



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** JUNE 8, 2021

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW  
NEW MAXIMUM-EIGHT-STORY, 335,560-SQUARE-FOOT, 375-ROOM HOTEL  
AT 1347-1365 E. COLORADO BOULEVARD, 35-39 N. HILL AVENUE & 36-56  
N. HOLLISTON AVENUE (NORTH PARCEL) &  
MAXIMUM FIVE-STORY MIXED-USE PROJECT WITH 40,916 SQUARE FEET  
OF COMMERCIAL SPACE & 49 RESIDENTIAL UNITS AT 1336-1350 E.  
COLORADO BOULEVARD (SOUTH PARCEL)

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find the application for Concept Design Review was subject to environmental review in the Final Environmental Impact Report certified by the City Council for a previously approved application for establishment of PD-35 for the same project on October 30, 2019, and that there are no changed circumstances or new information which would require further environmental review.

#### **Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance**

Acknowledge that there are no private protected trees on the project sites.

#### **Findings for Concept Design Approval**

1. Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of approval, will comply with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts; and

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2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review subject to the following conditions to be further reviewed during Final Design Review:

### **Conditions**

#### *North building*

1. Continue to study the design of the north building to ensure consistency with the proposed Art Deco style language as found in traditional examples of buildings of similar scale. In particular, further study the continuous cornice at the roof edges and the relative flatness of some of the facades, such as the seven-story volume at the western end of the south elevation.
2. Further study the design of the north building to create a clearer relationship to the historic building to be retained at that location. Consider incorporation of elements of the historic building that are compatible with the proposed Art Deco design such as the deep overhang, the rhythm of storefront windows, the circular engaged posts and mullions, and/or the materiality.
3. For Final Design Review, provide an elevation of the northeast corner of the north building to ensure that the proportions and detailing are fully resolved at this prominent location.
4. The exclusive use of smooth plaster in a single color on the entire north building shall be reconsidered. Strategically incorporate a more durable material other than plaster at the ground level and detail elements of the building such as engaged pilasters, window framing elements, cornices and other details. Metalwork railings and architectural panels shall be high-quality, custom designs and not off-the-shelf products. Windows shall be deeply recessed within building walls and shall be high-quality. The specialty paving material specification shall be consistent with the chosen Art Deco style.
5. Provide extensive vertical, horizontal and axonometric wall sections of the north building for review during Final Design Review along with extensive architectural details to fully demonstrate the building articulation and materiality transitions.
6. Further study provision of additional buffering landscaping along the north side of the north property.
7. The historic building to be retained shall be carefully reviewed by a qualified Historic Architect to identify rehabilitation treatments to be implemented in conjunction with the proposed project. Any structural or exterior cosmetic damage that is identified shall be repaired and any missing or altered exterior features shall be restored in conjunction with the project. In particular, the existing large sloping awnings shall be removed. Provide a rehabilitation plan for the building for review during Final Design Review.
8. The light fixture that is a contributing feature to the historic building shall be placed in a location on the site where it is as visible as possible to the general public, in a similar manner to its current location, and within the historic building or adjacent associated spaces. The plans submitted for Final Design Review shall specify the proposed location

and any rehabilitation or restoration work that is proposed to ensure it continues to reflect its historical appearance and its operation is restored.

*South building*

9. Further study the depths of the third-floor terraces and pergolas on the south building to ensure they provide meaningful usable space and associated massing articulation to the building.
10. Further study the south building tower elements to better integrate them with the design of the buildings and improve the building's response to the street corner location.
11. Improve the resolution of the Mediterranean design of the south building to ensure the design more accurately reflects the traditional language of the chosen architectural style. In particular, eliminate the engaged pilasters and vertical window framing elements, enlarge the ground-level windows at the south end of the west elevation, further articulate the third-floor terrace railings, and enhance the recessed panels above the corner arcade with enriching materials. Windows shall be deeply recessed within the building walls with no trim and articulated sills and the rooflines shall be articulated in a manner consistent with the style.
12. Incorporate landscaping such as small potted trees into the building entry areas at the northwest, northeast and southwest corners of the south building, as well as plantings in the setback area along the southern portion of the west elevation.
13. Study the programming of the ground-level courtyard at the south building to ensure it is usable for both the commercial and residential portions of the project and provides privacy for the different users of the space. Explore the provision of vertical circulation in close proximity to the courtyard to allow more direct access to the courtyard from the residential floors above. Provide amenities to make the courtyard usable for the residents, such as outdoor cooking and eating facilities.
14. Materials used for detailing of the south building, such as cornices and arched window trim, shall be specified to be high-quality such as precast concrete.

*Both Buildings*

15. Provide additional fenestration or other means of articulation to soften publicly visible blank wall conditions of both buildings including, at the north building, the east and west ends of the north elevation, the west end of the south elevation and the south elevation at the eighth floor and, at the south building, the west end of the south elevation and the north end of the east elevation. These facades shall be integrated into the overall design of the buildings to ensure a high-quality and contextual presentation.

