modal and pedestrian-focused street as a companion to more auto-oriented streets of S. Fair Oaks Ave. and Arroyo Pkwy.

Feedback received from these efforts helped to refine the preliminary draft vision, concepts, and standards that were presented last year and guided the drafting of goals, standards, and guidelines for the plan area that are presented in this report.

Draft SFOSP Vision and Subareas

The SFOSP area is envisioned as a creative, innovative, and health-oriented mixed-use community that provides multi-family housing, neighborhood-serving amenities, educational, and employment opportunities accessible to transit for residents, employees, students, and faculty. The objective of the SFOSP, as drafted, is to foster:

- A balanced variety of medical, office, retail, and restaurant uses that take advantage of the proximity to ArtCenter and Huntington Memorial Hospital and support the City's creative and economic vitality;
- Diverse building design that fosters creativity and district identity with supportive, job-generating uses that enable innovation;
- A variety of new housing options with convenient access to transit, major institutions, and a lively mix of neighborhood commercial uses and amenities, all supported by an engaging public realm;
- Compatible development with sensitive transitions to existing residential neighborhoods that support community character;
- A walkable community with enhanced sidewalks and connective paseos to make transit and destinations more comfortable and pleasant to access; and
- A livable and sustainable community with rich landscaping and open space.

To achieve this vision, the SFOSP area has been organized into a series of subareas that are distinguished by their existing conditions, General Plan Land Use designations, and the plan's vision for the future (See Figure 3). Each subarea will contain a set of goals and policies that help to guide implementation and shape future development.

Draft Land Use, Development, and Public Realm Standards

The draft regulations and standards presented in this report seek to facilitate and encourage development and improvements to realize the vision for the plan area, factoring in community, stakeholder, and commission input received throughout the outreach process. The draft regulations and standards are provided in Attachment A. A comparison of the draft and existing regulations and standards is provided in Attachment C. The existing 1998 SFOSP is provided in Attachment D.

A summary of the draft regulations and standards that implement the plan vision is discussed in the following subsections.

Land Use, Intensity, and Density

The General Plan Land Use Element calls for various changes in allowed land uses throughout the SFOSP area. Most notably, the proposed Arts & Innovation Flex subarea was designated as R&D Flex, Medium Commercial, and Low Commercial in the General Plan Land Use Diagram. These designations emphasize nonresidential land uses, which is generally consistent with the existing character of this subarea. One of the key proposed changes in the land use permissions in the Arts & Innovation Flex subarea is the prohibition of work/live units, which are currently the only housing type allowed in the majority of the area. Notable exceptions are parcels that front on Del Mar within the Arts & Innovation subarea, which currently permit a variety of housing types, including multi-family and mixed-use projects, but would not permit any housing in the draft SFOSP. The allowable floor area ratio (FAR) in the proposed Arts & Innovation

Flex subarea would range from 1.25 to 2.0, and are based on the General Plan Land Use Diagram maximums, which align very closely to existing regulations.

Figure 3. SFOSP Subareas



Another major change that was identified in the General Plan was the introduction of the High Mixed-Use designation along the entirety of the Raymond Ave. corridor, portions of the South Fair Oaks Ave. corridor (south of California Blvd.), and a portion of the west side of Arroyo Parkway (south of California Blvd.). The introduction of mixed-use would allow residential uses where they are currently prohibited along these corridors. The allowable density of 87 dwelling units per acre and 3.0 FAR in the draft SFOSP in these areas would be consistent with General Plan goals, policies, and guiding principles relating to focusing growth and higher density development away from residential neighborhoods and into areas that are transit-accessible and closer to jobs and amenities. These areas are located within a quarter- to half-mile of two Metro L (Gold) Line stations (Fillmore Station and Del Mar Station), are separated from existing residential neighborhoods by the Arroyo Parkway commercial corridor, and are within close proximity of two major local institutions - Huntington Memorial Hospital and ArtCenter South Campus. Additionally, numerous other medical, technology, and healthcare related offices and laboratories already exist or are proposed in the plan area.

The Arroyo Gateway subarea currently does not allow residential uses under existing regulations. The General Plan Land Use Diagram maintains the majority of the Arroyo Pkwy corridor as it currently exists, with a Medium Commercial designation that has a maximum of 3.0 FAR and does not allow residential uses. This is maintained in the draft SFOSP. However, a portion of the west side of Arroyo Pkwy between California Blvd. and Fillmore St., has been designated as High Mixed Use by the General Plan, and consistent with that designation and the area's proximity to the Fillmore Station, the draft SFOSP allowable residential density of 87 dwelling units per acre and 3.0 FAR would be permitted.

