

## 8. OUR ACTIVE COMMUNITY

### INTRODUCTION

Open spaces and recreational facilities provide an opportunity to exercise, access sunshine, nature and fresh air, and encourage people to walk or bike. They can have a significant impact on people's stress levels and overall mental health, particularly in urbanized areas like Downtown South Pasadena. Physical recreation reduces obesity and risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other health ailments. Public open spaces, whether playgrounds, picnic fields or even just engaging streets, can help build community by giving neighbors a realm in which to get to know each other, and giving children a safe place to play.

The public space network in Downtown South Pasadena needs interesting, inviting, and varied public spaces. The existing two parks do not adequately serve the needs of downtown residents. The Library Park is an open lawn area around the library and the Orange Grove Park is largely dedicated to league baseball and soccer activities. The places for quiet reflection or the places for physical activities and play are missing. The weak public spaces and the lack of substantial daytime focused activities in downtown cause fragile user patterns. An active public life culture in the downtown warrants more invitations throughout the day, week and the year.

In general, downtown has wide and easy accessible sidewalks of good quality with marked crossing and pedestrian signals. Together this provides a fine base for walking. There are a great deal of important destinations in downtown, but they are poorly connected. Downtown has two pulse points of activity: the Metro Station area, and the central node at the intersection of Mission Street and Fair Oaks Avenue. In between these two pulse points, the walking experience on Mission Avenue is challenged by inactive frontages, vacant parcels, and poor lighting. With the exception of a few blocks, the pattern of development on Fair Oaks Avenue is largely designed for vehicular traffic. To invite more people to walk, active and attractive ground floor facades, invitations to sit and rest along the streets, pedestrian scale street lighting, and clear organization of the sidewalk space to enable unobstructed walking are needed.

In downtown, the car tends to dominate. Vehicular traffic flows are prioritized, at times compromising pedestrian and bicycle flow. Downtown is built out with very limited infill opportunities to provide new parks and open space. The greatest opportunity for public space in Downtown South Pasadena exists in reimagining the streets and alleys as linear public space corridors that continue to facilitate vehicular traffic while also providing safe, comfortable, and inviting walking and biking experiences.

*Insert images of "Astride-Aside": The figure accentuates the pedestrian nature of the Mission Street area, and encourages commuters to disembark and visit the diverse shops and restaurants within walking distance of the stop.*

## **ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES**

The feedback from the focus group meetings, charrette, interviews, and survey point towards opportunities to improve the quality of public space in Downtown South Pasadena and a series of issues to be overcome. Overall, the main findings and recommendations focus on several key areas for action to improve the current situation:

- providing a continuum range of integrated public and private open spaces;
- promoting a shift in mind-sets towards a more people-orientated city culture creating a better balance between vehicular traffic, pedestrians and cyclists;
- upgrading the visual quality of the streets and open spaces;
- improving conditions for walking and cycling;
- improving conditions for resting and simply passing time;
- providing a range of recreational events and programming; and
- a sustainable source of funding to operate and maintain public open spaces and recreational facilities.

## **VISION**

An active way of life for all. The downtown serves as the retail, restaurant, and entertainment center of South Pasadena and is where the greatest numbers of pedestrians are encouraged and expected. This area will need the best gathering places, widest sidewalks, the widest crosswalks, safest bike lanes, the brightest street lighting, the most furnishings, and other features that will enhance the walking and biking environment.

### **Network of Open Spaces**

Open space provides the 'breathing room' within the urban downtown context and promotes opportunities to engage in outdoor activities. The vision identifies existing open spaces within the study area and stitches them to new open spaces creating a rich tapestry of parks, plazas, enhanced alleys, parklets and mid-block crossings that will increase the overall amount of open spaces in downtown, and provide visitors, workers, and residents with an appealing, thermally comfortable outdoor environment.

### **Recreation**

Recreation includes activities that happen both at outdoor open spaces and indoor facilities. Activity is beneficial by way of being fun, stimulating, refreshing, or relaxing. Active recreation involves physical activity while passive recreation usually involves sitting, lying down, or a leisurely stroll.

Active recreation refers to a mix of uses in Orange Grove Park that includes: sports fields, buildings or structures for recreational activities, concessions, courses or sport courts, children's play areas, and recreational pathways.

A passive recreation area refers to a mix of uses at Library Park, which include the landscaped areas, lawn spaces, seating and picnic areas.

The proposed Community Center and redesigned Orange Grove Park will increase opportunities for both active and passive recreation activities.

### **Redesign Orange Grove Park**

The current opaque edge fence intended to keep the baseball and soccer ball inside the field present a dull and inactive frontage that also block visual enjoyment of the park space. During construction of the new Community Center, the softball and soccer field will be used as a construction staging area. The reconstruction of the sports fields presents a wonderful opportunity to improve the edge treatment, improve sight lines to make the park and adjacent areas safe and more inviting, and provide a wide linear path along the edge with amenities including public art.

## **Redesign Station Area Plaza**

The open space around the light rail station is proposed to be significantly enhanced. The existing triangular park to the east of the station will be retained. The asphalted road to the east of the station is proposed to be redesigned a paved plaza. The existing historic monuments and Oak trees in this space would be retained. The intersection of Mission and Meridian would also be paved to enhance pedestrian connectivity on both sides of Mission Street. The station platform is directly connected to open spaces on both west and east by stair directly from the platform.

