

# NORTH FAIR OAKS VISION PLAN



**FEBRUARY 2025**



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Thomas and Elzena Medlock Community Center  
The Boys and Girls Club  
La Pintoresca Park  
New Life Holiness Church



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<b>PART I: Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PART II: Background and Process</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PART III: Zoning and Land Use</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PART IV: Streetscape</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART V: History, Culture, and Justice</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>PART VI: Next Steps</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>38</b>

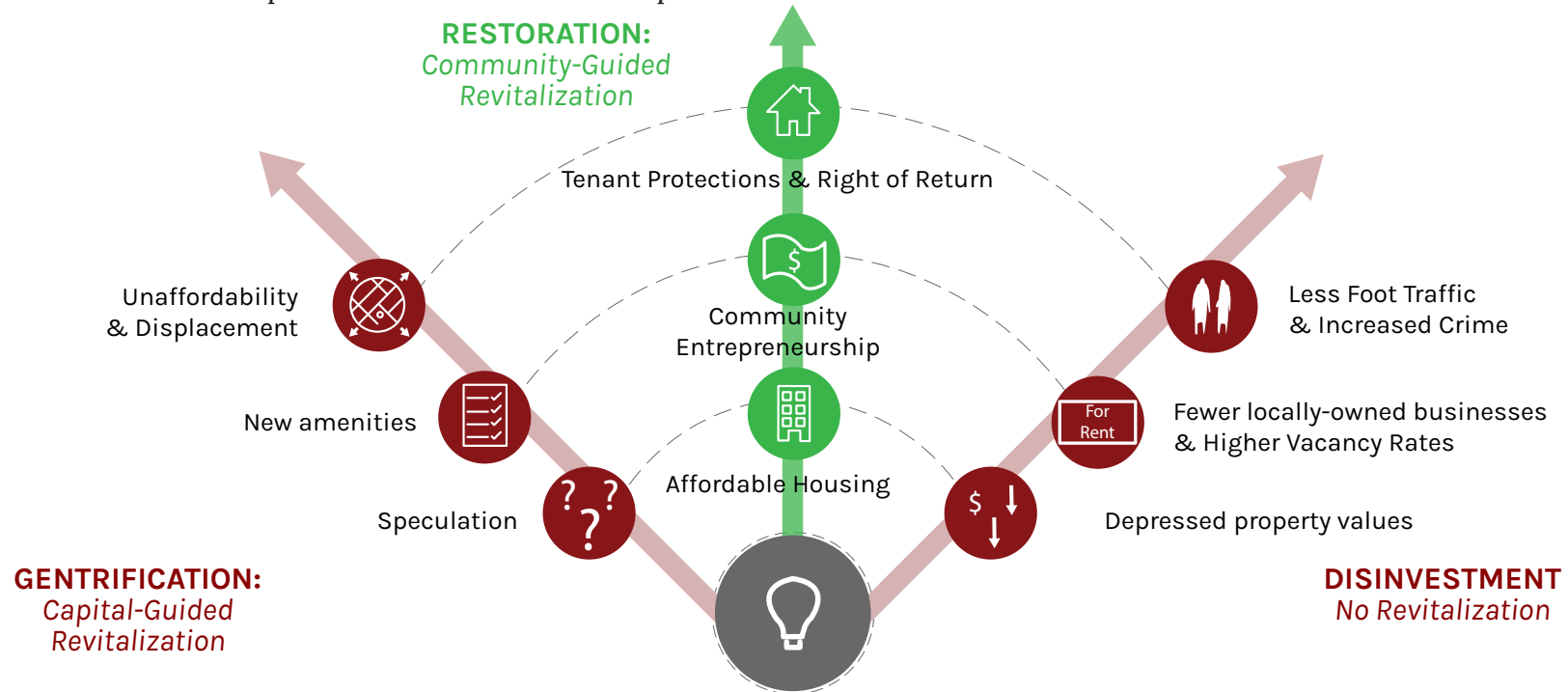


# 1 INTRODUCTION

## What is the North Fair Oaks Vision Plan?

The North Fair Oaks Vision Plan is a plan developed for and by the Northwest Pasadena community to elucidate a vision for North Fair Oaks Avenue between Washington Boulevard and the northern city boundary (between Montana Avenue and Woodbury Road). The Plan is a project of the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative of Making Housing and Community Happen, a faith-rooted housing advocacy organization based in Northwest Pasadena. The Plan was developed to document and respond to

an extensive community engagement process that the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Team has taken on since 2015. It illustrates the community vision and describes specific actions and policies that the community and City of Pasadena can take on to further the vision of the Committee to “beautify and not gentrify” this section of Pasadena. The focus of this Vision Plan is the restoration of North Fair Oaks Avenue and community of Northwest Pasadena.





## **Restoring the Heart of Northwest Pasadena**

North Fair Oaks Avenue runs through Northwest Pasadena, the City's veritable African-American neighborhood which produced such legends as Jackie and Mack Robinson and Octavia Butler. North Fair Oaks Avenue was a bustling business corridor with Black-owned and Black-serving businesses all the way from Old Pasadena to Altadena, but in the mid-20th century, civic leaders targeted this corridor, purposely destroying it through urban renewal and freeway construction projects.

The segment of North Fair Oaks Avenue between Washington Boulevard and the northern City boundary is the area which retains the most urban fabric from the pre-urban renewal era. It is in this section that the community aims to promote restorative justice by re-creating the main street that once existed, in a manner appropriate and feasible for today's multicultural community and economy, and protecting what remains of Northwest Pasadena's African-American community.

## **Important definitions**

### **Complete streets**

"Streets that are designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders."

(Source: US Department of Transportation)

### **Restorative justice**

"Restorative justice is a process in which all the stakeholders affected by an injustice have the opportunity to discuss the consequences of the injustice and what might be done to put (things) right" and enact concrete actions to right the wrongs.

(Source: Braithwaite, 2022 and North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative)

### **Urban renewal**

"Urban renewal is the process of seizing and demolishing large swaths of private and public property for the purpose of modernizing and improving aging infrastructure. Between 1949 and 1974, the U.S. government underwrote this process through a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant and loan program. Although the money was federal, renewal plans originated with and were implemented at the local level.

In cities nationwide, the consequences of urban renewal included the destruction of historic structures, the displacement of low-income families, and the removal (often closure) of small businesses."

(Source: The Inclusive Historian's Handbook)

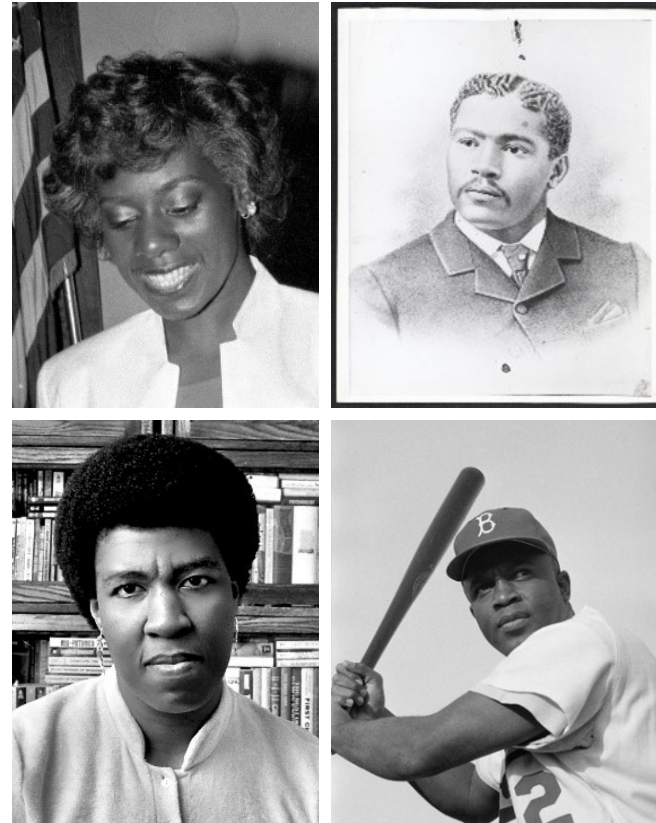
## 2 BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

### **History of the Black Community in North Fair Oaks, Pasadena**

Fair Oaks Avenue is a major historic thoroughfare, connecting the communities of Altadena, Pasadena, and South Pasadena. North Fair Oaks Avenue has been a part of Pasadena's Black community since the 1930s and used to be a flourishing neighborhood with Black businesses, homeowners and professionals; the street contained a movie theater, several markets (including a community co-op), numerous restaurants, churches, and doctor's offices. During this period, the community surrounding North Fair Oaks Avenue was 80% Black. Unfortunately, since the 1930s, the Black community and legacy of North Fair Oaks has been destroyed by redlining, urban renewal, freeway construction, and more.

### **Impacts of Urban Renewal**

In 1933, Homeowner Loan Corporation maps were published nationwide. These maps featured a rating system that classified neighborhoods as "best," "desirable," "declining," or "hazardous." Neighborhoods classified as "declining" or "hazardous" were most often neighborhoods which were significantly integrated or majority Black. Mortgages were nearly impossible to obtain for homeowners in "declining" and "hazardous" neighborhoods. North Fair Oaks Avenue was classified as "declining" and "hazardous." Between 1949 and 1974, the federal Department of Housing (HUD) funded cities to raze "blighted" or "slum" neighborhoods, seizing and demolishing large swaths of private and public property for the purpose of modernizing and improving aging infrastructure. This resulted in the displacement of a significant number of Black families from the entire area between Washington Boulevard and Mountain



Notable residents of Northwest Pasadena, from left to right:

**Top row:** Loretta Thompson-Glickman (1945-2001), first Black woman mayor of Pasadena; Robert Owens (1806-1865), an exceptional businessman who was born into slavery who purchased his own freedom, eventually becoming the wealthiest Black man in Los Angeles County

**Bottom row:** Octavia Estelle Butler (1947-2006), first science fiction author to win a MacArthur Genius Grant; Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson (1919-1972), first Black man to play in Major League Baseball, civil rights activist, and posthumous recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal and Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Street. This razing of “blighted” or “slum” neighborhoods became known as urban renewal.

In addition to urban renewal, the 1956 Highway Act released federal funding for highways across the US, slicing through Black neighborhoods and thriving Black business districts. The construction of the 210 Freeway and 710 “stub” had devastating effects on Pasadena’s African American, Latino, and Japanese communities. In fact, City leaders deliberately rejected an alternate plan for the 210 Freeway which would have preserved the homes of nearly 3,000 Black residents and the Lincoln Avenue business district. Thousands of homes and businesses were demolished to clear the path for the 210 and 710. Property owners were reimbursed according to “fair market values”; however, property values were considerably depressed due to historical redlining. Displaced residents of color struggled to find housing in the rest of Pasadena due to continued segregation.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 allowed Black residents to live outside of the North Fair Oaks community. Many Black residents with means moved to other parts of Pasadena or north to Altadena. Due to this exodus, the North Fair Oaks community suffered. The community was left with an ailing housing stock, a lack of access to good jobs, and the cocaine epidemic in the 80’s. This led to the proliferation of gangs in the area, causing even more residents to leave the community to escape the violence. This displacement, disinvestment and long history of exclusion in Pasadena has caused generational trauma and the loss of over 50% of the city’s Black population since 1990, as well as the loss of most of the buildings which remind the community of its history, except for the segment which this Plan focuses on, north of Washington Boulevard.

