

Date: June 14, 2017

From: Philip Burns, Greater Pasadena Affordable Housing Group

To: Pasadena City Council

Subject: Comparative Study of Impacts of Existing ADUs in Pasadena

Dear Councilmembers:

As the City is reconsidering its 2003 law which severely limited the ability of single-family homeowners to develop Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on their properties, Councilmembers must consider the issue from a number of perspectives, among them care for the elderly, availability of housing, and social equity. Representatives of neighborhood groups have also rightly claimed that the effect of Accessory Dwelling Units on neighborhood character is also a consideration. With that in mind, the Greater Pasadena Affordable Housing Group (GPAHG) set out to examine the potential impacts of ADUs on neighborhood character.

The City of Pasadena already has approximately 740 legal non-conforming\* Accessory Dwelling Units. Thus we are able to estimate the future impacts of ADUs on neighborhood character by comparing neighborhoods which currently have few ADUs to those which have many. Seeking to find two very comparable neighborhoods or streets only differentiated by the presence of ADUs on their street, we settled on the neighborhoods shown in Figure 2. These two neighborhoods are located immediately adjacent to each other and are within the same boundary streets of Hill, Washington, Allen and Mountain. Both are zoned RS-6, neither is a Landmark District, and each has 7,500 square foot lots.

The chosen high-ADU neighborhood represents the largest concentration of ADUs in the City.

	High-ADU Neighborhood		Low-ADU Neighborhood	
Primary Dwelling Units	236	83%	133	98%
Accessory Dwelling Units	50	17%	3	2%
Total Housing Units	286		136	

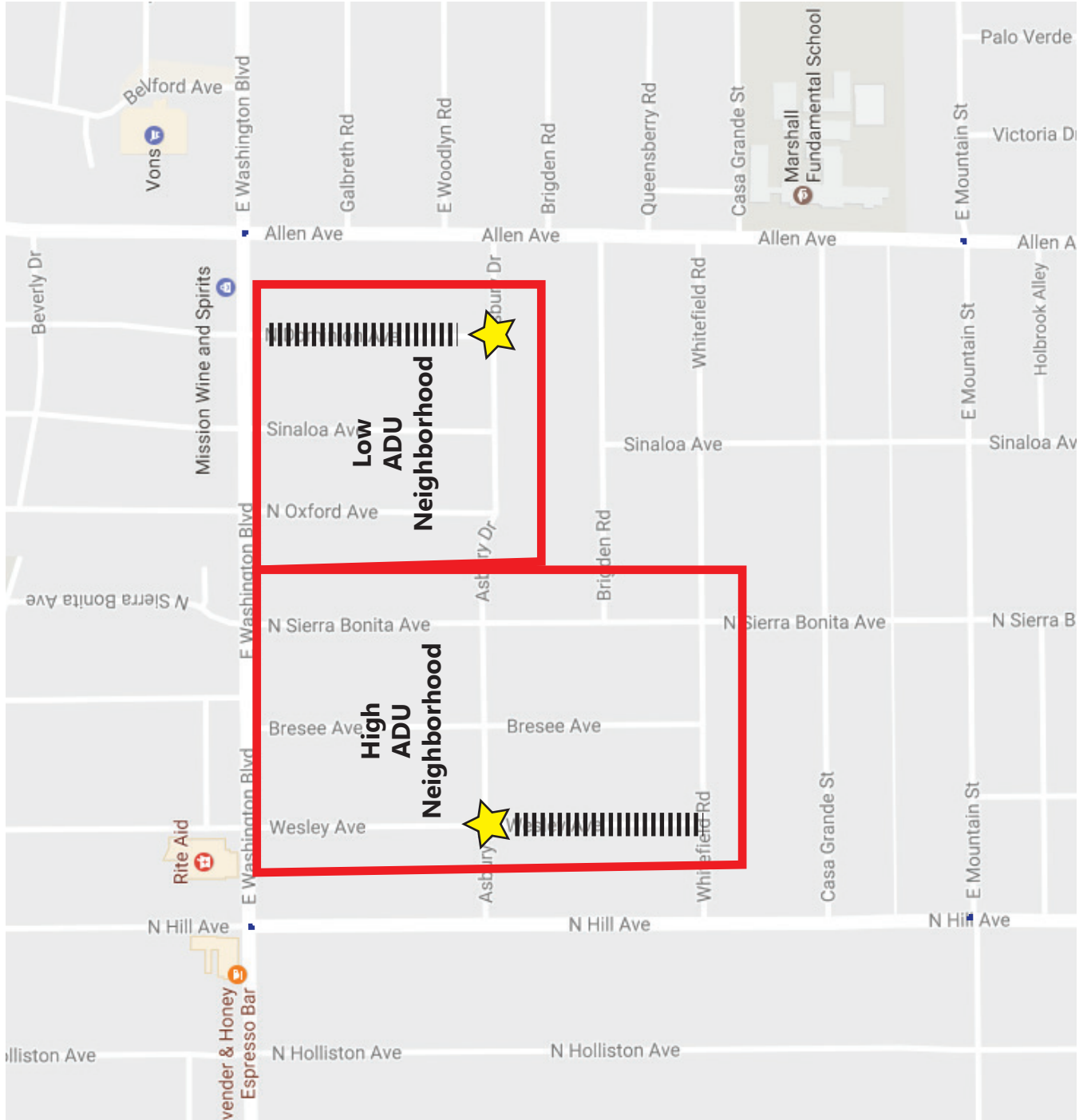
**Figure 1. Number of Housing Units in the Study Areas.**

