



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** JULY 27, 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

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 and refine the Art Deco detailing of the design to ensure a clear logic and hierarchy of detailing and a simple, elegant interpretation of the style. In addition, continue to study the fenestration to create a balanced solid-to-void proportion and emphasize the vertical dimension, particularly in areas of the building lacking articulated Art Deco features. Provide fenestration at the four-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. 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.
4. 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.
5. Further study provision of additional buffering landscaping along the north side of the north property.
6. 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.
7. 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*

8. Further study the engagement of the fourth-floor balconies with the third-floor terrace pergolas to either provide greater physical separation between them or to integrate them with similar materials and design features.
9. Further articulate the recessed solid wall panels at the second floor at the northwest corner tower and the entire west-facing wall adjacent to it to lighten the mass and improve the response to the street corner location.
10. Further define and refine the graphic elements shown at the east-facing tower element.
11. The base of the south building shall be a high-quality, durable material other than stucco.
12. Further study the solid-to-void proportion at the second floor on the north and west elevations, as well as the placement and design of balcony railing to ensure a logic to their placement and a simple, elegant design.
13. Provide additional fenestration or other means of articulation to soften publicly visible blank wall conditions at 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. False fenestration shall not be used and any fenestration or other articulation that is incorporated into the design may be more playful and reflective of the use of the associated interior spaces, consistent with traditional examples of the Mediterranean style in Pasadena.
14. Provide revised landscape plans depicting the revised landscape design described in the narrative including small potted trees into the building entry areas at the northwest, northeast and southwest corners of the south building and plantings in the setback area along the southern portion of the west elevation.

*General Project Conditions*

15. 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.
16. 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:**

On June 8, 2021, the Design Commission, acting under the provisions of §17.61.030 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, reviewed an application for Concept Design Review for construction of a new maximum-eight-story, 335,560-square-foot hotel building with subterranean parking. The scope of work includes the 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”).

The staff report from that review is included in Attachment A. The Commission provided comments on the design and continued the public hearing to July 27, 2021 to allow the applicant to revise the design to address the comments provided. In responding to the Commission’s comments, the applicant has not changed the previously proposed scope of the project.

## **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 June 8, 2021 Concept Design Review Hearing**

On June 8, 2021, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Concept Design Review for this project. The Commission continued the public hearing to give the applicant an opportunity to respond to the following comments (the architect’s and staff’s responses are detailed in the chart below and the full revised plans and elevations are in Attachment A):

Commission Comment, June 8, 2021	Excerpts from Architect’s Response	Staff Comments
<p><i>North building comment:</i></p> <p>1. Further 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 and to demonstrate architectural excellence. In particular, further study the arrangement of the massing, 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.</p>	<p>“As requested further study was conducted in the Art Deco style language. We enhanced the elevations in many areas to break down blank walls and also break the plane of the roof edge to create a more interesting roofline as seen in Art Deco buildings.</p> <p>The following Materials can be found on the north hotel building:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Precast Concrete Base</li> <li>2. Precast Concrete pilasters/columns</li> <li>3. Wrought Iron railings</li> <li>4. Decorative metal rails</li> <li>5. Decorative metal panels</li> <li>6. Equitone panels</li> <li>7. Smooth Stucco</li> <li>8. Aluminum window simulating steel windows (Similar to Quaker Doors and Windows)</li> <li>9. Decorative metal screen”</li> </ol>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>The applicant has incorporated extensive additional detailing on the building to more fully reflect the proposed Art Deco style, including additional engaged pilasters, roofline breaks, metal grille work and railings, and high-quality materials including precast concrete, metal and Equitone panels. Staff recommends that the detailing of these elements continue to be studied and refined as the project progresses to Final Design Review to ensure a clear logic and hierarchy and a simple, elegant interpretation of the Art Deco Style. Staff also recommends additional study of the fenestration to create a more balanced solid-to-void proportion and emphasize the vertical dimension, particularly in the areas not articulated with Art Deco design features noted above. The south-facing blank wall at the west end of the south elevation should also be articulated with fenestration. With these conditions implemented and reviewed during Final Design Review, the north building will reflect the essential qualities of design excellence required in conjunction with the FAR increase granted with the PD approval.</p>

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<b>Commission Comment, June 8, 2021</b>	<b>Excerpts from Architect's Response</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
<p><i>South building comments (#2-8)</i></p> <p>2. 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.</p>	<p>"Terraces have all been updated and have a generous space for a couple chairs and a table."</p>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>The third-floor terraces have been increased in depth to ensure that they are usable, and the articulation of the building is improved as a result. The engagement of the fourth floor metal balconies with the wood pergola at these terraces is unresolved and staff recommends a condition that they be further studied to create greater separation between them or to better integrate them with similar materials and design features.</p>
<p>3. 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.</p>	<p>"Tower elements have been revised to be cleaner with create focal points on the building."</p>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>The tower elements of the south building are substantially improved. At the northwest corner, the tower is a fully integrated volume from top to base and includes an integrated vertically oriented arched window at the upper portion with an open base with arched openings. The solid, recessed panels at the second floor of this tower and the treatment of the entire adjacent west-facing wall should be further articulated in a manner consistent with the style to lighten the massing at that location and further improve the treatment of the building at the corner. The easterly tower is also improved by slight articulation of the wall and addition of a graphic element, which should be further defined and refined as the project moves forward. Staff has recommended conditions of approval to address these concerns.</p>
<p>4. Improve the resolution of the Mediterranean design of the south building to ensure the design more accurately reflects the traditional language of the</p>	<p>"All of the suggestions have been incorporated. We have windows recessed 6" and the main feature window on the tower is recessed 9" to give a more defining shadow line. The corner arcade has been pulled back from the</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The Art Deco features have been removed from the design and the building better reflects the proposed Mediterranean design and is appropriately differentiated from the north building. Specific refinements</p>