Right: Urban renewal and freeway construction projects which demolished former Black owned business districts  
See Appendix A for more detail.



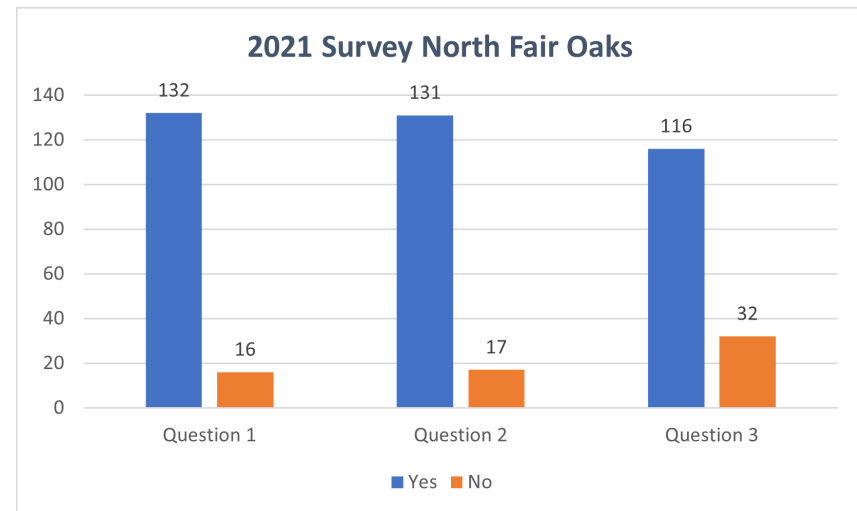
## The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative

To seek to address the deep wounds and injustices experienced by the North Fair Oaks Ave community, Making Housing and Community Happen (MHCH) has stepped in. The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative was started by Dr. Jill Shook in 2015. In 2015, Dr. Shook collected 150 survey responses to understand concerns, hopes, and dreams of residents for the future of their community. In 2015, community members prioritized thriving businesses and a pedestrian friendly, safer North Fair Oaks Avenue.

Also in 2015, the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative planned and hosted the Northwest Jobfest in cooperation with community organizations, religious organizations, the Workforce Employment Board, and elected officials. During this Jobfest, attended by 500 local residents, services were provided for job applicants. Additionally, the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative collected input from approximately 125 local residents regarding their vision for the future of North Fair Oaks Avenue.

The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative team gained recognition in the community in the years that followed. The Initiative team partnered with the Complete Streets Coalition to create with the community a list of specific items that would improve the streetscape and pedestrian experience of North Fair Oaks Avenue. The Initiative team and Coalition created a list of 15 concerns which they addressed through meetings with the Pasadena Department of Transportation, the Pasadena Transportation Advisory Commission, the Northwest Commission, and the Pasadena City Council. Today, several of these requests have been completed, and others are approved and waiting for funding.

4 Questions	NO	YES	Answers
1. If there were more safe crosswalks, would you be more likely to frequent the North Fair Oaks Community? / Si hubiera cruces peatonales más seguros, ¿frequentaría la comunidad de North Fair Oaks?	16	132	148
2. If there were more shade and benches, would this encourage you to walk and gather with friends and family? / Si hubiera más sombra y banquetas, ¿Le alentaría a caminar y reunirse con amigos y familiares?	17	131	148
3. To create a more livable, safer, and healthy North Fair Oaks community, would you support converting the existing 4 lanes to 2 lanes with a center turn lane? / Para crear una comunidad de North Fair Oaks más habitable y segura, ¿Apoyaría la conversión de los 4 carriles existentes en 2, con un carril de giro central adicional?	32	116	148



Survey Responses



In 2021, the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative conducted a second survey with 148 responses which yielded essentially the same results as the 2015 survey. Following the release of these survey results, the Pasadena Department of Transportation informed MHCH that it was seeking grants of \$5 million and more to complete the requested street projects to beautify North Fair Oaks. The Department didn't receive this grant but has since applied for several other grants. The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative continues to advocate for complete streets improvements for North Fair Oaks Avenue.

### ***Developing the North Fair Oaks Vision Plan***

To produce this Vision Plan, the Initiative and The Arroyo Group conducted 4 outreach events. The first outreach event took place on May 16th, 2023 at New Life Holiness Church. During this event time was set aside to screen an oral history of North Fair Oaks and its history as a thriving Black community. After familiarizing participants with North Fair Oaks' thriving past, the rest of the meeting turned to the current and future condition of the avenue. Through a mapping exercise, participants were able to provide input on specific uses (such as mixed income housing, mixed use housing, affordable housing, cafes, commercial uses, and more) that they would like to see in specific locations along North Fair Oaks in the future. Themes included a preference for having commercial uses clustered around the four main intersections along North Fair Oaks. Another finding was the community's interest in supporting a Black working artist community and cultural businesses along the avenue. The community values Black art and cultural expression and has interest in a Black live/work artist community or Black owned art or cultural businesses along North Fair Oaks.



Photos from N Fair Oaks engagement events

The second outreach event, held at the Boys and Girls Club on July 12th, 2023, introduced participants to the concept of zoning, the City's current proposal for updating the zoning along North Fair Oaks Avenue, and The Arroyo Group's proposal for updating the zoning along North Fair Oaks Avenue, described in Chapter 3. Participants during this outreach event and the previous event expressed support for 3-4 story residential buildings in the neighborhood, although some had concerns about additional population along the avenue, as the community already feels dense to them. Additionally, support was expressed for walkable business and shopping experiences along North Fair Oaks Avenue, in either commercial only storefronts or mixed use developments.



Photo-collage of public mapping and visioning exercise results.

**Left:** E Montana St to E Tremont St (approx.)

**Right:** E Tremont St (approx.) to W Washington Blvd



The third outreach event was held in La Pintoresca Park on September 17th, 2023. The purpose of this event was to gain community input on a vision for public art, restorative justice, and complete streets initiatives. As part of the complete streets discussion, The Arroyo Group presented an updated complete streets plan for North Fair Oaks Avenue. Specific suggestions from the community were incorporated into the complete streets plan for consideration. For the restorative justice activity, the first portion focused on educating participants about the injustices faced historically by the North Fair Oaks community. Following this education, a discussion was held regarding what actions the City of Pasadena might undertake to right these historical injustices. The public art activity also featured an education session, meant to empower participants to choose the people, places, and histories that are important within the North Fair Oaks community for a public art mural that would represent and restore pride to the North Fair Oaks community for years to come.



The final outreach event took place at New Life Holiness Church on November 19th, 2023. A draft of the Vision Plan was presented at this event for community members to comment upon. During this event feedback was received regarding the streetscape portion of the draft. One commentor expressed skepticism about the ability of proposed streetscape improvements to slow and make safer traffic along North Fair Oaks Avenue. In response to this feedback, adjustments were made to the proposed streetscape improvements. Additionally, supportive feedback was received for specific types of land uses along the avenue, including artist studios, bookstores, coffee shops, affordable housing, and mixed use housing. Lastly, commentors expressed an interest in recovering the history of North Fair Oaks Avenue and historical businesses along the corridor.



# 3 ZONING AND LAND USE

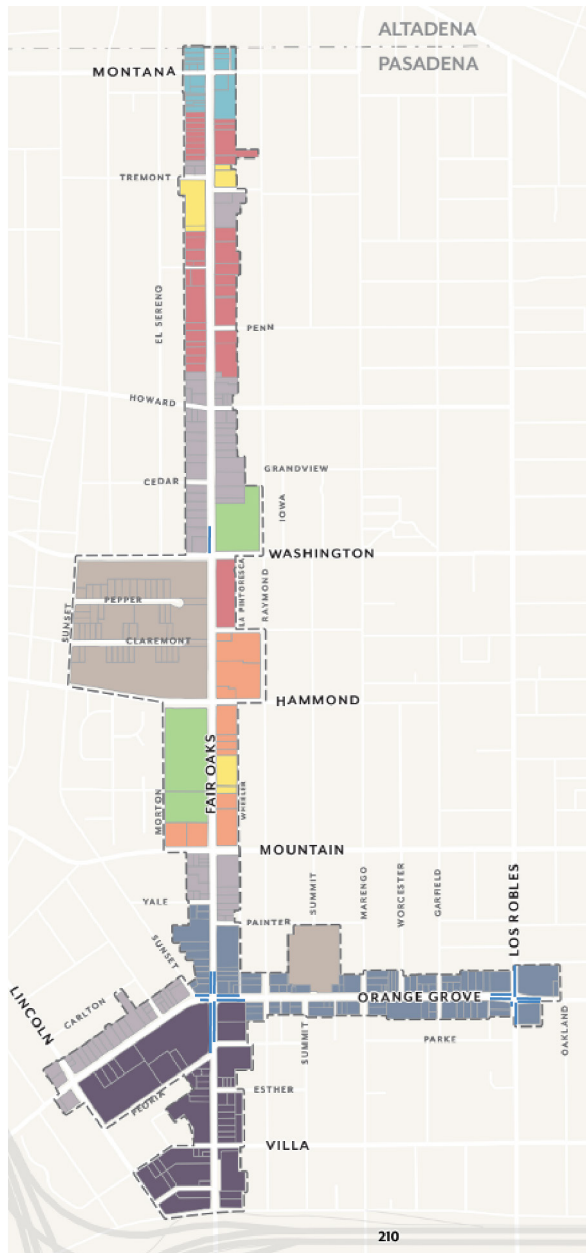
## Overview

This chapter of the Vision Plan is intended to illustrate the land use changes desired by the community on North Fair Oaks Avenue. These land use changes require zoning modifications by the City of Pasadena which can be implemented through the current Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan update. Our hope is also that private landowners will draw upon these concepts as they develop plans for this area.

North Fair Oaks Avenue has long had a mix of residential and commercial uses of various types. In the 1960's, due to a lack of permissible sites in other parts of the City, nursing homes began to concentrate heavily on the street, destroying the neighborly feel of the street and forestalling opportunities for much-needed multifamily housing. Instead of making targeted changes to prevent future nursing homes, the City downzoned the corridor as a whole, **eliminating the opportunity for not only nursing homes but also multifamily housing and commercial uses that could have revitalized the corridor**; the current low-density zoning basically imposes a “**no new investment**” status on the area, with the exception of special projects which require large amounts of City funding to make feasible.

In recent decades, the City has pursued a strategy of concentrating development in Downtown and preserving residential neighborhoods. While the City's strategy was often supported, especially in more prosperous neighborhoods, the unique conditions and needs of North Fair Oaks Avenue require a different approach. Recognizing this, the City has proposed to upzone portions of the Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan (FGSP) area near the 210 Freeway. However, in recent years the community north of Washington Boulevard has consistently supported more growth and revitalization. As such, this Vision Plan lays out a strategy for revitalizing the area, including upzoning for affordable, mixed-income, and mixed-use development.