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### *General Project Conditions*

16. The project shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Zoning Code and PD-35. In particular, the proposed office use at the south parcel is not permitted and the lot coverage proposed is slightly over the maximum allowable lot coverage of 75% of the site.
17. The proposal to remove existing street trees is subject to separate review by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee and approval by the City Manager and the review process shall be completed prior to submitting an application for Final Design Review. If the request is not approved, and changes to the approved concept design are required to accommodate the protection of the existing trees, an application for Changes to an Approved Project shall be required to be reviewed prior to submittal of an application for Final Design Review.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: Median Mixed Use (0 – 2.25 FAR)
- Zoning: PD-35 (Colorado Hill Planned Development)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Districts.
- Site: The site is comprised of five adjoining lots totaling 128,328 square feet (2.95 acre) at the northwest corner of E. Colorado Boulevard & N. Hill Avenue, also with frontage on N. Holliston Avenue (“north parcel/building”) and four adjoining lots totaling 30,851 square feet (0.7 acre) at the southeast corner of E. Colorado Boulevard & S. Holliston Avenue (“south parcel/building”). The north parcel is roughly rectangular in shape, with some irregularities and the south parcel is fully rectangular in shape. Both sites are currently developed with one-story automotive sales and repair structures and large surface parking lots. The main showroom building at 1355 E. Colorado Blvd. (1947, Sylvanus Marston) has been deemed a historic resource. The south parcel also has frontage along Giddings Alley along its south side. A tree inventory provided with the application identifies one non-protected tree on the north parcel and six street trees along its frontages and two street trees along the frontages of the south parcel.
- Surroundings: Surrounding properties include one- to-two-story commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings and surface parking lots along East Colorado Boulevard and N. Hill Avenue, as well as a newer four-story mixed-use building and surface parking lots along S. Holliston Avenue near the south parcel and one-to-two-story single- and multi-family residential uses along N. Holliston Avenue near the north parcel. Nearby designated historic resources include:

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- Holliston Avenue Methodist Church (1900, John C. Austin & Bennett & Haskell) at 1305 E. Colorado Boulevard
  - Howard Motor Company (1927, Austin Co. of California) at 1283 E. Colorado Boulevard
  - Kindel Building (1928, Bennett & Haskell) at 1095 E. Colorado Boulevard
  - Foothill Boulevard Milestone within the public right-of-way in front of 1304 E. Colorado Boulevard
  - Burns Eastman Building (1926, Glenn Elwood Smith) at 1275 E. Green Street
  - Former gas station and garage buildings (1929, Pacific Steel Building Company) at 1271 E. Green Street
  - Hill Avenue Library (1925, Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury) at 55 S. Hill Avenue
  - Historic Signs at 1155 & 1060 E. Colorado Boulevard
- Project Description: The project involves construction of a new maximum-eight-story, 335,560-square-foot hotel building with subterranean parking, including retention of an existing historic building, at the properties located at 1347-1365 E. Colorado Blvd, 35-39 N. Hill Ave. & 36-56 N. Holliston Ave. (“north parcel/building”) and a maximum 5-story mixed-use building with 40,916 sf of commercial space and 49 residential units on the property at 1336-1350 E. Colorado Blvd (“south parcel/building”).
  - Site Design: At the north parcel, the proposed hotel building would cover the majority of the site, with minimal setbacks from its three street frontages. The building would be chamfered at the corner of Colorado Boulevard and Hill Avenue, creating a forecourt with an elevated terrace flanked by raised planters leading to a loggia and one of the hotel’s pedestrian entries. A second hotel entrance along Hill Avenue would be deeply recessed within the building, flanked by two small setbacks from the street edge. A shallow covered loggia is proposed at the northernmost building edge along Hill Avenue. Along Colorado Boulevard, the building has no setback except for recessed entrances to retail spaces and the chamfered corner previously described. The main vehicular entry court and drop-off zone is proposed approximately mid-block along Colorado Boulevard, adjacent to the historic building to be retained. The building has a five-foot setback along Holliston Avenue and a varying setback from the north property line. This setback area provides an additional vehicular access and drop-off zone as well as loading space, a ramp to the subterranean parking garage and trash/recycling space.  
  