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Commission Comment, June 8, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
<p>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 should 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.</p>	<p>corner and engages the overall tower element better.”</p>	<p>to the design previously mentioned will also improve the building's resolution of the proposed architectural style.</p>
<p>5. 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.</p>	<p>“Pots have been added at the three major entrance locations on the south west, north west and north east corners. Landscape providing additional plantings at the setback area along the west façade.”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>The approach stated in the applicant's response is appropriate; however, the submitted plans do not reflect these changes. As such, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring the landscape plans submitted for Final Design Review to reflect the additional landscaping described in the response.</p>
<p>6. 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</p>	<p>“The ground floor courtyard wants to be a location for the those visiting the market place to have a location to sit, eat, and relax. We believe it is not the best solution to co-mingle the public and private space. In response we have created additional outdoor space on the 4th floor roof that will be exclusively private tenant</p>	<p><i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Staff is in agreement with the applicant's proposal to expand the fourth floor roof deck rather than create additional outdoor space for the upper-floor residential units at the ground floor. The previous pool deck and the new amenity roof deck space are easily accessed from adjoining stairs and elevators and are interconnected to allow for their</p>

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Commission Comment, June 8, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
<p>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.</p>	<p>space. It has a connection to the pool deck and this amenity is sandwiched between the three floors of residences.”</p>	<p>use. Further definition of the amenities provided and design features of the decks and ground-level courtyard will be required to be submitted for review during Final Design Review as a matter of course.</p>
<p>7. Materials used for detailing of the south building, such as cornices and arched window trim, should be specified to be high-quality such as precast concrete.</p>	<p>“The following materials can be found on the south apartment building:            1. Clay tile roof (multi-color red)            2. Wrought Iron Railings            3. Wood Rafters            4. Wood Trellis            5. Precast caps at balcony's            6. Precast surround at first floor windows and doors            7. Precast at featured multi-story window            8. Smooth stucco for body            9. Textured stucco at base            10. Decorative light fixture - Mediterranean style            11. Aluminum windows designed to mimic steel windows (Quaker Windows and Doors)            12. Precast concrete decorative elements”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>The building features a variety of high-quality materials that are reflective of the proposed Mediterranean style. Staff recommends a condition requiring the base material to be a high-quality, durable material other than the proposed textured stucco.</p>
<p>8. Study the number and proportion of openings on the first and second floors of the elevations facing Colorado Boulevard and Holliston Avenue.</p>	<p>“This location we have added Juliet balconies with French doors, something typically seen in Mediterranean architecture.”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>The fenestration of the two street elevations has been improved in the revised design. However, the solid-to-void proportion at the smaller second-floor windows should be further studied. In addition, the design and placement of metal balconies should also be further studied to present a clear logic and a simple, elegant design. Staff has</p>

Commission Comment, June 8, 2021	Excerpts from Architect's Response	Staff Comments
		recommended conditions of approval to this effect.
<p><i>Comment on both buildings:</i></p> <p>9. 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 should be integrated into the overall design of the buildings to ensure a high-quality and contextual presentation.</p>	<p>“For both buildings we have either added true fenestration or created a mock opening that looks to be shuttered or a louver. This was done in some location because the structure behind the opening was a shear wall and not able to have these types of openings. The goal is to create something interesting but also buildable.”</p>	<p><i>Comment to be fully addressed with a condition of approval.</i></p> <p>At the north building, some new fenestration has been incorporated into the east end of the north elevation and the eighth floor design has been improved with Art Deco design features carried from the lower floors. As discussed earlier in this report, staff has recommended a condition of approval requiring articulation of the blank wall that remains at the west end of the south elevation.</p> <p>On the south building, the areas of concern have been articulated with tile roofs; however, false fenestration has been incorporated into the east elevation and no additional fenestration has been added to the south elevation. As the south elevation is the rear façade of the building, it may be acceptable for the façade to have a more utilitarian presentation; however, as the property to the south is undeveloped, this façade will be highly visible to the public. Use of false fenestration would not be consistent with a requirement for design excellence. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring continued study of the articulation of these facades in a manner than is consistent with the architectural style, which may include a more playful fenestration/ articulation pattern than currently proposed and that is reflective of the use of the associated interior spaces.</p>

**Previous Staff-Recommended Conditions**

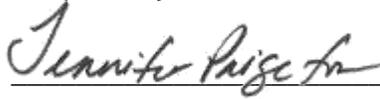
The majority of staff’s previously recommended conditions have been discussed in the table above and have been modified to reflect the current design. For the north building, previously recommended conditions related to the historic building, detailing and landscaping are retained in this report as these issues were not of primary concern during the first review and the Commission did not request the applicant to address them as part of the continuance. As such, staff recommends that they be retained to ensure they are addressed going forward. A previously recommended condition requiring provision of an elevation of the southeast corner has been removed as this was provided in the current revised submittal.

The previous staff report also included two general project conditions regarding Zoning/PD compliance and removal of public trees. Current Planning staff has reviewed the revised plans and determined that although the lot coverage of the south property has been reduced, it remains very slightly above the maximum allowed and notations regarding office use also remain in the drawings. In addition, no additional information regarding public tree removals has been provided in this submittal. As such, staff recommends that these conditions be retained in this review.

**CONCLUSION:**

The issues identified at the previous hearing have largely been addressed in the revised plans and written responses provided. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the application for Concept Design Review with conditions described above.

Respectfully submitted,



David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning and  
Community Development

Prepared by:



Kevin Johnson  
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Reviewed by:



Leon E. White  
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Attachments:

- A. Current plans and elevations
- B. Staff Report from June 8, 2021 Design Commission meeting