## Official City Draft Specific Plan Update: North Fair Oaks

 **FGSP-CG (General Commercial)**

**Permitted uses:** Commercial-only. (restaurants, retail, offices/services, etc)

 **FGSP-CF (Flex Commercial)**

**Permitted uses:** R&D Flex. (labs, small-scale manufacturing, etc)

 **FGSP-MU-87 (Mixed-Use 87)**

**Permitted uses:** Mixed Residential/Commercial, 87 du/ac

 **FGSP-MU-48 (Mixed-Use 48)**

**Permitted uses:** Mixed Residential/Commercial, 48 du/ac

 **FGSP-MU-32 (Mixed-Use 32)**

**Permitted uses:** Mixed Residential/Commercial, 32 du/ac

 **FGSP-RM-16 (Multifamily Residential 16)**

**Permitted uses:** Multifamily residential, 16 du/ac.

 **OS (Open Space)**

**Permitted uses:** Public open space. (plazas, parks, etc)

 **PS (Public-Semipublic)**

**Permitted uses:** Limited commercial and a variety of public and commercial accessory uses. (educational uses, public institutions, etc)

 **PD (Planned Development)**

**Permitted uses:** Mixed-use, with nonresidential prohibited in upper floors.

**du/ac:** Dwelling units per acre.

## Official City Draft Specific Plan Update: North Fair Oaks (Zoomed into Vision Plan Extent) - N. of Washington

The draft Specific Plan proposes retaining most of the corridor as FGSP-RM-16, a zoning designation which allows only single-family homes, duplexes, and generously sized townhomes (no apartments). At Montana Avenue, only commercial uses are permitted; no residential development of any type is allowed. Within the rest of the area, commercial uses are not required to be built as a part of any development, except at the immediate corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and Washington Boulevard.

### FGSP-CG (General Commercial)

**Permitted uses:** Commercial-only. (restaurants, retail, offices/services, etc)

### FGSP-MU-32 (Mixed-Use 32)

**Permitted uses:** Mixed Residential/Commercial, 32 du/ac

### FGSP-RM-16 (Multifamily Residential 16)

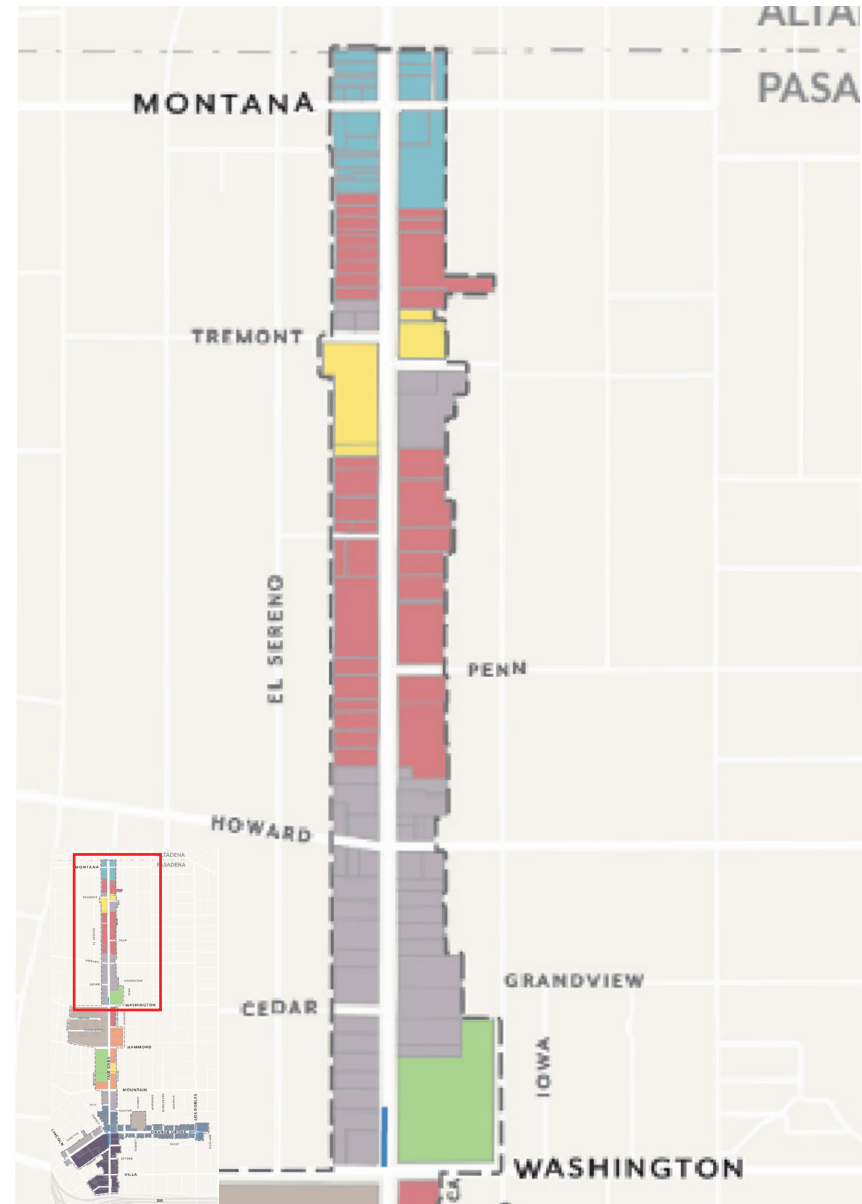
**Permitted uses:** Multifamily residential, 16 du/ac.

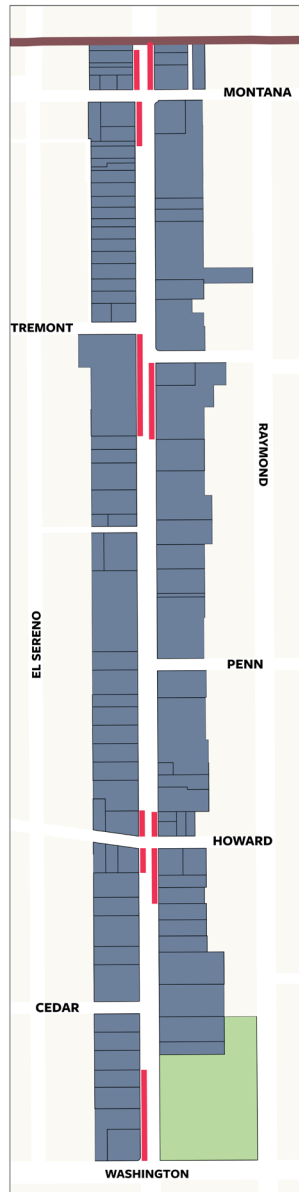
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## North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative Vision Plan Proposed Zoning: North Fair Oaks


This Vision Plan's proposed zoning would allow three-story residential and commercial buildings anywhere throughout the corridor, with a maximum density of 48 du/ac. This is a density typically required to make multifamily housing projects, especially affordable housing projects, feasible. Commercial uses would be required on the ground floor at intersections, allowing for neighborhood gathering places and small business opportunities within walking distance of the entire corridor and nearby neighborhoods.

 **FGSP-MU-48**

**Permitted uses:** Residential-only, commercial-only, mixed-use.  
Ground floor commercial is required at specific intersections.

**Maximum height:** 3 stories/39 feet

**Density:** 48 du/ac

 **Active frontages (ground floor commercial required)**



## Desired businesses and retail uses

The Plan accommodates the vision of restoring North Fair Oaks' role as a main street of Pasadena's African-American community, which means the reinvigoration of commercial uses along the corridor. Because all of the properties are very small along the corridor, it is likely that most businesses would be small, and possibly locally-owned, which is an asset in this case.

During community workshops, community members expressed a sentiment that cultural activities and businesses could be profitable and sustainable, as demonstrated by the recent opening of Octavia's Bookshelf (unfortunately outside NW Pasadena). Another key theme is the need to simply bring more amenities within walking distance of nearby residents.

An example would be a coffee shop with an appropriate cultural theme, displaying and selling art and serving as a community gathering place. Co-working space could serve a similar function and provide an outlet for people working remotely in the neighborhood. A final example could be a small food hall, managed by a non-profit with curated startup food offerings.



Blossom Food Hall showcases the cuisine of local chefs and creates a gathering place for the community centered around food.



## Walk Score:

North Fair Oaks (Fair Oaks and Penn)	54
Northeast Pasadena (Hill and Washington)	83
Old Pasadena (Fair Oaks and Colorado)	98
City of Pasadena Average	69

A walk score measures the walkability of an area. With the Vision Plan's streetscape improvements, the walk score of North Fair Oaks Avenue should improve. The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative envisions a target walk score of 80 for North Fair Oaks Avenue.



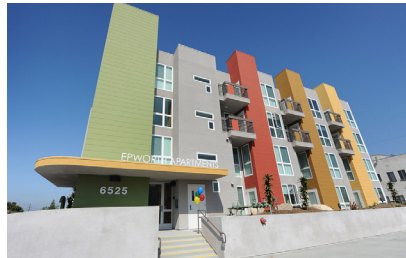
Sip & Sonder is a Black women-owned coffeehouse brand established in Inglewood. It is a gathering place for the community.

North Fair Oaks Vision Plan

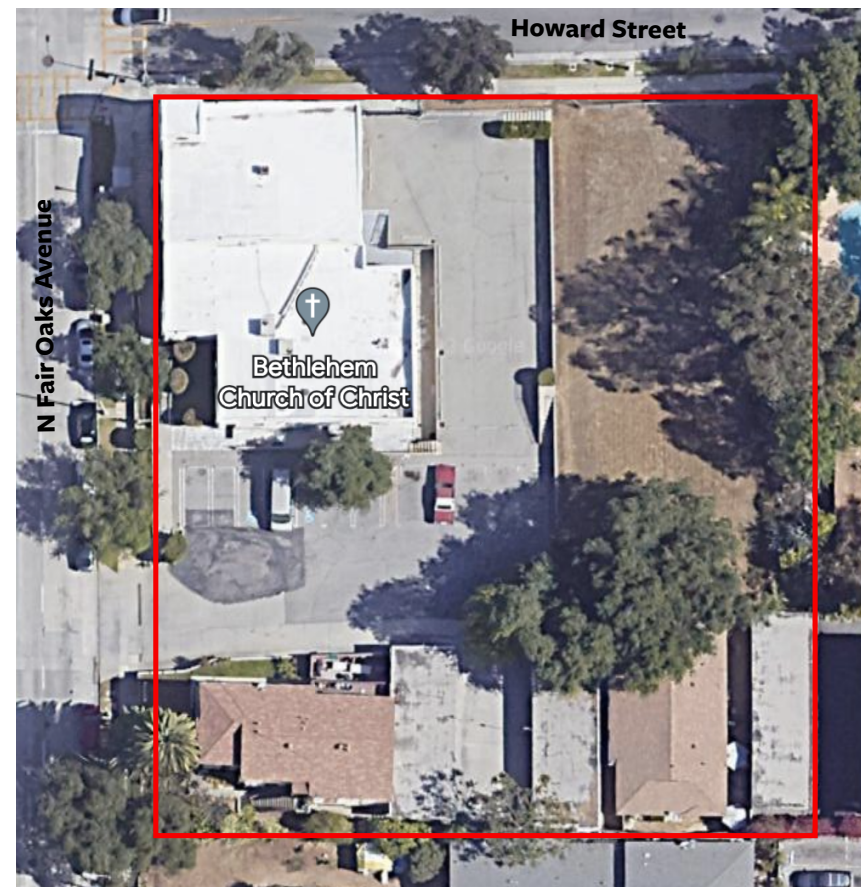
## Affordable housing

Affordable housing is a critical need due to extremely high rent burdens in Pasadena, especially for Black households and other households of color. Over 60% of Pasadena households are renters and 58% of Black households are cost burdened. As a result of the lack of affordable housing in the City, Pasadena's Black population has declined by over 50% since 1990. Nevertheless, the City's recent amendments to its Local Preference Policy now sets aside 20% of units for "Right of Return" for those who have been displaced from the City in the last ten years, opening up an opportunity for people recently displaced to return. Two helpful amendments to this policy would be increasing the eligible time of displacement, or allowing those who grew up in the City to be eligible, and removing the current 50-beneficiary cap on this program.