Similarly, at the south parcel, the building is also proposed to cover the majority of the property with minimal setbacks. Covered loggias are proposed at the northwest and southwest corners of the building and a 7’3” setback is proposed at the northeast corner at the lobby entrance. A small setback of approximately five feet, enlarging to 8’10” at the southernmost end, is proposed. Vehicular access to the subterranean parking structure is proposed to be taken from Giddings Alley at the southeast corner of the site, with loading and service spaces adjacent to the west.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary with references to Art Deco (north parcel) and Mediterranean (south parcel)
  - Developer: J & K Plus Investments, LLC (Jason Chen)

- Architect: ACRM Architects + Interiors
- Landscape Architect: L.A. Group Design Works

**ANALYSIS:**

**Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation**

On September 23, 2013, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Preliminary Consultation for this project. The Commission’s comments from that meeting, with the design team’s responses, and staff’s comments, are detailed in the chart below. The Design Commission also reviewed the project on two other occasions (March 22, 2016 and September 12, 2017) and recommended that the City Council determine the project represents architectural excellence and is contextual, in order to approve an increase in the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) for the project. On March 23, 2021, the Design Commission received a project update that included excerpts from drawings that were reviewed at all three previous Design Commission reviews, as well as the comments that were provided during each review. Those that were provided during the two “architectural excellence” reviews were transmitted to the City Council in conjunction with its review of the PD; therefore, the design team responses that are subject to review at this time are those provided at the original Preliminary Consultation in 2013, as detailed below:

Commissioner Comments, September 23, 2013	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>1. Further refine the building form in response to the applicable guidelines for this site and in response to the architectural urban context that exists, particularly the historic resources located on the site, which are to be retained.</p>	<p>“The model included in the package demonstrates how we have integrated the historic building, letting it be the jewel of the project. We are also proposing the light/sign that is a contributing feature to be installed in the courtyard, so it would be as if we built around the feature and lets everyone experience it in relatively the same manner it previously was experienced.”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>Staff has evaluated the design of the north building and finds that additional means of responding to the historic building on the site should be incorporated into the design. Staff recommends that a condition of approval require this to be further studied. See further discussion in the body of the report below.</p>
<p>2. Study the overall height of the project on the northern site to be more compatible with the surroundings and the height specifications of the College District of the East Colorado Specific Plan.</p>	<p>“The height and massing are intended to create a more monumental central mass while allowing the perimeter edges to fall away in better relation to the scale of the surrounding street scape. By keeping the highest portions of the structure pulled back from the street wall, the</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The proposed building heights have been approved through the Planned Development (PD) process and ensure that the taller portions of the building are substantially set back from street frontages and adjacent properties with lower-scaled volumes that are generally consistent with the</p>

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Commissioner Comments, September 23, 2013	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
	surrounding pedestrian scale is respected and maintained.”	future vision for East Colorado Boulevard provided along the outer perimeter.
<p>3. Study the treatment, relocation, etc. of the existing historic light fixture for future reviews. The existing light fixture at the north end of the driveway portal was determined to be a contributing feature to the historic property.</p>	<p>“The driveway in the historic structure which leads to the existing historic light fixture is to be infilled with glass set back from the existing plane at the street front and also glazing at the rear of the building to provide the transparence into the proposed courtyard. We are proposing that the existing historic light fixture be installed in the proposed courtyard allowing a similar view of the fixture as we currently see.”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The submitted drawings do not indicate the proposed location of the light fixture and the location described would not allow for general public views of it. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring further study of a more publicly visible location for this feature and that it be shown in the plans submitted for review during Final Design Review.</p>
<p>4. Consider of the opening shown at the southeast corner of the [north] building and study ways in which the ground-floor corner treatment can better engage the street edge and work more in concert with the specialty glazing feature and tower component above.</p>	<p>“The corner has been refined slightly to better meet the sidewalk while providing a more welcoming portal into the exterior courtyard which will be available for the public and guests alike to rest and have a bite to eat. The park setting is to be an extension of the building and how it welcomes the public at the sidewalk.”</p>	<p><i>Condition satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The design at the southeast corner of the north building incorporates an open arcade element with planters and specialty paving. The arcade columns extend to become pilasters along the building facades above it, creating a strong and unified design element. To ensure proper proportions and resolution, staff recommends a condition requiring an elevation of the corner to be provided for review during Final Design Review. The specification for paving at the north building should be consistent with the chosen architectural style; the drawings appear to indicate terra cotta or brick pavers, which would not be consistent with the proposed Art Deco influenced design.</p>
<p>5. How does the proposed building [to the north] respond to the existing historic resources stylistically?</p>	<p>“The style of the northerly building is in direct relation to the adjacent historic Pasadena City College campus - a contemporary updated version of the streamlined Federalist and Art Deco style of the main</p>	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>See response to comment #1 above and further discussion in the body of the report below.</p>