For a complete list of allowed uses and permit requirements, refer to Chapter 4 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A). Definitions of land uses are found in Pasadena Municipal Code (PMC) 17.80.020. Additional standards for specific land uses may apply; refer to the PMC Section noted in the table. For more detailed maps and regulations relating to density and intensity, refer to Chapter 6 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A).

Building Height Limits

Consistent with the General Plan Land Use Diagram's designation of High Mixed Use, proposed building heights in the majority of the HEART District subarea have been increased in the draft SFOSP. The draft SFOSP would also introduce height averaging, allowing additional height over 30% of the building footprint, if other portions of the building are lowered to achieve the required average height. The greatest height increase is proposed on the parcels immediately adjacent to the Fillmore Station, with heights tapering down along Raymond Ave. Parcels along the east side of S. Fair Oaks Ave. would allow slightly more height than Raymond Ave., but less than the maximum heights surrounding the Fillmore Station.

Heights in the Arts & Innovation Flex subarea would remain generally unchanged from existing regulations. A few exceptions would be slight increases in height for parcels fronting on Del Mar Blvd. west of S. Fair Oaks Ave., and a decrease in height for parcels fronting Del Mar Blvd. east of S. Fair Oaks Ave. These minor changes are intended to reflect the existing built environment, as well as new General Plan Land Use Diagram designations of Low and Medium Commercial for these parcels, which would no longer allow housing under the draft SFOSP.

The Raymond Transit District subarea would increase maximum heights to align more closely to existing height regulations on Raymond Avenue north of E. Bellevue Dr. Similar to the HEART District, these changes are reflective of the new General Plan Land Use Diagram designation of High Mixed Use. However, this subarea is distinct in that it is also in close proximity to the Del Mar Station, and heights have been calibrated to encourage the development of residential uses rather than medical or other office uses.

Public comments received during the public outreach process about the Arroyo Gateway subarea expressed a concern for increased heights causing excessive massing that would impact the character of residential neighborhoods to the west of the SFOSP area. In recognition of these concerns, as well as the General Plan Land Use Diagram designation of Medium Commercial, heights along the entire east side of Arroyo Pkwy, as well as a significant portion of the west side of the street, have been reduced slightly from existing regulations. This height reduction, along with a prohibition on residential uses in the majority of this subarea, will ensure the maintenance of the existing scale of Arroyo Pkwy. Reductions in parking requirements for certain uses, which are discussed later in this report, will also encourage a strong retail, commercial, and dining presence along this corridor.

The Institutional Flex subarea, which is currently entirely City-owned and consists of the Glenarm Power Plant and related facilities, is proposed to have a slight reduction in maximum allowable height. The South Fair Oaks Neighborhood Village subarea is mostly currently regulated by RM-32 development standards, which are also referred to as “City of Gardens” standards. However, parcels fronting S. Fair Oaks Ave. currently allow more height than the RM-32 areas under existing regulations. The proposed SFOSP would slightly increase the heights in the RM-32 areas, and heights along S. Fair Oaks Ave. would be slightly increased and allow height averaging. These minor changes are intended to encourage lower-scale multi-family residential uses that are compatible with existing built form, while acknowledging the General Plan Land Use Diagram’s Medium and Low Mixed Use designations to allow some neighborhood-serving commercial uses facing S. Fair Oaks Ave.

It should be noted that numerous additional development standards are also being introduced in the draft SFOSP that affect the potential building envelope, massing, and perception of height. These include building stepbacks, historic adjacency requirements,

modulation, and façade breaks. For additional standards related to building height, including ground floor height and upper floor stepbacks, refer to Chapter 6 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A).

Sidewalk, Building Setback, and Street Trees

To support pedestrian mobility and amenities within the sidewalk that is appropriate and relative to adjacent uses, the draft SFOSP establishes minimum sidewalk widths ranging from 12 feet to 25 feet, with the widest sidewalks required along access routes to the Fillmore Station. More detail on sidewalk widths can be found in Chapter 5, Section 5.1, Map 5.1-1 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A). The draft SFOSP also includes setback requirements ranging from 0 feet to 15 feet for up to 75% of building frontages. Each setback requirement is expressed as a range in order to provide flexibility for building design while maintaining appropriate setbacks and spaces for landscaping and other pedestrian amenities. The majority of corridors allow a 0-foot setback, however portions of S. Fair Oaks Ave. south of California Blvd. and the majority of Arroyo Parkway require a minimum 5-foot setback for at least 75% of the building frontage. More detail on proposed setback requirements can be found in Chapter 6, Section 6.1.4, Map 6.1-4 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A).