Medium and large sites within the Specific Plan area could be redeveloped into 100% affordable housing. There is an opportunity to utilize sites which are publicly-owned or owned by religious congregations, such as the one to the right. There are 10 churches located in the area, all of which have a mission to serve the community, but have lost much of their local membership due to displacement. Repurposing excess congregational land for affordable housing can help stabilize these important community institutions and be an outgrowth of their mission.



The most common method for 100% affordable housing development funding is through Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), which require a minimum of 50-60 units to be feasible. Combining the proposed zoning of 48 du/ac with a State density bonus of 80%, any site of at least 0.6 acres should be able to develop such housing. These projects would provide new, quality housing with rents restricted to 30% of a household's income.





## **Mixed-income housing**

Small properties cannot meet the 50-60 unit threshold for 100% affordable housing, but allowing more opportunities for development of market-rate housing is beneficial for several reasons:

It will expand the housing supply, and activate the corridor with more foot traffic and more disposable income to support businesses.

Because of Pasadena's inclusionary housing ordinance, 20% of all units constructed in developments of 10+ units would be affordable.

It will also help create move-up options, and possibly lower-cost homeownership options (condominiums) for the long-time renter population of the area. Because lots are small and the location is less desirable than other areas in Pasadena, prices will likely be lower than at other new construction projects in the City.

Under the proposed Specific Plan zoning, a 0.26-acre site like the one shown at right would only accommodate four units of housing. Because of high acquisition and demolition costs, it is unlikely that such a project would happen. However, under our proposed zoning, it would accommodate twelve units, making a project likely subject to the inclusionary zoning ordinance and creating two affordable housing units on the site.

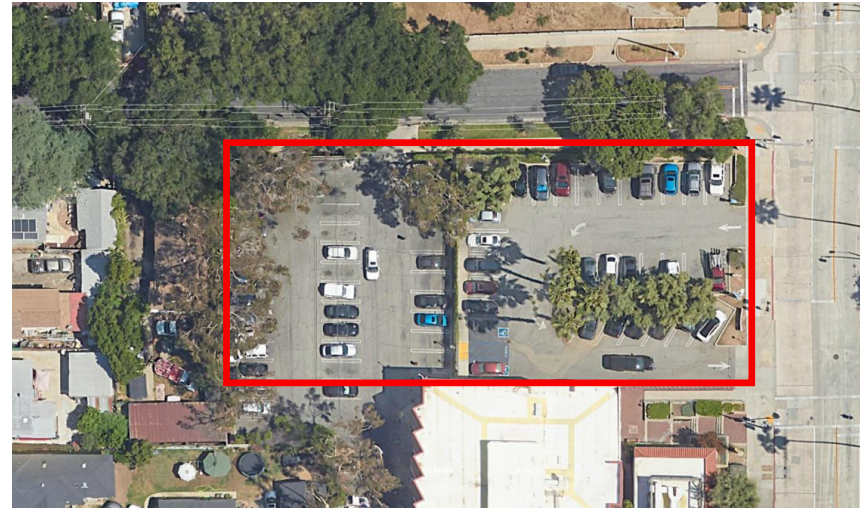


### **Mixed-use with open space**

Many of the largest properties on the corridor belong to convalescent homes or drug rehabilitation centers. In the 1970's and 1980's, North Fair Oaks Avenue became the targeted location for these uses due to deinstitutionalization, relatively permissive zoning, and NIMBYism from whiter and wealthier neighborhoods. The high concentration of these uses along the street has significantly affected the livability of the street, with constant ambulances and a lack of community sentiment.

Nevertheless, since 2021, two convalescent homes have closed. One of them is being converted into residential apartments. This gives hope that others of these uses will close in the future and relocate in a more equitable manner to other parts of the City, as residential care facilities such as these are now permitted in all of the City's residential and mixed-use zones.

These large properties are the most clear opportunities to create additional open spaces along the corridor. Small plazas functioning as community gathering places, outdoor dining for small commercial uses, and locations for culturally-honoring public art would help further the goals of the Plan. Such public space should be required of all developments greater than one acre along the corridor.

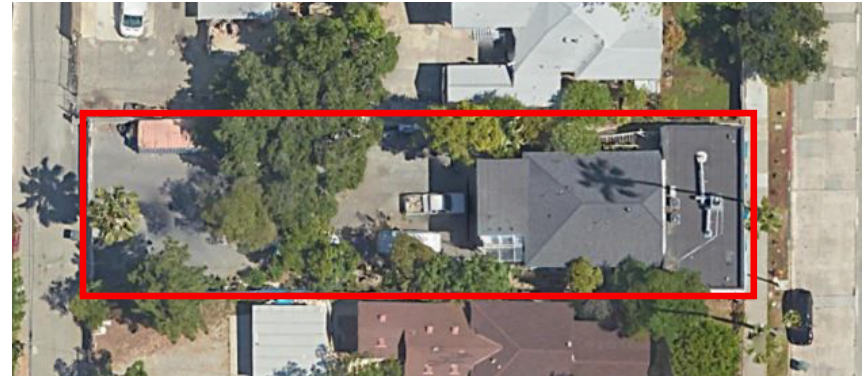




### **Live/work space or Artist community**

To help further the identity of the corridor as a historic main street of Pasadena's African-American community, community members also recommended the establishment of an artist community in the area, perhaps focused on themes of African-American history and identity.

Smaller residential care facilities in the area, mostly former single-family homes converted into individual living areas, would make good locations for these communities. These properties tend to be lower-priced, with abundant outdoor areas and opportunities to repair and customize the homes. Some of these properties even have small commercial storefronts along the street which can serve as gallery space.



## **Parking on North Fair Oaks Avenue**

While parking is considered an unabated parking good, the costs of parking requirements along North Fair Oaks Avenue are many. For example:

- Many businesses in the City are considered “legal nonconforming” because of an inadequate number of parking spaces to meet current municipal code requirements. Extensive renovations or replacement of these buildings is impossible.
- Commercial parking requirements are a major deterrent to developers wanting to construct commercial space within a residential development. This is one factor contributing to new development being 100% residential.
- Parking lots along the street deaden the street environment. This is particularly true in areas that should be nodes of activity, such as where Fair Oaks Avenue meets Washington Boulevard, and where it meets Tremont Street.

Instead of relying on a large supply of off-street parking for commercial and civic uses, most of these needs should be handled along the street. Since overnight parking on the street is prohibited in the City of Pasadena, street parking is functionally limited to visitors or commercial businesses. In current conditions, on-street parking is typically quite available along the street.

## **Parking Recommendations**

- Monitor use of on-street parking as commerce increases. If utilization is greater than 85%, restrict on-street parking to 2 or 4-hour parking, or restrict the number of overnight parking permits given to residents.
- Part IV recommends the replacement of some on-street parking spaces with tree wells. Site these tree wells in areas to minimize loss of on-street spaces, especially in commercial areas.
- Eliminate parking requirements for commercial uses with sizes under 5,000 square feet, similar to Lincoln Avenue.
- Allow major renovation of older commercial properties without having to meet current parking requirements.
- Encourage shared parking, especially in underutilized church lots and at the Health Department. Refrain from requiring long-term covenants to allow commercial uses to share parking with other underutilized properties.
- The City can partner with churches to take over lots for public parking and install EV (electric vehicle) charging stations. EV charging stations should also be installed at the Health Department; however, the community requests that the parking spaces with these charging stations not be restricted to only electric vehicles.



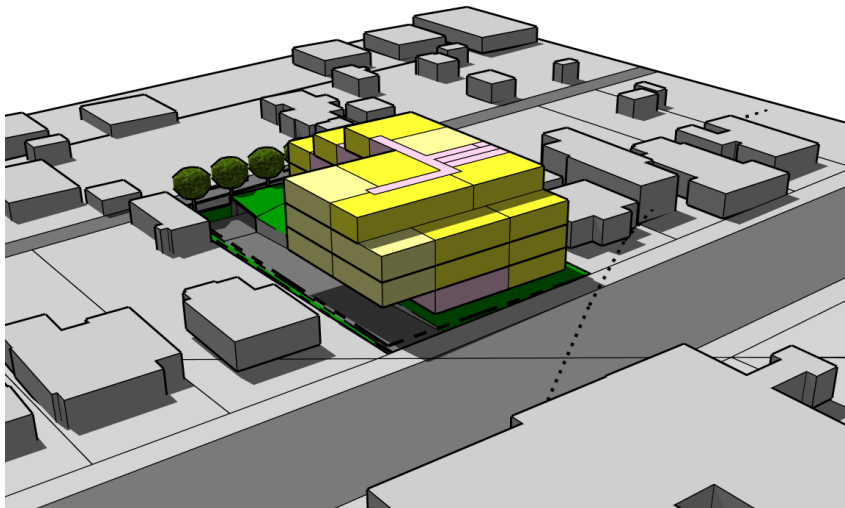
## **Protecting Privacy of Adjacent Neighborhoods**

Immediately to the east and west of North Fair Oaks Avenue are medium-density residential neighborhoods along El Sereno and Raymond Avenues. As the height and density of development along North Fair Oaks Avenue increase, care should be taken to mitigate impacts on the privacy of residents on nearby streets. This is of particular importance on the west side of the street, where properties fronting on North Fair Oaks Avenue are at a higher elevation than properties fronting on El Sereno Avenue.

In order to determine appropriate strategies to mitigate these impacts, the planning team studied a “worst-case” scenario, where a new building was built along North Fair Oaks Avenue at 48 dwelling units per acre plus a 50% density bonus (this would only come into place where a development provided more affordable housing than required by the City). The studies demonstrate that simple guidelines can be held to which significantly mitigate effects on privacy. In fact, the increase in density and permitted height on the street in some ways improve privacy from current regulations, since current regulations enforce a less flexible “townhouse” residential type, and restrictive height limits prohibit shifting most of the project density toward the Fair Oaks Avenue frontage of the property.

We recommend the following standards and guidelines to address this issue:

- Require developments to adhere to a transitional height limit, where taller heights must be located at sufficient distance from the lower density neighborhood
- Plant rear setbacks with evergreen trees
- Minimize number of windows on facades facing rear yards of lower-density neighborhoods
- All upper-floor common open spaces oriented toward lower-density neighborhoods should incorporate a 6' buffer on the edge of the open space which prevents downward views into adjacent yards.