## **Parklets**

Parklets transform on-street parking spaces into small spaces for people to use and enjoy. They provide pedestrian amenities such as seating, landscaping, and bike parking. To augment pedestrian activity and social interaction along Mission Street, and to provide more sidewalk space, a series of parklets are proposed to be distributed throughout the street. The introduction of parklets along Mission is also a way of distinguishing it from the proposed tree lined formality of Fair Oaks Avenue.

## **Two Great Streets**

Mission Street is envisioned to be re-striped as a Main Street with two travel lanes, two bicycle lanes and parallel parking on both sides. This reinforces the character of Mission Street as a bicycle-friendly street connecting the light rail station to Fair Oaks Avenue.

Fair Oaks Avenue is envisioned to be configured as a grand double-tree lined north-south arterial. It will be restriped to have four travel lanes, two bicycle lanes and parallel parking on both sides. The bicycle lanes will be located closest to the street curb and separated from the parallel parking by potted plants in the initial phases and permanent planters in the eventual phases. Bulb out designs at each intersection will create safer pedestrian crossings, while allowing continuous bicycle lanes to run through.

## **Park Once**

The Downtown area will become a Park Once walkable places. Carefully located public parking places ensure parking distribution throughout the two districts and encourages people to walk to various destinations throughout. All parking is designed to be subservient to the pedestrian and invisible from the public realm.

## **Mid-block Crossings**

Mid-block crossings on Mission Street help break the large block lengths and encourage pedestrian activity along and across the street.

## **Untapped Potential of Alleys**

Downtown alleys have the potential for strengthening the public realm and increased pedestrian invitations. Pico Alley east of the Station and Edison Lane behind Rialto are human scaled and have much potential for more active pedestrian use. The challenge will be to retain the utilitarian functions of the alleys while providing improvements to accommodate pedestrian activity, retail, and other uses.

## **Green Network**

The street trees and other vegetation in downtown function as a localized green infrastructure which is part of the larger “green infrastructure” framework of the city. Street trees and other vegetation substantially enhance pedestrian activity. South Pasadena is known for its extensive and mature street tree canopy, with the exception of its two signature corridors. Both Mission Street and Fair Oaks Avenue have significant gaps in the tree canopy. The vision calls for thriving and distinctive street trees on these two streets.

## Reimagining Streets for Active and Healthy Living

### 626 Golden Streets

Open Street events such as "Ciclovía" or the 626 Golden Streets event temporarily open stretches of Mission Street in Downtown South Pasadena and beyond for people to walk, jog, skate, bike and more. This event, allows people to take over the street space and enjoy this valuable open space asset for a day and creates an appetite to help make pedestrian and bike infrastructure adjustments that can serve the community other 364 days of the year.

*Insert images of 626 Golden Streets*

### Farmers Market

Every Thursday evening, Meridian Avenue and El Centro Street are closed off (between Diamond Avenue and Glendon Way) for over 70 vendors, picnics, and live music on the lawn adjacent to the Metro Gold Line Station.

*Insert images of Farmers Market*

### Park(ing) Day to Parklet

PARK(ing) Day is an annual event where on-street parking spaces are converted into park-like public spaces. The event shows that car space is also public space that can be used for people activities instead. PARK(ing) Day encourages collaboration amongst local citizens to create thoughtful, but temporary additions to the public realm. The temporary repurposing of parking space for a day allows the concept to be tested and refined while building support for a more permanent parklet space.

*Insert images of Parklet*

*Insert images of passive (movable chairs, movies in the park, etc) at the and active recreation (playground, rollerskating, etc)*

## POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### Network of Open Space

**P8.X** Encourage the dynamic and flexible use of existing open spaces and promote a variety of new recreation and open space uses, where appropriate.

**A8.X** Re-design the open space around the Metro Gold Line Station to create a large, cohesive, and central civic amenity, improve pedestrian and vehicular flow, and improve the paved surface aesthetics.

**A8.X** Redesign Orange Grove Park with enhanced sight lines and an active, accessible, and visually engaging perimeter design. Possible use of Orange Grove for other uses besides AYSO & Little League.

**A8.X** Continue to partner with the South Pasadena School District for the use of their central courtyard to host variety of public events and festivals.

**A8.X** Amend the development standards to require private development to provide a range of public and private open spaces on the block, lot, and building.

**A8.X** Pursue and develop innovative long-term funding mechanisms for maintenance, operation, renovation and acquisition of open space and recreation.

## **Recreation**

**P8.X** Provide and promote a balanced recreation system which offers a variety of high quality recreational opportunities for all residents. [AP](#), [SE](#)

**A8.X** Provide a range of active and passive recreational activities and programs that are responsive to community needs and changing demographics. [AP](#), [SE](#)

**A8.X** Support the design and construction of new Community Center and identify a sustainable way to fund its operation and maintenance.

## **Improve conditions for walking and biking**

**P8.X** Promote a new balanced traffic culture including walking and cycling for all age groups. [AP](#), [SE](#), [VZ](#)

**A8.X** Support and develop existing publicly-owned right-of-ways and streets into temporary and permanent open spaces like parklet, curb extension, mid-block crossing, sidewalk extension, shared street, and temporary open street or street park. [AP](#), [SE](#), [VZ](#)

**A8.X** Transform Mission Street and Fair Oaks Avenue into complete streets that promote safe walking and cycling. [AP](#), [SE](#), [VZ](#)

**A8.X** Transform downtown alleys into safe, comfortable, and enjoyable walking paths. [AP](#), [SE](#), [VZ](#)