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Commissioner Comments, September 23, 2013	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
	buildings on the campus and other historic buildings throughout the central business district along Colorado in Old Pasadena.”	
6. How are the two projects [north and south sites] differentiated from each other?	“The northern building is more monumental in scale with expansive multi-story windows and pilasters reflecting its status as a destination 4-star hotel while the southern apartment building is scaled back to a more residential scale with individual punched windows and Juliette balconies and detailing.	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>While the two buildings are stylistically differentiated from each other, the south building incorporates features of the north building that are in conflict with the chosen Mediterranean style of the south building. See further discussion of this in the body of the report below; staff has recommended conditions of approval requiring further refinement of the south building’s representation of the chosen architectural style.</p>
7. Further study and refine the north elevation [northern building site] and consider a different type of unit or suite for the building corner. Resolving the blank wall and fenestration treatment for this elevation and adjustment of the driveway along this elevation to allow for sufficient landscaping, in response to neighbors, should be studied.	“Additional windows and building articulation has been added in these areas in responses to the scale of the neighboring buildings. In addition, a landscape buffer has been added to soften the transition between the proposed drive and neighbors.”	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>Blank wall conditions appear to remain along the north elevation, particularly at the east and west ends where they would be most publicly visible; staff has recommended a condition of approval requiring articulation or fenestration in these areas. In addition, landscaping along the northern end of the site is minimal and staff recommends a condition of approval requiring further study to provide additional buffering landscaping in this area.</p>
8. The southern building appears quite tall and over scaled. Further study the massing, including allowing for higher massing at the rear and lower massing at the front portion of the building.	“The southern building responds to the street scape and building scale seen in other areas along Colorado between N. Wilson Ave. and N. Catalina Ave. while stepping down on Holliston to 5 stories as seen at the corner of Holliston and Green for a lesser scale.”	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The massing of the south building is articulated by lower-scaled volumes with residential terraces above along the street edges, which are somewhat shallow, particularly on the west side. Staff recommends a condition requiring further study of these volumes and terraces to ensure usable outdoor space for the</p>

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Commissioner Comments, September 23, 2013	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
		adjoining residential units and associated building articulation.
<p>9. Consider stepping down the massing for the northern project to better respond to the lower-scaled neighbors on the edges (Holliston and Hill). This is a precedent setting piece for this area and it may be a bit too high. The current massing is sensitive but a 60 foot maximum height, for example, may be more appropriate.</p>	<p>“Our approach was to have the buildings step back away from the street edge as the height increased. This allows the façade to relate to the neighborhood while still providing a signature building with architectural interest, intent on becoming a landmark for the surrounding neighborhood.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The organization of the massing and volumetric heights appropriately place lower-scaled volumes along the street frontages with taller portions in the center. The massing and heights proposed are consistent with the design approved in conjunction with the PD.</p>
<p>10. “Building B” [southern site] should remain at the height limit for this area of the Specific Plan. This building should not be a “step-child” of the northern building.</p>	<p>“We agree that this should not just be a “step-child” of the northern building, rather stand-alone on its own merits. The building is presenting itself as a landmark with its corner tower element pulling back from the street corner and creates a welcome plaza. In addition, along Colorado at the east end of the building again the façade pulls back and allows for an entry plaza this time for the residential entry. Overall the design is responding to the surrounding streets and stylistically presenting a modern interesting architectural statement.”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be addressed through conditions of approval.</i></p> <p>The height of the south building has also been approved in conjunction with the PD; however, staff recommends conditions of approval that will ensure that the building design stands on its own and removes elements of the north building design. See further discussion in the body of the report below.</p>
<p>11. How does the south building fit into the neighborhood and how does the proposed height relate to the neighbors. A block long sectional view would be encouraged for future reviews.</p>	<p>“The southern building responds to the street scape and building scale seen in other areas along Colorado between N. Wilson Ave. and N. Catalina Ave. while stepping down on Holliston to 5 stories as seen at the corner of Holliston and Green for a lesser scale.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>As previously noted, the height of the south building has been approved in conjunction with the PD. The design incorporates design strategies that will ensure it fits into the neighborhood.</p>

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Commissioner Comments, September 23, 2013	Excerpt from Design Team Response	Staff Comments
<p>12. The main entry on the northern site at the corner (Hill and East Colorado) appears to be a fairly narrow “throat” that leads to the courtyard space and further study of this area appears required.</p>	<p>“To make this “throat” feel friendlier and open higher light levels will be provided with abundant clear glazing into the retail on both sides adding to a more expansive sensation while alleviating the idea of a tight corridor or “throat” that feels uninviting.”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The main entry is now set within an inviting open loggia and windows allowing for views into the adjoining retail/restaurant spaces are provided, which will ensure that the entry, while remaining somewhat narrow, is an inviting entry to the hotel.</p>
<p>13. Consideration in the planning process should be given to the open space provided by the developer in the equation for the height allowance for this [northern] site. Theoretically, a project could be approved that extrudes the mass of the building over the entirety of the 2-acre site at a height of 45 feet and that is a problematic concept. Height averaging should be a component of the Planned Development at this site. This is an important intersection across from an important institution and there should be the ability to manipulate the massing in exchange for the proposed open space.</p>	<p>“The overriding goal with the site has been to respect the scale of the surrounding street wall while at the same time establishing architectural interest with the creation of a central tower, set-back so as not to impose itself on the street but rather serve to draw the eye upward - similar to the San Gabriel mountains visible throughout Pasadena”</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>As previously noted, the project has been designed to place the tallest portions of the building at the center of the site, with lower-scaled volumes along the outer perimeter, consistent with a height averaging approach as recommended in this comment. The building heights shown in the drawings were approved in conjunction with the PD approval,</p>
<p>14. This type of development is welcome and reacts to the site, rather than an extrusion of the zoning limits.</p>	<p>“Acknowledged.”</p>	<p><i>No response required.</i></p>
<p>15. There is support for the form-based, rather than code-based, design.</p>	<p>“Acknowledged.”</p>	<p><i>No response required.</i></p>
<p>16. This is a welcome project for this part of Colorado Blv. This project can create an important connection to downtown.</p>	<p>“Acknowledged.”</p>	<p><i>No response required.</i></p>