Study of massing of development at 48 du/ac + 50% density bonus, demonstrating transitional height away from rear



Planter and furniture at roof deck edge, avoiding views straight down into adjacent properties



Plan view



Buffer landscaping, transitional height and setback

# 4 STREETSCAPE

## Overview

One of the reasons North Fair Oaks Avenue would be challenged to return to its historic role as an active, neighborly main street is its dangerously fast car traffic. According to the Pasadena Police Department, approximately 65 automobile collisions were registered on the street in the first seven months of 2023.

The street possesses one of the most dangerous roadway configurations: a four-lane road with no center lane or turn median. Even worse, the street is not wide enough for this configuration – the parking lane and #2 lane in each direction are narrower than required for an arterial roadway with frequent bus traffic.



The aftermath of a crash between E Howard St. and E Penn St.

To illustrate the street's danger, picture the following situations:

- A northbound driver wants to turn left onto Howard Street while a southbound driver also wants to turn left. Neither can see past each other to judge whether there is traffic oncoming in the #2 lane.
- A driver stops abruptly in the left lane to turn into a residential driveway, with another driver tailgating.
- A driver in a rush coming from Altadena gains speed and drives as quickly as possible downhill, especially in the stretches where there are no signals between Fair Oaks Drive and Howard, and Howard and Washington.
- A resident wants to back out of her driveway and cannot see oncoming traffic behind parked vehicles, because the #2 lane is located very close to the parked cars.
- A driver zig-zags between traffic lanes to race as fast as possible along the street.
- A pedestrian seeks to cross the street. The driver in the #2 lane stops to let him pass, but a driver coming behind in the #1 lane speeds up to pass. Also, there is no place for the pedestrian to take refuge in the middle of the street.
- A driver parking on-street opens up the rear driver-side door to help an elderly person out of the car while a bus tries to pass in the too-narrow travel lane.

All of these circumstances can contribute to an overall high level of risk posed to pedestrians, cyclists, and even other drivers. For this reason, we strongly recommend the street be restriped into a three-lane road: one lane in each direction, and a center turn lane with medians, bulb outs, and other street beautifying features. In 2021, Making Housing and Community Happen surveyed 148 people who live on the street. Over 78% of people supported this restriping concept.



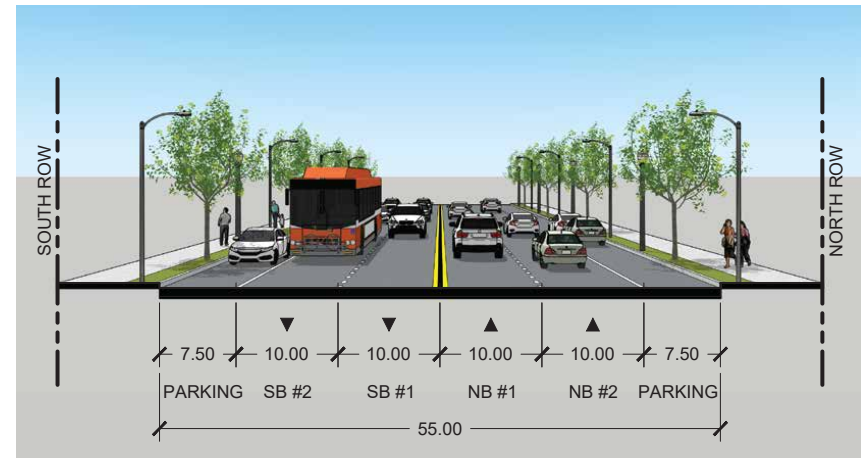


Rendering of a safer and more pedestrian-friendly intersection at Montana St and N Fair Oaks.

## Street cross-sections

Existing typical cross-section is a fast moving street with substandard parking width and 2 lanes traveling each direction.

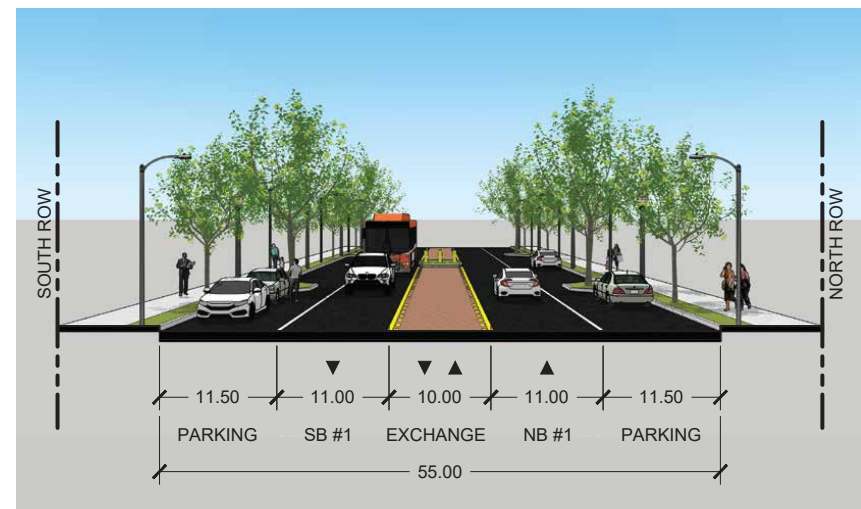
### Existing



The proposed cross-section proposes wider parking lanes and 1 travel lane each direction with a center exchange lane, with a unique paving treatment, slowing down the dangerous speeds of traffic. This cross-section accommodates a daily volume of 20,000 vehicles, which is greater than the 13,300 - 16,800 vehicles per day on the street in 2019. Adding emergency and transit priority signals will help ensure that essential services are not delayed. Large trees are planted at intervals in parking lanes to provide extra shade and traffic calming.

An alternative cross-section incorporating a one-way Class II bicycle lane was also considered, but rejected in favor of encouraging bicycle access through the existing two-way Class II bicycle lanes on Raymond Avenue, which should be improved. There is not enough room to provide bicycle facilities in both directions along Fair Oaks Avenue.

### Proposed



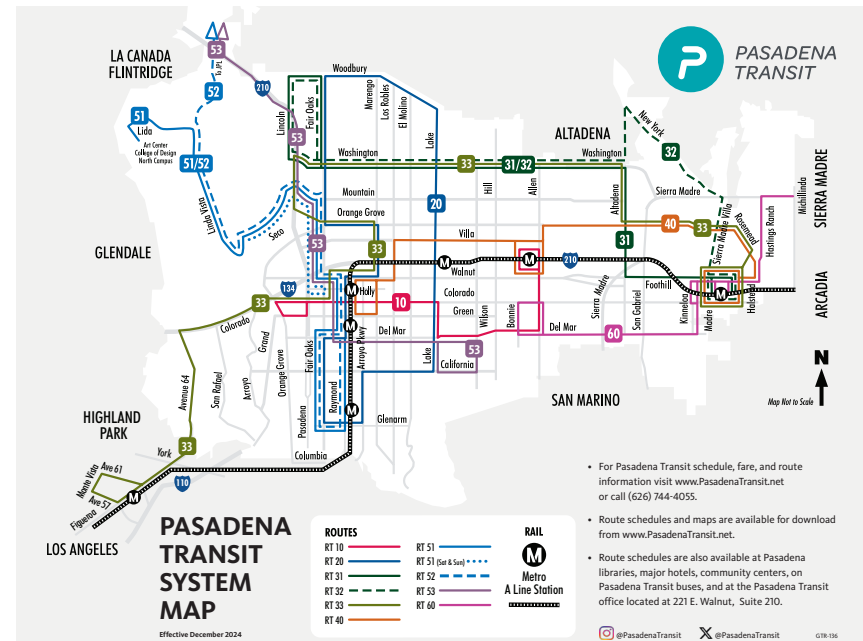


## Public transit

Public transit (a Pacific Electric streetcar) was once the primary method of transportation along North Fair Oaks Avenue. In the 21st century, increased utilization of public transit will reduce traffic congestion, bring more people to the streets, supporting local businesses, and reduce living expenses of people living within the Vision Plan area. Because transit service and availability is also linked to financing and zoning incentives for affordable housing, increasing public transit will also improve the opportunities to finance and construct affordable housing developments in the Vision Plan area.

The Vision Plan area is actually one of the better-connected areas in the City, with connections to routes 20, 31, 32 and 33. Metro line 660 also runs through the area, and line 662 runs along one edge. However, today none of these routes has a service frequency of 20 minutes or less, the threshold for being considered “high quality transit” and triggering financing and zoning benefits for 100% affordable housing developments. This is because the frequency and reliability of transit service is generally the most important consideration for potential riders when considering whether to make a trip by public transit or a different mode. Luckily, Pasadena Transit has opportunities to upgrade two lines to “high quality” lines in its Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP), which is currently being updated:

- Route 20 is Pasadena’s most popular bus route, a loop connecting North Fair Oaks Avenue to most of Pasadena’s major job and activity centers, as well as four Metro Rail stations. In the draft SRTP, the Department of Transportation has proposed to increase service frequencies on this route from every 25 minutes to every 15 minutes.



- Routes 31, 32 and 33 all travel similar routes along Washington Boulevard. If the City could combine these into a single route, it would qualify as a “high quality transit” route. It may also attract new riders, as a simpler and more legible service.

Infrastructure improvements are also proposed to improve the rider experience. Bus shelters should be added at stops where shade is lacking, and the maintenance of benches and trash cans ensured. Finally, to mitigate any effects of the proposed restriping on bus speed and reliability, bus priority signals should be installed on the street, and queue jumpers installed at the entries into the three-lane segments.

## Streetscape Kit of Parts

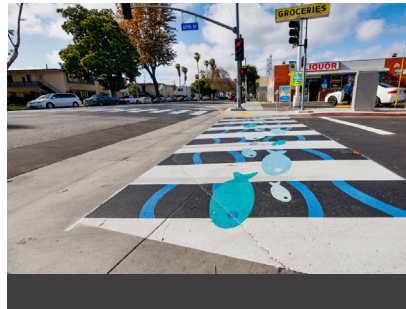
### A. Gateway element

Adds a sense of neighborhood identity and provides an opportunity to uplift and give publicity to the history, arts, and culture of the North Fair Oaks community.



### B. Artistic crosswalks

Contribute a sense of neighborhood identity while preserving the high visibility of traditional striping.



### C. Planted road medians

Beautify the area, create a more pleasant walking and cycling environment, and contribute to local habitat value.



### D. Sidewalk bulb-outs

Extend the sidewalk at intersections, reducing crossing distances for pedestrians and creating a more inviting streetscape, while ensuring buses can easily move around them where needed.



### E. Medians with pedestrian refuges

Provide a safe waiting space for pedestrians in the middle of the road, making the street more accessible for people of all physical abilities.



### F. Pedestrian Lighting

Increase number of pedestrian light poles or install upgraded bulbs to improve lighting for pedestrian travel at night. Also, add benches and trash receptacles at key locations and ensure maintenance of sidewalks.





### G. Coastal Live Oaks

The recommended tree species is Coastal Live Oaks, namely Southern Live Oaks. These trees adapt to our climate, have fire resistance factors, and contribute to Pasadena's tree canopy.



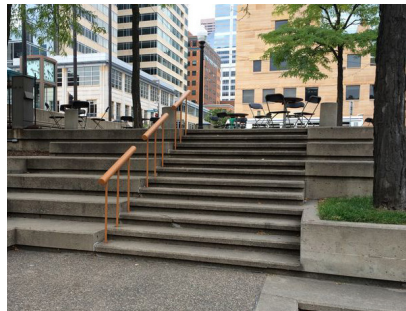
### H. Parklets

Parklets along North Fair Oaks will allow local businesses like restaurants and cafes to extend their service to a protected portion of the street, activating the sidewalk and public realm.



