

Passion and Patriotism About City's General Plan Update

By **Alisa Hayashida** -
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Planning Director David Watkins was busily gathering "last chance" surveys on the drop-dead last day at Saturday's WISPPA meeting as Planning Commissioner Kelly Koldus helped him explain the roadmap for how the city will go about creating a new general plan template that will guide development in our city for the next 25 years or so.

Sound like a yawn? Actually the oration and passion in the room on April 4 made it feel more like July 4, or watching our Founding Fathers cobble together the framework for our country than hearing about how we will craft the blueprint for our little burg.

"This is not the end; this is the end of a phase," Koldus explained to about 30 audience members at the monthly gathering of Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action as the last surveys were passed in [reluctantly, with copious notes scribbled in the margins.]

It's a complicated, hurried and expensive process, which they walked through step by step. Phase one—the surveys—is indeed over, but much more is yet to come. In case you too are not an architect and wonder what a "charrette" is and whether you should attend on the week of April 24, they provided all the answers.

There will be many points at which we can participate, they explained, but as in any recipe, the first steps—or missteps—are the most important. Once the cake, or our general plan, is baked, there will not be much more to say. For a very long time. And your grandchildren might be eating it.

And yes, you definitely should cancel that vacation or wedding, tape all your favorite shows, bring some granola bars or protein shakes, and get a babysitter so you can be there as many days and nights as humanly possible. Monday, April 24, is the most vital because each day will build on the previous one, and then on Friday we will all be presented with our “cake.” Or at least a cake mix.

“I expect a lot from you,” Watkins said about the importance of participating. “Spread the word out in the community! This is your job! Not just WISPPA’s job.” All he needed was a white wig and a three-pointed hat to fit right in at Independence Hall.

But I digress. A “charrette,” or “cart” in French, refers to the practice of the young architects of yore placing their finished models and plans onto a rolling platform as it ran through the studio. The city has lined up a host of top-notch speakers, advisers and urban planners to help guide us. But in the end, it really is our job to figure out what we want, Watkins and Koldus said. And unlike people in previous centuries, we have the Internet to provide the information and connect electronically.

“Show up and speak up, physically or on the website,” said City Treasurer Gary Pia. “The more you can say about this process when it’s going, the better. Show up, speak up! Please.” As ever, he was sort of the reasoned and practical Alexander Hamilton.

Yes, they also talked about all the usual chestnuts: The Rialto, parking and whether we will even need it, the Gold Line, the arts/arts district, affordable housing and granny flats, the required seven elements of every general plan, and the history of the last general plan, as provided by the “Father of Our City” Harry Knapp and his First Lady Clarice. And the elusive “things that touch all areas” and overlap in real life—such as how parking and housing affect commerce and the arts, and so on.

All this passion of both our city staff and involved residents is what makes our city great. So please. Show up and speak up, or at least visit www.plansouthpasadena.org Or forever hold your peace.

VIA Dana Farrar - Commentary