## **Programming and Circulation**

### North Building

The ground floor of the north building, is proposed to be programmed with retail/restaurant spaces along the Colorado Boulevard and Hill Avenue frontages, with an open courtyard near the southeast corner. Additional retail spaces are situated along the east and west sides of the entry court along Colorado Boulevard and the historic building is also proposed to be used for retail space. The main vehicular access and drop-off zone is proposed adjacent to the historic building, with a ramp to the subterranean parking structure behind it. An additional courtyard is shown behind the historic building, west of the garage ramp. The main hotel lobby extends from the northern end of the entry court behind the street frontage uses and includes a ballroom, two restaurants, one of which fronts onto Holliston Avenue, and a courtyard at the secondary rear drop-off zone, on axis with the entry court to the south of it. Banks of elevators and stairs are provided at the east and west ends of the lobby space and secondary stairs are also provided along the north edge of the building in three locations and on the east and west sides of the entry court. The majority of the main lobby elevators and stairs, as well as those at the northwest corner of the building extend from the subterranean garage to the upper floors of the building; the remaining stairs extend from the ground floor to the upper floors.

The second floor of the building is programmed with hotel rooms on the east side and meeting rooms and a fitness space at the west side. A second-floor courtyard is provided near the northeast corner and a portion of the lobby, as well as the ballroom, are double-height spaces that extend into this floor. The remaining floors are programmed with hotel rooms and small service spaces such as housekeeping and business centers. The floors become smaller starting at the fifth floor where areas at the northeast and southwest corners are eliminated. The sixth and seventh floors are east-west-oriented rectangular bars at the center of the building while the eighth floor has a smaller footprint than the sixth and seventh floors and includes a skybar lounge and pool/spa area with cabanas.

Overall, the programming of the building is appropriate and consistent with the design guidelines. In particular, the proposal to line the ground floor with retail and restaurant spaces that directly access the street, and the strategic incorporation of outdoor open spaces with the hotel and retail spaces provide for a strong connection to the public realm and to Pasadena's climate and legacy of integrated courtyards. Vehicular access is largely placed at the rear of the site with an additional entry court and drop-off zone along Colorado Boulevard in a similar location as the existing vehicular access to the previous automobile sales and service uses. Parking is placed exclusively underground.

### South Building

The south building is programmed with a single retail space, labeled as a market in the drawings, along the two street frontages, with a courtyard space behind, service uses along the south and east sides, and a lobby space with elevators and stairs at the northeast corner. Adjacent to the northwest corner loggia space is a stair that extends from the ground floor to the office space above and a third stair, extending from the parking structure to the top of the building, is provided near southwest corner. The second floor is programmed with an open

office space surrounding the ground-level courtyard mentioned above, as well as a gathering room and fitness room. The remaining floors are programmed with residential units surrounding the courtyard below. At the fourth floor, there is a pool deck with cabanas at the south end of the building and an unoccupied roof space along the east side and the fifth floor's residential units are all along the north end of the building only.

Similar to the north building, the proposed programming of the south building incorporates direct pedestrian access from the street to ground level commercial spaces as well as integrated, usable outdoor spaces. Vehicular access and service spaces are placed at the rear and access is taken from the alley. As such, the proposed site and floor plan design are consistent with the applicable design guidelines. As discussed further in the landscape design section below, the programming of the ground-level courtyard adjoining the commercial use should be further studied to also provide space for the building residents to access and utilize this outdoor space. The maximum lot coverage requirement of the PD prevents the courtyard from being relocated to the third floor where it would be more directly accessible to the building residents.

### **Orientation**

The proposed new buildings have windows, balconies and sun-shading devices arranged in a clear pattern on all sides, with strong emphasis placed on street-facing elevations. As previously noted, active uses align the streets and, with the exception of the main entry court, vehicular access is placed at the rear of both sites. There are portions of both buildings that appear blank and unarticulated and that should be further studied to better animate and integrate into the overall design of these publicly visible facades. These include, at the north building, the east and west ends of the north elevation, the west end of the south elevation and the south elevation at the eighth floor and, at the south building, the west end of the south elevation and the north end of the east elevation. A condition of approval to this effect has been included in staff's recommendation.