### I. Seat Steps

Expansion of staircase entry into La Pintaoreca Park, inviting people to sit as they wait for bus or enjoy fare from street vendors.



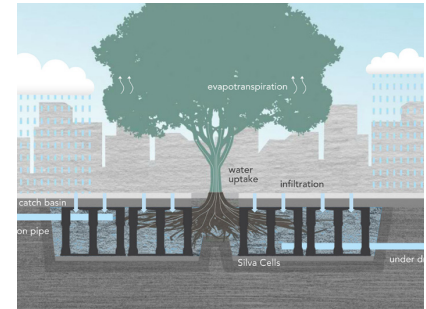
### J. Tree Well Bulb-Outs

Tree bulb-outs foster a walkable, environmentally resilient, welcoming corridor with more shade to address the urban heat island effect. Bulb-outs soften the streetscape, calm traffic and enhance pedestrian safety.



### K. Silva Cells

Modern planting techniques, like Silva Cell technology, provide for more permeable tree wells, reduce soil compaction, prevent runoff, and minimize sidewalk damage from roots.

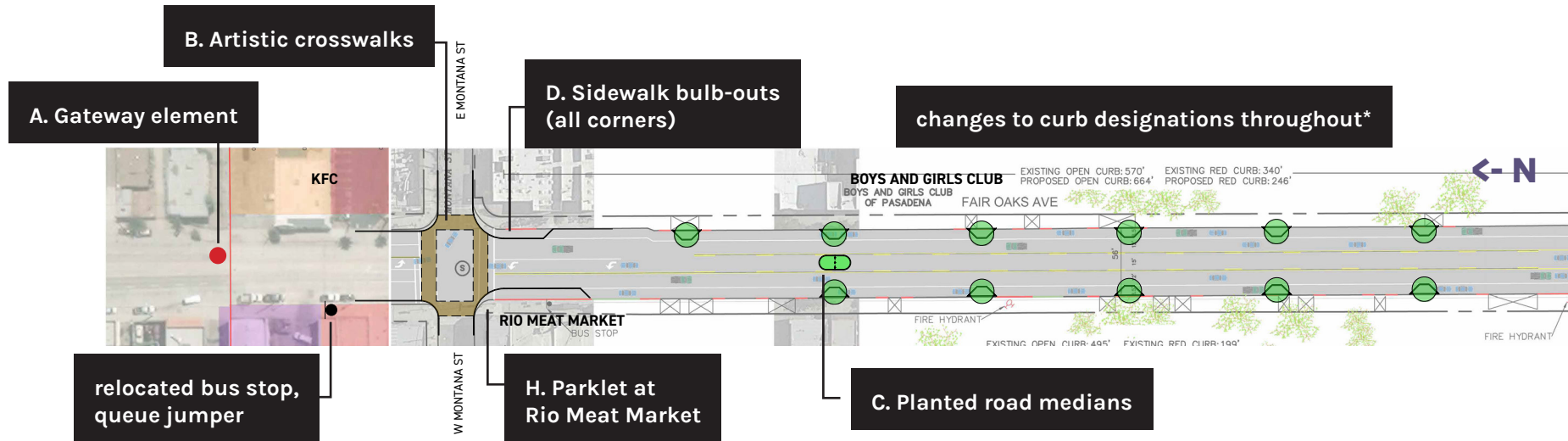


### L. Historic Plaques on Sidewalks

Historic plaques along the sidewalk featuring information about North Fair Oak's history as a historic black main street. To be located throughout the corridor.



## Section I: Montana St to Tremont St



### Existing conditions

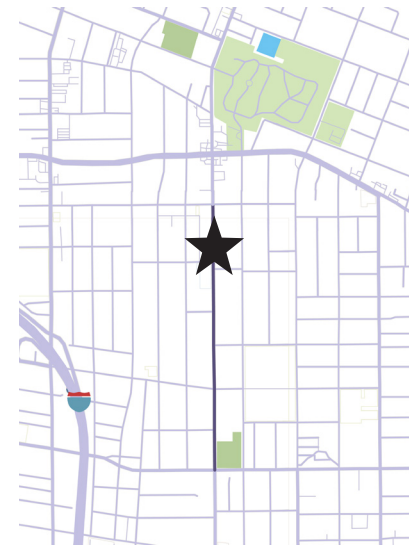


Section I begins with low-density, under-utilized commercial with churches, medical, and the local Boys & Girls Club. Drivers do not stop in this area, and parking is limited.

### \*Why make changes to curb designations?

The current distribution of red curb length does not meet today's traffic engineering standards.

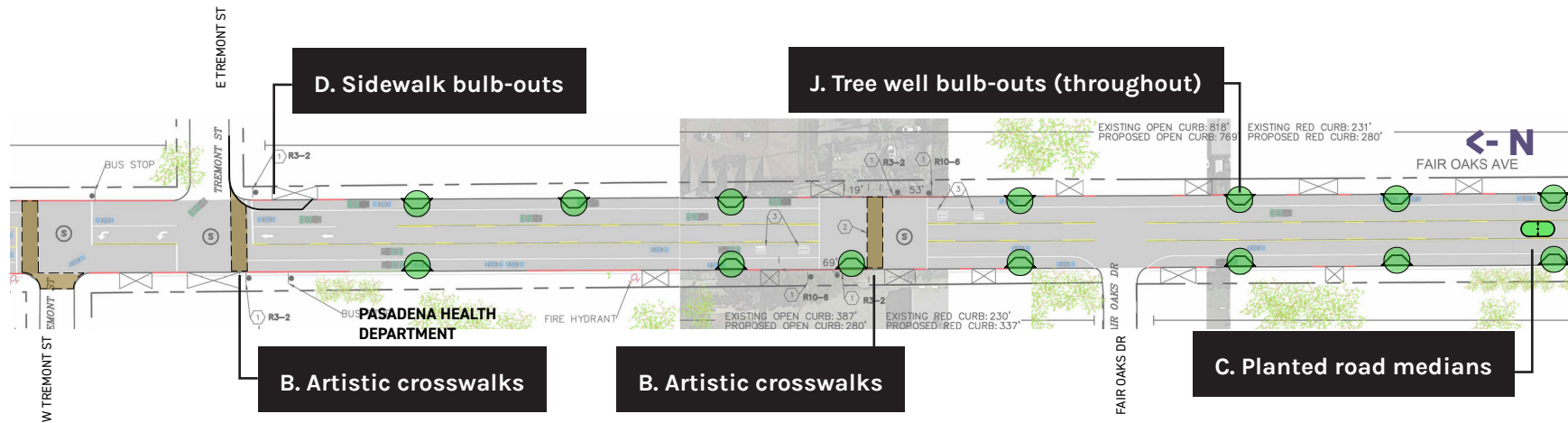
Some blocks will end up with more red curb, and some with less — all in service of making N Fair Oaks safer and more efficient for all users.



North Fair Oaks Vision Plan



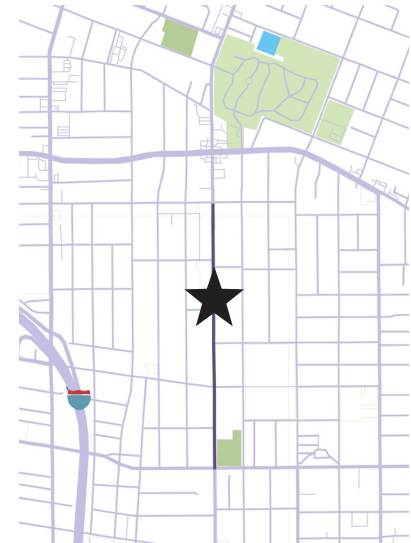
## Section II: Tremont St to Penn St



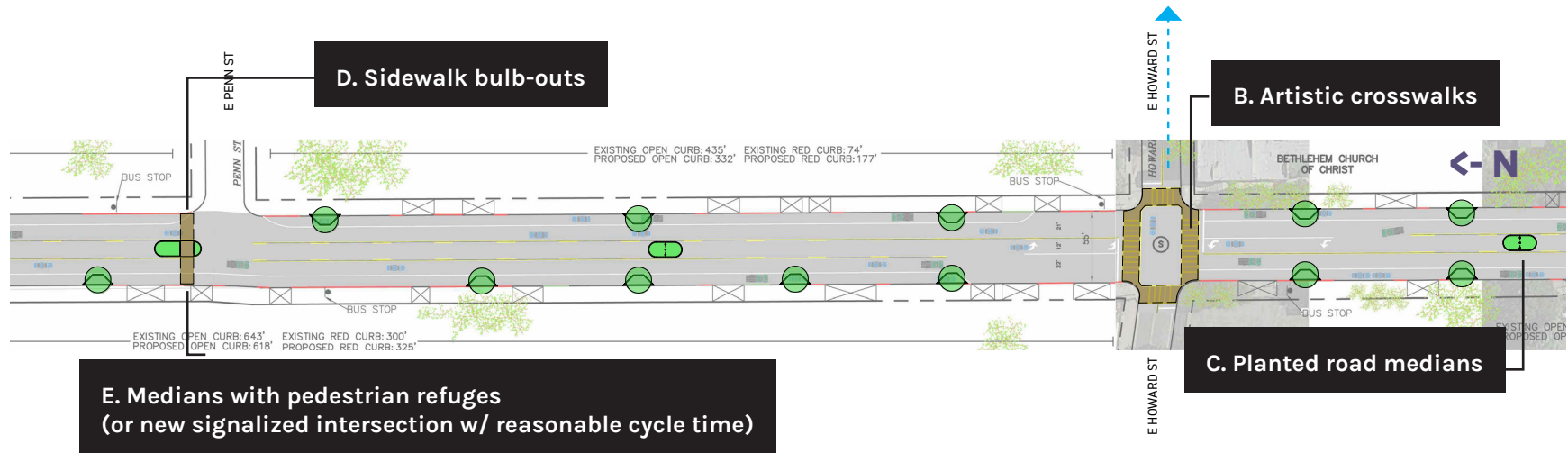
### Existing conditions



Section II begins with several medical buildings and sheltered bus stops. Medium-density residential along N Fair Oaks.



