

SMART GROWTH IN ACTION

Central District Specific Plan Downtown Housing Near Transit

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

A popular town in the Los Angeles region, the city of Pasadena wanted to maintain its unique sense of place and give its residents choices in where they live and how they get around. Through its Central District Specific Plan, adopted in November 2004, the city is encouraging housing in the downtown, near transit, and above stores. Design guidelines ensure that new development fits with community character.

The planning department engaged residents with a variety of tools to visualize changes in the city plan. On the low-tech end, planning staff used modeling clay and cardboard boxes to show how development might look in a neighborhood. They also used a "story bus" to reach out to the public, with displays that explained planning and transportation issues. Taking advantage of more modern technology, the planning department made its Geographic Information System data available to the public; people printed maps of where they lived or worked with notes illustrating planned or existing projects. Planners used the maps to talk with citizens about what they valued and what changes they liked and disliked.

The plan has already shown success. More than 85 percent of all new housing permits in Pasadena are in the Central District, and most are within one-half mile of a light rail station. Most of the new housing is in a mixed-use format with stores or restaurants on the ground floor. Although it allows up to 5,095 units of housing, the plan is expected to reduce the projected traffic growth in the Central District. The growing downtown population means more customers for stores and businesses.

The plan promotes more housing choices, including rental and ownership, affordable and luxury. All housing projects must have at least 15 percent affordable units or provide an alternative.

The city encourages walking by requiring wide sidewalks, benches, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. The mix of uses encourages downtown workers to get out and walk around at lunchtime and residents to walk to work or to shopping.

When built out as planned, the Central District will occupy 10 percent of the land in Pasadena while generating an estimated 25 percent of the property taxes.

As people stroll Pasadena's streets, stopping at its shops and restaurants, they are seeing the fruits of a plan for growth that respects historic buildings, capitalizes on its convenient transit stations, and encourages development in places where it makes environmental and economic sense.

QUICK FACTS

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GenPlan/centdis.asp](http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/planning/deptorg/commplng/GenPlan/centdis.asp)
Implemented: 2004



SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES PASADENA'S MIXED-USE DOWNTOWN

#1	Includes Mixed Land Uses	★
#2	Exhibits Compact Building Design	✓
#3	Provides Range of Housing Types	★
#4	Promotes Walkable Neighborhoods	★
#5	Exhibits a Distinct Sense of Place	★
#6	Preserves Open Space	✓
#7	Utilizes Existing Development	✓
#8	Provides Transportation Choices	★
#9	Practices Fair Decision-making	✓
#10	Promotes Stakeholder Participation	★