### **Height, Massing and Modulation**

The height limit at the north parcel is 78.5', with rooftop pool and bar area, and other appurtenances illustrated in the approved PD plan allowed up to a maximum height of 90'. The height limit at the south parcel is 48'. Staff of the Current Planning Section has reviewed the plans submitted for Concept Design Review and determined that they comply with these limitations.

The elevation drawings and renderings depict the north building massing being modulated by the creation of articulated sub-volumes along the edges of the buildings with taller portions at the center, consistent with the massing models and drawings approved as part of the PD and previously reviewed by the Design Commission. Overall, the modulation of the north depicted in the elevation drawings is appropriate and responsive to the design guidelines, and consistent with previous reviews by the Commission.

The south building has a more boxy massing character and is articulated by a projecting tower and two-story arcade element at the northwest corner, a smaller elevator tower near the northeast corner, two-story volumes at the street edge with residential terraces covered by pergolas at the third floor above, and engaged pilasters and projecting balconies at the upper

floors. As noted, the two-story volumes appear somewhat shallow, particularly on the west elevation. Staff recommends that the design team further study the depths of the third-floor terraces and pergolas to ensure they provide meaningful usable space, and associated massing articulation to the building. The northwest corner massing also appears unresolved, primarily due to the tower being set back from the corner, creating a low-scaled two-story volume at that prominent location, and the smaller northeasterly tower element appears disconnected from the building massing overall. Staff recommends a condition requiring additional study of these tower elements to ensure they are integrated with the design of the building and that the prominence of the northwest corner tower be increased to respond to the street corner condition at that location.

## **Architectural Style and Detailing**

### North Building

The north building is designed in a restrained Art Deco style with flat roofs, corniced parapets, articulated volumes with generally symmetrical presentations, a regular pattern of punched window openings offset by areas with vertical strips of windows with solid panels at floor plates, and metal pergolas and projecting balconies. The southeast corner is chamfered and engages the ground with a covered loggia that wraps to portions of the two street frontages at that location. The Art Deco elements of the building include the generally symmetrical and stepped arrangement of massing with a prominent central tower element, framed ground-floor entrances with large transoms above and vertically oriented engaged pilasters separating stacked windows and recessed balconies.

In general, the massing of the building relates well to the surrounding context and places the tallest portions in the center of the site, a considerable distance from lower-scaled structures nearby. The Art Deco style proposed is appropriate to the context, which includes buildings of this style on the campus of Pasadena City College. The massing arrangement and the verticality of the multiple engaged pilasters in the design reinforce the proposed Art Deco style; however, staff recommends that the design continue to be studied to ensure consistency with this style language as found in traditional examples of buildings of similar scale. In particular, the continuous cornice at the roof edges and the relative flatness of some of the facades, such as the seven-story volume at the western end of the south elevation, should be further studied for stylistic consistency with the rest of the building. In addition, it is unclear how the north building relates to the historic building to be retained on the site. While incorporating features of a one-story, simple, International Style automobile showroom into a four-to-eight-story hotel building would generally not be appropriate, elements of the historic building's design and proportions that are compatible with the Art Deco style, such as the deep overhang, the rhythm of storefront windows, the incorporation of circular engaged posts and mullions, and the materiality, should be studied to create a clearer relationship between the existing and proposed buildings. Staff has recommended conditions of approval to address these concerns. For Final Design Review, an elevation of the chamfered northeast corner of the building should be provided for review to ensure that the proportions and detailing of this prominent portion of the building are fully resolved.

### South Building

The south building is designed in a Mediterranean style that is traditionally found throughout Pasadena. As compared to the north building, its massing articulation is more simplified, with relatively shallow, two-story volumes adjoining the street edges. The building has flat roofs, portions of which are corniced and other portions with engaged pilasters extending slightly above the roofline. It also has two hip-roofed tower elements clad in clay tiles, repeating arched ground-floor window openings, and a regular pattern of stacked, punched window openings at the upper floors. A stone base, wood pergolas, metal balconies and vertically oriented window frames that extend over multiple floors accentuate the design.

In general, the design of the south building appears to combine aspects of the north building's Art Deco design features with Mediterranean features and massing, creating a hybrid design that should be further studied. In particular, the engaged pilasters and vertically oriented window framing elements are inconsistent with the overall Mediterranean design language. In addition, the northwest corner appears unresolved, particularly the recessed panels above the arched openings, the blank west-facing wall above (windows are shown on the west elevation but not on the floor plans or renderings) and the engagement of the tower elements with the building massing. Finally, the third floor terrace railings and building rooflines should be articulated consistent with the style and windows should be deeply recessed with no trim and articulated sills. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring further study of the design to ensure that it more accurately reflects the chosen Mediterranean style.