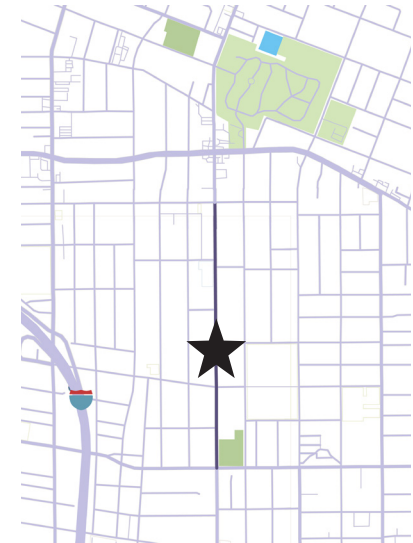
### Section III: Penn St to Howard St



### Existing conditions

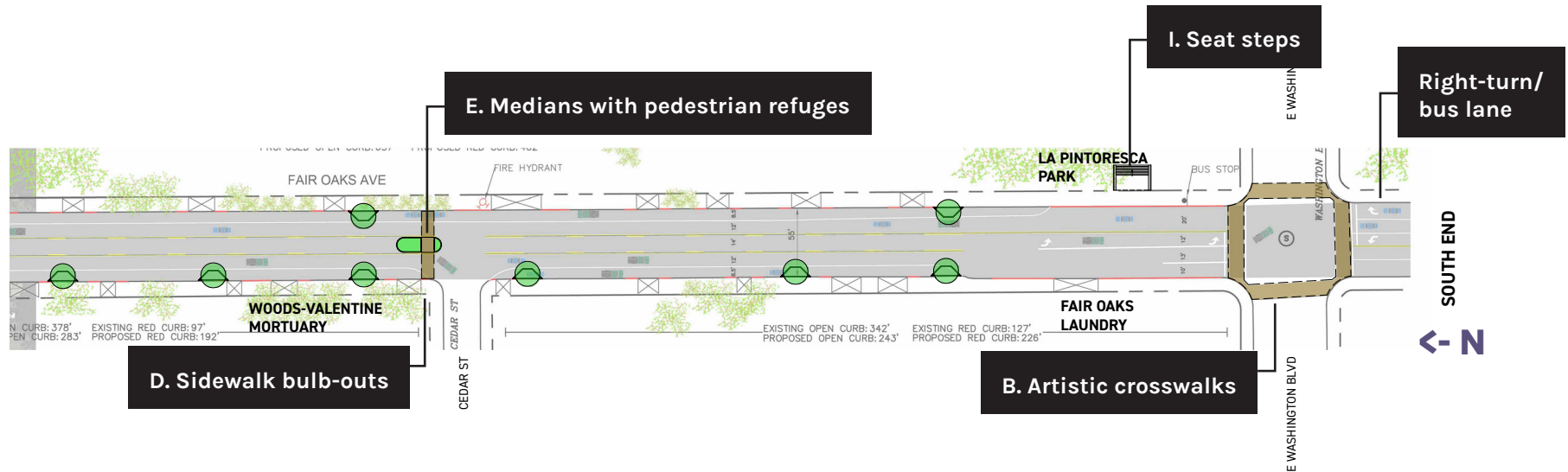


Section III begins with a three-point, uncontrolled intersection with E Penn St leading into a set of townhomes. Car traffic at this intersection is very rapid and known to pose danger to pedestrians crossing to access bus stops.



North Fair Oaks Vision Plan

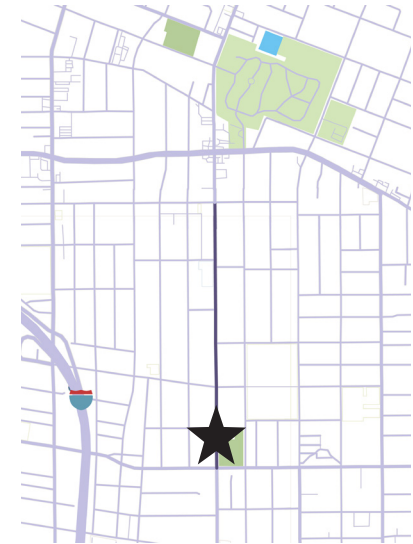
## Section IV: Howard St to Washington Blvd



### Existing conditions



Section IV begins with a tire shop, medical offices, a law office, a church, and unsheltered bus stops. Other community-serving establishments along N Fair Oaks. Ends at La Pintoresca Park, with low visibility crosswalks and unsheltered bus stops. There are high pedestrian counts in this area.





## 5 HISTORY, CULTURE, AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The final element of the Vision Plan deals with policy and programmatic recommendations related to restoring the historic role of North Fair Oaks Avenue as a main street for the African-American community. As all elements of this Plan do, this Chapter utilizes a restorative justice lens.<sup>1</sup> These recommendations are not intended to be a complete listing of policies to redress the historical injustices perpetuated against the African-American community in Pasadena.<sup>2</sup>

### **Current Cultural Activities**

North Fair Oaks Avenue continues to host activities and cultural institutions which reflect its role as one of the City's historic African-American main streets. Seven African-American churches line the corridor from Washington Boulevard to the City limit, along with one Hispanic congregation. Despite facing challenges such as rising housing costs and gentrification, these congregations persist as essential gathering places for the current and former Pasadena African-American community. They offer a culturally relevant sense of identity and purpose while extending support to those in need.

An annual highlight is the North Fair Oaks community's coming together every February for the Black History Parade. This event draws participation from schools, civic

<sup>1</sup> "Restorative justice is a process in which all the stakeholders affected by an injustice have the opportunity to discuss the consequences of the injustice and what might be done to put (things) right" and enact concrete actions to right the wrongs.

(Source: Braithwaite, 2022 and North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative)

<sup>2</sup> Some of the policy recommendations here are taken from the recent California Reparations Report to the California Legislature prepared by the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, adapted to the local context and history of the City of Pasadena.

groups, elected officials, and more. Churches prepare meals and host the community on their front porches. Despite its significance, the parade remains relatively unknown beyond Northwest Pasadena. Enhanced City support could amplify its impact, fostering greater awareness and appreciation for this culturally significant event.

### **Incentivizing Small, Local and Black-Owned Businesses**

Due to urban renewal, large portions of thriving Black homes and businesses along North Fair Oaks Avenue were driven out of the community. To help resurrect the commercial corridor, the City can create and provide funding for a small business investors fund, which would be a forgivable, interest-free local program available to owners of desired types of small businesses (such as retail, personal services, food and drink, art/cultural) along North Fair Oaks Avenue. Those who descend from or have relation to the historic North Fair Oaks community could be given extra points in the application. These funds would be used for startup costs, store upgrades, and other business investments.

The loans could range from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and a portion of the loans would be forgiven each year as long as the recipient remains in business in the same location.

The City can also use CDBG funds for façade improvements or other supports for small businesses in the area. Another potential use of funds is for the organization of an event with local food and artistic vendors which can help brand the area.

### **Public Art**

The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Team is in the process of finalizing the plan for a mural on the side façade of Rio Meat Market, a long-standing business along North Fair Oaks Avenue. Feedback received during the third outreach meeting's public art activity assisted the Committee in choosing a direction for the mural. The Initiative is pursuing this mural as a way to beautify the North Fair Oaks community while also honoring people of color from the community who were notable nationwide or locally. This mural is meant to empower and evoke a sense of pride in the North Fair Oaks community. The Initiative intends to include notable local Pasadena residents such as Loretta Thompson, Woods/Valentine, Edna Griffin, and Mae Reese Johnson on the mural. Lorretta Thompson-Glickman was the first Black mayor of Pasadena. Woods-Valentine refers to James Woods and Fred W. Valentine, the owners of one of Pasadena's oldest Black owned businesses, a mortuary on North Fair Oaks Avenue. Mae Reese Johnson was the founder of the Scattergood School and a proponent of education. The design for this mural is not final, however, the Committee has acquired a rendering of the most recent draft concept of the mural.

In addition to this mural on the façade of Rio Meat Market, the Plan encourages a wide variety of art typologies in various locations which have been vetted by the community some of which are shown in the images on the next page. Art which represents an African-American historical or cultural theme, or a multicultural theme, would be particularly encouraged.

**Draft Mural at Rio Meat Market**





### **Historic Preservation on North Fair Oaks Avenue**

One of the priorities of the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative is to uncover the history of businesses and community along North Fair Oaks Avenue. Currently, the history of businesses, buildings, and community along North Fair Oaks is not well understood. In July 2023 the City of Pasadena engaged a team of professional consultants to prepare a comprehensive Citywide Historic Context Statement and Historic Resources Survey. These deliverables are due for completion in 2025. The Historic Resources Survey will identify individual buildings and structures, objects, and sites citywide. It will also identify groupings of related properties for potential eligibility as historic or landmark districts. The survey will evaluate properties within the City that were constructed through the year 1979 and are not currently designated as historic resources.

The North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative encourages the City of Pasadena to focus heavily on the North Fair Oaks Avenue corridor throughout the process of developing the Historic Context Statement. As the complete history of this corridor has yet to be uncovered, the City of Pasadena has a prime opportunity to assist the North Fair Oaks community in discovering their community's history which can help create a sense of pride for community members.

However, we believe that the City's focus must be on cultural preservation more than preservation of structures. Historic designation of a few buildings on the corridor may have a role; however, the more important effort is to allow for construction of new buildings which can provide spaces for threatened members of the community and new uses that honor the historic culture of Northwest Pasadena.

#### **A. Gateway element**



#### **B. Plaza Art**



#### **C. Artistic crosswalks**



#### **D. Historic plaques**



### **Financial Planning**

Although the history documents how members of the North Fair Oaks community were systematically robbed of generational wealth, homeowners in Northwest Pasadena have nevertheless seen a large appreciation in wealth in recent decades. The upzoning proposed along the street would also increase property values. Nevertheless, community members express concern over reverse mortgages, cash sales below market value, and other ways in which community wealth is whittled away. The City of Pasadena could establish a fund to provide free or low-cost financial planning education to residents of the area and assist owners of developable property to partner with missional property advisement groups, like the MHCH Congregational Land Committee which advises religious congregations on affordable housing development.

### **Data Gathering and Educational**

The California Reparations Report also recommends the collection of data on housing discrimination. The City of Pasadena should analyze this data, ensuring it is racially disaggregated, and make it available to the public in a comprehensible format. Qualitative stories about ongoing housing discrimination should also be gathered through focus groups and other means. Through the Housing Element process, the City should provide resources to subject matter experts to periodically analyze the information and make recommendations for the remediation of continuing disparities exposed by the data.

In addition, the Vision Plan encourages partnerships between community-based organizations and local public high schools/community colleges in the pursuit of gathering oral histories from North Fair Oaks community members. Preserving the oral history of the North Fair Oaks community is crucial in upholding a sense of community and place for future generations.

In addition to identifying specific policies for adoption in Pasadena, the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative and The Arroyo Group encourage the City of Pasadena to undertake their own Restorative Justice Report. This local Reparations Report would be an extensive study of historic businesses that exist or previously existed along North Fair Oaks Avenue as well as historical injustices citywide. The Reparations Report would propose a comprehensive reparations plan for consideration by City Council for implementation.