The combination of minimum sidewalk widths, building setbacks, and other standards, such as minimum parkways, not only serves to reduce the appearance of building mass, but also creates greater opportunities for increasing the street tree canopy throughout the SFOSP area. This is in direct response to public comments received throughout the outreach process expressing a strong desire by the community to increase the number of trees and improve the pedestrian experience by providing shade. Appendix A.2 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A) also includes an analysis of the existing street tree inventory and makes recommendations for potential alternative tree species that would complement existing trees while improving shade in a sustainable manner.

Open Space and Paseos

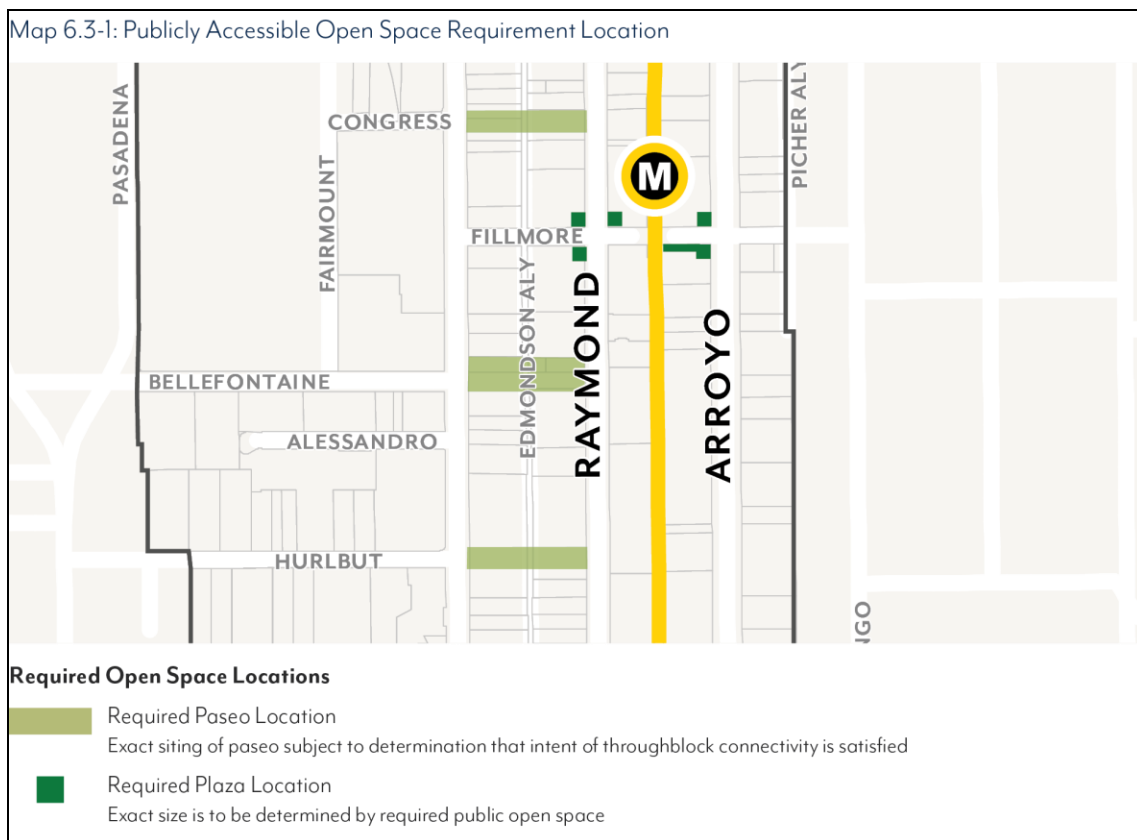
The draft SFOSP revises open space requirements to improve quality of life and open space access for future residents, businesses, students, and visitors. Private and common open space requirements for residential development would be based on the number of bedrooms in each proposed unit, ensuring adequate open space amenities for the number of residents within each building. Common open space is also required for commercial projects, creating amenities for visitors and employees. In addition to the benefit of providing open space for building users, the requirements also contribute to better building modulation and massing with patios, balconies, terraces, and plazas.