### **Compatibility**

The proposed new buildings are generally compatible with their immediate surroundings, particularly recently completed and anticipated future development, in terms of massing, setbacks and architectural design. While the height of the north building is greater than most of the surrounding buildings, the tallest portions of the building are placed in the center of the site and lower-scaled volumes that are generally consistent with the height limit in the Specific Plan are placed along the outer edges of the building to ensure compatibility with the surrounding context. The south building is also higher than much of the surrounding context; however, it is articulated with lower-scaled volumes that allow it to better relate to the context. The heights of the buildings are consistent with the height limits that were approved as part of the Planned Development (PD) zoning that was created for the site.

### **Conceptual Landscape Design**

The locations of the buildings at the street edges limit opportunities for ground level landscaping. At the north building, landscaped medians are proposed within the entry court along Colorado Boulevard and raised planters are incorporated into the treatment of the southeast corner arcade and entry progression and the mid-block entry along Hill Avenue. Specialty paving also appears to be indicated at all ground-floor outdoor areas. Interior courtyards are shown with seating, landscape strips and trees. Water features are also incorporated into the entry court, and the north and west ground level courtyards. Similar treatments are proposed for upper-level courtyards; the third-floor courtyard is designed as an outdoor event space with synthetic turf, a focal pergola at the north end, shade structures along the east and west sides, and café string lighting above.

No landscaping is proposed along the outer edges of the south building; specialty paving is shown at the northeast, northwest and southwest corner entries. The ground-level central courtyard is shown with raised planters, a raised deck area, outdoor fireplace and water feature. The fourth floor pool deck has small planters, seating and three cabanas.

In general, the amount of landscaping proposed is appropriate for an urban setting and development. However, staff finds that ground-level landscaping could be strategically incorporated into the south building to soften the design, such as small potted trees at the corner arcade and other recessed entries and plantings could also be incorporated into the setback area along Holliston Avenue. In addition, the purpose of the large ground-level courtyard is unclear, given its connection to a commercial market space. While it would be appropriate to provide small outdoor dining space for ancillary prepared food service within the market, the bulk of the courtyard should be accessible to building residents. As noted previously, this open space area cannot be placed on upper floors of the building due to the lot coverage limitations of the PD; therefore, the courtyard design should be further studied to provide discreet areas for use by both the commercial and residential building occupants, incorporating features that would ensure privacy between these users and amenities to support active use of the space, such as outdoor cooking and eating facilities. In addition, direct vertical circulation should be provided from the upper residential floors to the courtyard. Staff has recommended a condition of approval to this effect.

#### **COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:**

The project was reviewed by multiple City departments during the Planned Development (PD) process and the comments provided were incorporated into the conditions of approval of the PD. Staff routed the project for comment to the Current Planning Section to ensure consistency of the project with the approved PD and to the Housing Department to ensure compliance with inclusionary housing requirements for the residential portion of the south building. Current Planning staff indicated that office uses are not allowed on the south parcel and that the lot coverage slightly exceeds the maximum 75% allowed. Staff has included a condition of approval requiring compliance with the PD, including these specific standards. Relocation of the ground-level courtyard space could assist in addressing compliance with the lot coverage standard; any additional setback areas created along street frontages should incorporate landscaping to soften the building.

#### **PD DESIGN-RELATED CONDITIONS:**

As noted in the staff report and presentation for the recent project update provided to the Commission, the conditions of approval of the PD include several design-related conditions that are required to be addressed during the design review process. Those conditions, with staff comments, are listed below (note that the Director approved on March 25, 2021 a modification to condition 34, which is reflected in the language below):

33. The Design Commission shall review and refine the overall design of the project through the Design Review process. This review shall include, but is not limited to, modifications to the mass and height within the revised maximum allowed thresholds as deemed appropriate by the Design Commission. The Design Commission will review and condition the project to ensure that the project is of high quality, exhibits architectural excellence, and contextual to

the surrounding neighborhood.

*Staff has carefully reviewed the design and recommended conditions of approval to ensure that the project is high quality, exhibits architectural excellence, and is contextual to the surrounding neighborhood. The review by the Commission, and any additional or modified conditions that are incorporated into its decision will further ensure compliance with this condition.*

34. Throughout the design review and construction process, the Applicant shall ensure that the finishes, materials, and detailing of the structure are appropriate to the design presented or shown in the attachments to support the request to increase the additional F.A.R. for the project.