## 6 NEXT STEPS

### Using the North Fair Oaks Vision Plan as a tool for advocacy

The North Fair Oaks Vision Plan is a guide for residents, property and business owners, church leaders and the City of Pasadena to realize the community vision described in this Plan. The following steps are recommended:

Action	Responsible	Priority	Timeline	Empowerment Initiative Role
1. Present the Vision Plan to stakeholders including Council District 1, City Council, City Manager, Planning Department, Department of Transportation, and Economic Development Division, modifying as necessary.	Empowerment team	High Priority	2024	
2. Modify the zoning in the proposed Fair Oaks/ Orange Grove Specific Plan as described in Chapter 3. The corridor should be rezoned as FGSP-MU-48, with commercial requirement at corners, a requirement of publicly accessible open space for properties in excess of one acre, elimination of parking requirements for small commercial uses, and guidelines to protect privacy of adjacent neighborhoods.	Planning Department	High Priority	2025	
3. Adjust the City's Local Preference Policy to strengthen the "Right of Return" policy.	City Council, Rent Stabilization Department	Medium Priority	2025	
4. Restripe North Fair Oaks Avenue into a three-lane road together with resurfacing project.	Department of Transportation	High Priority	2025	Advocate
5. Submit grant applications to construct other streetscape improvements.	Department of Transportation	High Priority	2025-2027	Advocate

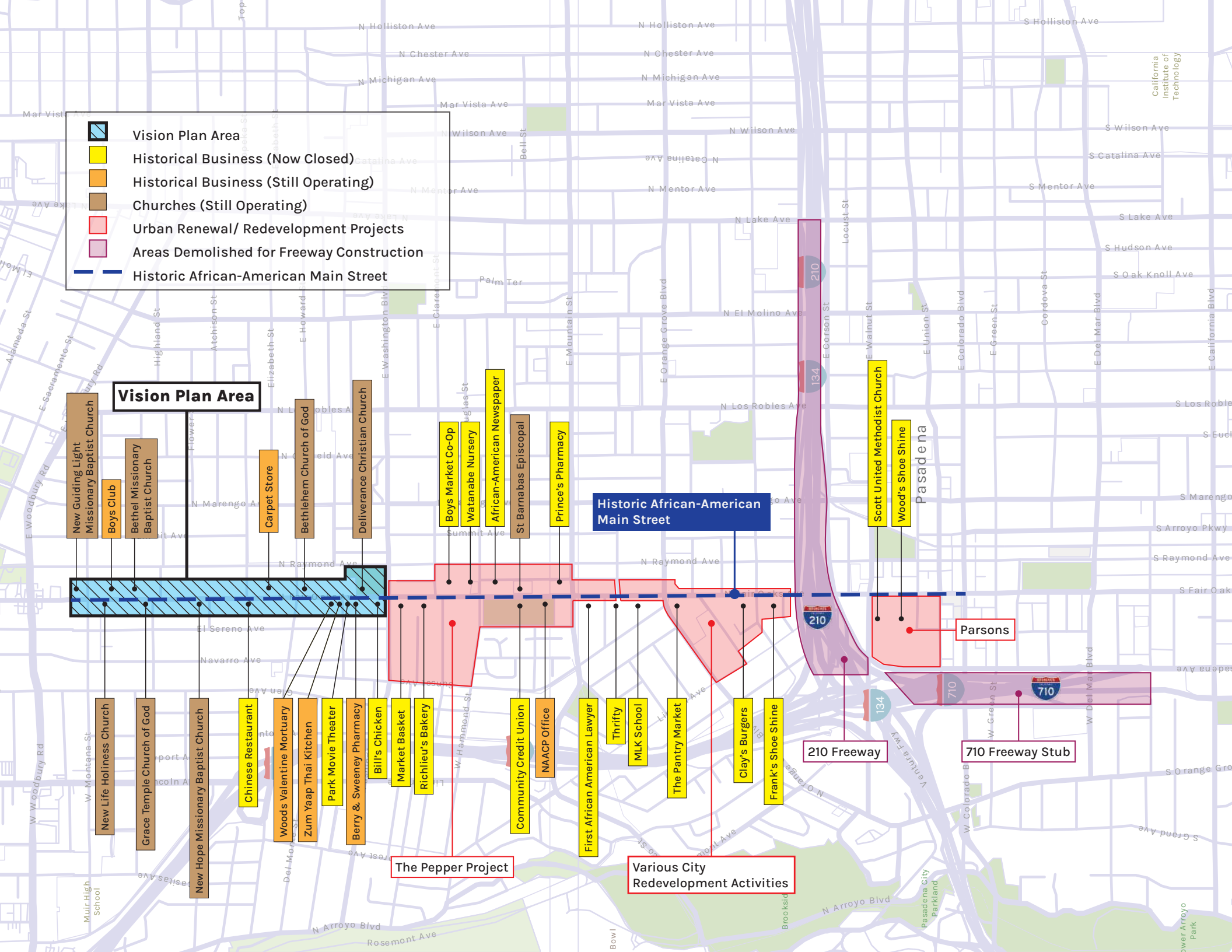
6.	Permit and install African-American history mural at Fair Oaks Avenue and Montana Street.	Empowerment team / Property Owner/Planning Department	Medium Priority	2024 COMPLETED	Provide funding and manage project
7.	Organize pop-up event with small, local businesses/ food vendors, artists, etc. to kick off.	Empowerment team / Economic Development	Medium Priority	2025	Organize event
8.	Provide assistance to churches and other property owners with interest in repurposing land for affordable housing.	MHCH	High Priority	Ongoing	Assist
9.	Adopt Short-Range Transit Plan to increase Pasadena Transit bus frequencies and create high-quality transit corridors.	Department of Transportation	Medium Priority	2025	Advocate
9.	As other properties become available, facilitate partnerships with affordable housing developers and advocate for conversion into affordable housing and community-serving retail uses.	Empowerment team / Economic Development	High Priority	Ongoing	Facilitate partnerships and advocate
10.	Undertake a Citywide or Northwest Pasadena-focused study of past and present racial discrimination to inform restorative justice recommendations	City Manager's Office	Medium Priority	2025-2026	Advocate
11.	Establish a small business loan program, with priority for populations affected by past discrimination and prioritized community uses.	Economic Development	High Priority	2025-2026	Advocate
12.	Create a project to apply for CDBG funding for façade improvements and other small business activities.	Empowerment team / Business/Economic Development	Medium Priority	2025-2026	Organize business owners & advocate
13.	Manage on-street parking, beginning with setting time limits for parking near Montana Avenue.	Department of Transportation	Low Priority	2025-2026	Advocate
14.	Establish a fund to provide free or low cost financial planning education to Northwest Pasadena residents.	Economic Development	Low Priority	2026	Advocate, find funders
15.	Analyze housing discrimination data, ensure it is racially disaggregated, and make it available to the public.	Rent Stabilization Department, Housing Department	Medium Priority	2025-2029	Advocate and partner with experts or community members to analyze
16.	Explore redevelopment of Pasadena Department of Health Parking lot into affordable housing, civic uses, shared parking and/or open space.	Heath Department, City Council, Housing Department	Medium Priority	2026	Advocate



# A APPENDIX

## ***Appendix I: In-progress map of the impacts of Urban Renewal***

This map is intended as a basemap for community-contributed information about BIPOC-owned historic businesses and properties lost to urban renewal. It is a working map that the North Fair Oaks Empowerment Initiative expects to grow over time.

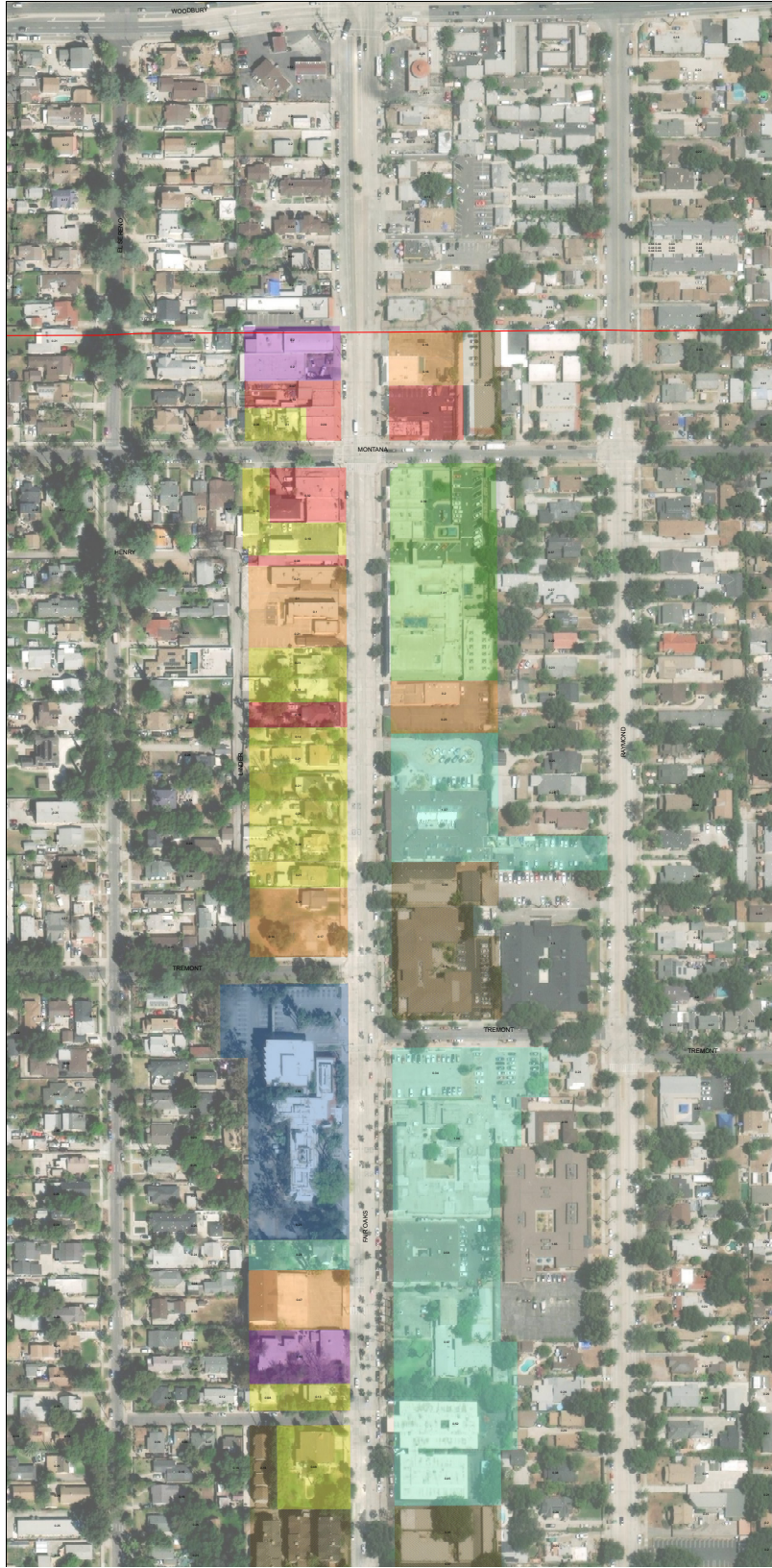


**Existing Land Uses on North Fair Oaks Avenue**

The map on the following page displays existing land uses on North Fair Oaks Avenue, developed for the first outreach event for the development of this Vision Plan. The table below displays existing land use categories and data regarding how these categories stack up along the corridor.

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percentage of Total Vision Plan Area Acres
1 to 5 plex	4.87	11.62%
Residential Care Facility	11.29	26.93%
Church	3.99	9.52%
Industrial	1.32	3.15%
Medical	3.46	8.25%
Multifamily	4.04	9.64%
Multifamily (Affordable)	0.9	2.15%
Recreational	6.58	15.7%
Retail	2.18	5.2%
Townhome	2.76	6.58%
Vacant	0.53	1.26%
















### North Fair Oaks Visioning Exercise

 City\_Boundary

#### Existing Land Use

 1 to 5 plex	 Multifamily (Affordable)	 Industrial	 Retail
 Townhome	 Care Facility	 Medical	 Vacant
 Multifamily	 Church	 Recreational	