\* Non-conforming under the 2003 law; some of these units may now be legal per the 2017 law. Some of these units may also be non-conforming duplexes rather than ADUs.

Figure 2

## Study Areas for ADU Neighborhoods Comparison

-  Study Areas
-  Intersection for Traffic Counts
-  Block for Parking Counts





**Figure 3. High ADU Neighborhood.** Wesley Avenue between Asbury and Whitefield.



**Figure 4. Low ADU Neighborhood.** Dominion Avenue between Washington and Asbury.

We compared these two neighborhoods in terms of the following characteristics:

- Neighborhood Character/Visual Impact
- Property Values
- Traffic
- Parking

## Neighborhood Character/Visual Impact

As Figures 3 and 4 show, from a casual drive down the street, the presence of ADUs is not noticeable. Setbacks, building heights and building modulation are unaffected by the presence of ADUs. Any differences in character are due to architectural styles, tree canopy and other issues unrelated to the ADUs.





**Figure 5. Close-up of Dominion Avenue.** There are no ADUs on the lots visible in this image.



**Figure 6. Close-up of Wesley Avenue.** There are two ADUs on the lots visible in this image.

Figures 5 and 6 show closer views of houses on Wesley and Dominion Avenues viewed at an oblique angle. Again, the ADUs are not visible and do not play a role in the visual character of the neighborhood.





**Figure 7. Study Area ADU Examples.**

Figure 7 shows ADUs located in the study areas, or immediately adjacent in Bungalow Heaven. ADUs are generally hard to spot; however, with a direct view down the driveway, most ADUs are visible from the public right-of-way. (3) and (6) are exceptions, where the ADUs are screened by a fence. (3), a property within the Bungalow Heaven National Historic Register District, is an example of a historically sensitive screening of an ADU. (1) is an example of a carriage house, or above-garage ADU. The images show a variety of architectural styles and varying levels of attractiveness, largely depending upon the architectural distinction of the main house and the level of upkeep of the property over time.

## Property Values

GPAHG compared recent property sales between the two areas in order to determine whether there might be an effect of ADUs on property values of adjacent single-family homes. It is easy to surmise that ADUs increase the property values of the properties on which the ADU is located; the additional living space and income potential of the ADU clearly increase the overall property's worth. However, some residents may fear that ADUs decrease the overall desirability of the neighborhood, as reflected in property values of adjacent single-family homes with no ADUs.

	High-ADU Neighborhood		Low-ADU Neighborhood	
	Total	Per SF	Total	Per SF
Recent Average Sales Price	\$705,250	\$442	\$657,500	\$454
Number of Sales	24		8	

**Figure 8. Home Sale Value Comparison.** Comparison of sales prices of homes with no ADUs within the past three years.

Figure 8 demonstrates that there is no major difference between the neighborhoods in the value that buyers assign to them. The average sales price of a home in the high-ADU neighborhood was 7.2% higher than in the low-ADU neighborhood, while on a per square foot basis it was 2.6% lower. While there are many variables at play in the value of any particular house, it is very difficult to conclude that ADUs have a generalized negative effect on neighborhood sales prices.