The draft SFOSP also includes a requirement for Publicly Accessible Open Space (“PAOS”) for projects with more than 60,000 square feet of gross floor area. The amount of PAOS required increases based on the size of a proposed project, as well as

its proximity to a Metro light-rail station platform. For example, a project with gross floor area between 60,000 and 119,999 square feet would be required to provide 2% of that area as PAOS if the site is located more than 500 feet away from a Metro station platform, but that requirement is increased to 4% if the site is within 500 feet of a platform. The connection of PAOS requirements with proximity to transit is combined with designations of required plaza locations at key intersections along Fillmore St. to achieve an overarching goal of improving access and visibility to the Fillmore light rail station. The map shown in Figure 4 below illustrates the required plaza locations for projects that are subject to a PAOS requirement. In addition to corner plazas on the west side of the station, the draft SFOSP also calls for a pedestrian promenade along Fillmore St. This configuration is intended to lead pedestrians from Arroyo Parkway to the eastern station entrance, create gathering spaces for transit riders, and improve station visibility from the Fillmore St. and Arroyo Pkwy intersection to increase safety.

In addition to plazas, the draft SFOSP includes required paseo locations for projects that are subject to a PAOS requirement. The locations of these paseos were identified as opportunities to break up the excessively long blocks, provide better pedestrian access between Huntington Memorial Hospital and the Fillmore station, and align with crossing opportunities across S. Fair Oaks Ave. The proposed paseo locations are also shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Sites Where PAOS Paseos and Plazas are Required



More detailed information on open space requirements can be found in Chapter 6, Section 6.3 of the draft SFOSP.

Parking

The draft SFOSP refines parking requirements for commercial uses by setting a consistent minimum parking requirement of 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet for office, retail, restaurant, and service uses. This allows for greater flexibility for changes in use, particularly when a new restaurant seeks to occupy an existing tenant space that was previously used for retail or office. The reduced parking requirements also reflect the SFOSP area's access to high quality transit, including the Fillmore Station and Del Mar Station, both of which are walkable within a quarter- and half-mile radius, covering the majority of the plan area. More information on parking is available in Chapter 6, Section 6.4 of the draft SFOSP (Attachment A).

Implementation of the SFOSP

The updated SFOSP will be primarily implemented through the adoption of the plan's new land use, public realm, and development regulations, which align private sector investment with the plan's vision, goals, and policies. In addition, SFOSP improvements and programs funded through the City and outside sources, can further implement the plan, particularly where redevelopment is less likely to occur. The draft SFOSP will include targeted actions intended to help guide and prioritize the implementation of the plan. It will also provide an overview of existing services, plans, and programs, all of which can be leveraged to help implement the plan. A summary of funding sources will also be included to guide the City in understanding and selecting available funding sources to implement the improvements and programs identified in the updated SFOSP. Feedback on the draft SFOSP will help prioritize programs identified for this plan area.

Environmental Analysis

An addendum to the General Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (GP EIR) is being prepared to evaluate the environmental effects associated with the SFOSP update and to determine whether these impacts are consistent with the evaluation presented in the GP EIR in compliance with CEQA (Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq.). The SFOSP Update Addendum will be presented to the Planning Commission along with the proposed SFOSP.

CONCLUSION:

The Planning Department anticipates presenting the proposed SFOSP, any associated Zoning Code and/or General Plan amendments, and the addendum to the General Plan EIR to the Planning Commission for its review and recommendation to City Council early next year. This report focuses on the background, public outreach, land use, development standards, and public realm standards in the SFOSP update for the Planning Commission and members of the public to use as reference for the study session. The following policy issues remain open for discussion and staff seeks further direction from the Planning Commission and input from the public during the study session:

1. Whether to propose a General Plan Amendment to allow housing along portions of Arroyo Parkway that are currently designated only for commercial uses;
2. Whether to propose a General Plan Amendment to allow housing in portions of the Arts & Innovation Flex Subarea, and
3. Whether to regulate building heights using height averaging or an alternative method of projecting heights, which would allow greater flexibility in meeting open space requirements.

Respectfully submitted,



DAVID M. REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Andre Sahakian, AICP
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



David Sanchez
Principal Planner

Attachments:

Attachment A – 2021 SFOSP: Draft Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6 and Appendix A2
Attachment B – SFOSP Update Public Outreach Process
Attachment C – 1998 SFOSP
Attachment D – 1998/2021 SFCOSP Land Use and Development Standards Comparison Table

Attachments are available at the following link: <https://www.ourpasadena.org/SFOSP-PC-SS-102721>.

ATTACHMENT A

2021 SFOSP: Draft Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6 and Appendix A2

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/SFOSP-PC-SS-102721>

ATTACHMENT B
SFOSP Update Public Outreach Process

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/SFOSP-PC-SS-102721>

ATTACHMENT C
1998 SFOSP

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/SFOSP-PC-SS-102721>

ATTACHMENT D

1998/2021 SFCOSP Land Use and Development Standards Comparison Table

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/SFOSP-PC-SS-102721>