*North building conceptual materials include smooth plaster, precast concrete, metal details (grilles, pergolas, railings, balconies and canopies), and aluminum-framed windows. While generally high in quality, the use of exclusively smooth plaster in a single color on the entire building should be reconsidered. Strategic incorporation of a more durable material other than plaster should be considered at the ground level and for detail elements of the building such as engaged pilasters, window framing elements, cornices and other details. Metalwork railings and architectural panels should be high quality, custom designs and not off-the-shelf products. Staff has recommended a condition of approval to address these issues. In addition, extensive vertical, horizontal and axonometric wall sections should be required for review during Final Design Review along with extensive architectural details to fully demonstrate the building articulation and materiality transitions.*

*South building conceptual materials include smooth stucco walls, a stone base, wood pergolas, metal balconies, aluminum windows and clay tile roofing at tower elements. In general, these materials are high quality and consistent with the Mediterranean design of the building. Detail materials such as cornices and arched window trim are not indicated in the drawings and staff recommends a condition requiring that they be specified to be high quality such as precast concrete.*

35. A comprehensive landscape plan shall be submitted to the Design Commission for review and approval. The goal of the landscape plan is to demonstrate the following: Create distinctive environments; soften the exterior appearance of the building; and incorporate the use of native drought tolerant plant material to avoid excessive water use.

*Landscape plans are included in the submittal and staff's recommendations are discussed earlier in this report. Further details of the proposed design features of the common courtyard areas will be required for review during Final Design Review as a matter of course, which will ensure that these spaces are designed to create distinctive environments. The conceptual designs depict a variety of features and amenities provided within them, consistent with this requirement. Staff has recommended conditions requiring additional study of landscaping features of the south building, which will also address compliance with this condition.*

36. A sub-committee of the Design Commission should be convened to review the thoroughness of the construction documents (CD's) and specifications prior to each phase of the design review process and plan check submittal.

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*A subcommittee of the Design Commission was convened on March 23, 2021 and consisted of Commissioners Sales, Chiao and Potter. Commissioner Potter has since resigned from the subcommittee; therefore, the Commission should discuss whether another Commission should replace her. Staff provided the Concept Design Review drawings to the subcommittee for review on May 12, 2021 and did not receive any requests for additional information to be provided for this phase of the design review process.*

37. The developer should be required to provide a large-scale mock-up panel of exterior materials during construction for review and approval by the subcommittee of the Design Commission prior to installation of materials on the building.

*Large-scale materials mock-ups will be required as a condition of Final Design Review.*

38. A qualified Executive Architect (subject to City review and approval) with hospitality experience should be engaged by the applicant to oversee the CD production and construction processes to ensure implementation of high-quality design and materials and, during construction, consistency with the approved building plans.

*The current project architect, ACRM Architects + Interiors, meet the criteria established in this condition.*

39. A design-build CD process should be un-acceptable for projects over 10,000 sf.

*The project is not undergoing a design-build process.*

40. The number of Design & Historic Preservation inspections during construction should be increased to deter field changes, conditionally releasing each floor.

*More extensive construction inspections will be required as a condition of Final Design Review approval.*

41. Specifications shall be written for appropriate, quality materials to lessen the ability to reduce the quality of the finish materials approved by the Design Commission. The subcommittee of the Design Commission should have enough access to the construction process, to make sure that these are followed through.

*Detailed materials specifications will be required to be submitted for review during Final Design Review as a matter of course.*

42. Value engineering that would reduce the quality of materials specifications shall not be allowed for this project after design review approval is granted.

*Any changes to the design that are proposed during construction will be reviewed by staff or the Design Commission as required by the Changes to an Approved Project procedures in the Zoning Code.*

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified in conjunction with the approval of the PD

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for the project. The project has been found to be in substantial compliance with the PD approval; therefore, additional environmental analysis is not required for this application.

**HISTORIC RESOURCE REHABILITATION:**

The project includes the retention of the Pasadena Ford showroom building, which is in a state of substantial disrepair. The application does not include a rehabilitation plan that identifies work that is planned to be done to rehabilitate and restore the building; therefore, staff recommends a condition requiring this to be provided for review during Final Design Review. The building should be evaluated in detail by a qualified Historic Architect and any structural or exterior cosmetic damage that is identified should be repaired and any missing or altered exterior features restored in conjunction with the project.

**CONCLUSION:**

The massing and architectural design of the two buildings are consistent with the PD approval and the design guidelines. Staff has recommended conditions of approval that, in general, encourage clearer representation of the proposed traditional architectural style languages proposed for the buildings, appropriate resolution of details, use of high-quality and durable materials and softening the buildings with landscaping. Staff has also recommended conditions related to rehabilitation of the historic building to be retained in conjunction with the project and further definition of the use of the ground-level courtyard space at the south building. With these conditions addressed and reviewed during Final Design Review, staff finds that the project will be consistent with the applicable design guidelines and the design-related conditions of approval of the PD.

Respectfully Submitted,



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David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning and  
Community Development

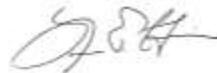
Prepared by:



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Kevin Johnson  
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



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Leon E. White  
Principal Planner

Attachment:

- A. Current plans & elevations