## Traffic

GPAHG went to the project site and conducted simultaneous traffic counts at Asbury and Wesley (high-ADU neighborhood) and Asbury and Dominion (low-ADU neighborhood). These traffic counts took place on Monday, May 22, from 5:50 to 6:50 pm, and Wednesday, May 24, from 7:45 to 8:45 am. The results of the traffic study are presented in Figure 9. The Eastbound Through and Westbound Through movements are omitted because they correspond to through traffic, not traffic related to the comparison streets of Wesley and Dominion Avenues.

Traffic levels on the two streets are very low, with less than 60 cars per hour (one car per minute) making a movement onto or off of Wesley or Dominion Avenues. This compares to a local roadway capacity of 600 vehicles per hour. Volumes are slightly higher at Asbury and Wesley, but when accounting for the fact that Asbury and Wesley is a 4-way intersection, as opposed to the 3-way intersection of Asbury and Dominion, that difference disappears.

It is reasonable to conclude that in general, ADUs increase the number of trips in an area; residents do need to commute out of the area by some means. However, the increase in trips is minimal compared to the capacity of the roads. For example, if each of the eight ADUs on Wesley Avenue between Whitefield and Asbury created three daily trips, they would add only 24 daily trips to the street.

	Asbury & Wesley High-ADU Neighborhood		Asbury & Dominion Low-ADU Neighborhood	
	AM Peak	PM Peak	AM Peak	PM Peak
Southbound Through	7	9	N/A	N/A
Southbound Right	17	14	16	14
Southbound Left	6	7	12	9
Northbound Through	2	4	N/A	N/A
Northbound Right	1	1	N/A	N/A
Northbound Left	3	2	N/A	N/A
Eastbound Right	5	0	N/A	N/A
Eastbound Left	2	8	4	5
Westbound Right	3	4	9	8
Westbound Left	0	2	N/A	N/A
Total	46	51	41	36
Total - Adjusted for 3-Way Intersection	46	51	55	48

**Figure 9. Traffic Study.**



## Parking

GPAHG surveyed parking conditions on Wesley Avenue between Asbury and Whitefield, and on Dominion Avenue between Washington and Asbury (see figure 2). The parking survey was conducted at the end of each traffic study hour, at 6:55 pm on Monday, May 22, and at 9:00 am on Wednesday, May 24. Of the two parking counts, the more relevant one to this analysis is the evening parking count, since residential parking demand is greatest in the evening. GPAHG wanted to determine whether ADUs created a parking crunch in the area.

	Wesley Avenue High-ADU Neighborhood	Dominion Avenue Low-ADU Neighborhood
Vehicles Parked	11	19
On-Street Parking Capacity	60	64
On-Street Parking Utilization	18%	30%

**Figure 10. Parking Study.**

Figure 10 shows that parking utilization was low on both streets. However, it was higher on Dominion Avenue than on Wesley Avenue. This is likely due to the commercial uses at the north end of Dominion Avenue at Washington Boulevard. The ADUs on Wesley Avenue did not have a large effect on on-street parking.

While it is reasonable to conclude that ADUs will generally increase the demand for on-street parking, it is highly doubtful that this effect will be very strong. Furthermore, since in the majority of Pasadena's single-family neighborhoods, overnight parking is prohibited, there is a large supply of available on-street parking throughout the day.

## Conclusion

This study compared two similar, adjacent neighborhoods in the City of Pasadena which differed in the number of Accessory Dwelling Units in them. The high-ADU neighborhood had 50 Accessory Dwelling Units, or 17% of the total housing stock, while the low-ADU neighborhood only had 3 Accessory Dwelling Units, or 2% of the total housing stock. GPAHG evaluated the impact of these ADUs on neighborhood character, property values, traffic and parking and found no significant impacts. Therefore, we conclude that the potential effect of future ADUs on single-family neighborhoods in Pasadena will be minimal.