

STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

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

SUBJECT: PROPOSED EAST COLORADO SPECIFIC PLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

1. **Recommend** that the City Council consider an Addendum to the 2015 Pasadena General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR), along with the EIR, and find that the Addendum properly discloses only minor technical changes or additions to the EIR, and none of the conditions triggering a subsequent or supplemental EIR are present, as set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15164; and
2. **Recommend** that the City Council make the Findings for Approval for the General Plan Land Use Diagram Amendments, Specific Plan Amendment, and Zoning Code Map and Text Amendments in Attachment A and approve the proposed East Colorado Specific Plan (ECSP) in Attachment B.

BACKGROUND:

On August 25, 2021, the Planning Commission held a study session on the draft East Colorado Specific Plan (ECSP). Information was presented on the plan boundary, vision, objectives, subarea concepts, land uses, development standards, and public realm standards that would regulate future development in the East Colorado planning area. The discussion also included a comparison of the existing 2003 ECSP with the draft ECSP. The Planning Commission received public comments, discussed the draft ECSP, and provided feedback to City staff. A summary of the comments and feedback received during the study session is provided below:

- Public comments included the following, organized by topic:
 - Drive-Through Uses - Desire to restrict the establishment or expansion of drive-through restaurants in the plan area due to potential impacts to residential neighborhoods
 - Open Space for research and Development (R&D) Uses – Reassess the threshold for public open space and open space requirements in general for R&D uses in order to encourage these uses in the plan area

- Commissioner comments included the following, organized by topic.
 - Outreach – Request for more detailed information on the number of unique participants in the public outreach program
 - Specific Plan Boundary – Consider including last two parcels along E. Green Street between S. Holliston Avenue and S. Hill Avenue
 - Drive-Through Uses – No interest in allowing new drive-through uses to be established in the plan area, as this would conflict with the desire for enhanced pedestrian mobility
 - Public Open Space – Revise terminology throughout all Specific Plans to clarify that requirements pertain to privately owned, but publicly accessible open space, rather than publicly owned open space
 - Paseo Requirements – Support for paseos in general, with concerns about implementation, impacts on businesses, and feasibility
 - Relationship to Adjacent Specific Plans – Augment language in the proposed ECSP to discuss its relationship to the Central District and Lamanda Park Specific Plan areas
 - Street Trees and Setbacks – No strong preference for either of the street tree concepts presented (allée vs. single row with landscaped setbacks) on north/south streets connecting Green and Colorado
 - Impacts of Density Bonus – Request for information on potential height and density of future development when adding density bonus provisions
 - Name of Specific Plan – Request for clarification as to why the word “Boulevard” was removed from the plan name.

PROPOSED EAST COLORADO SPECIFIC PLAN:

Goals and Policies

Chapter 3 of the Proposed ECSP includes vision, goals, and policies to establish the desired outcomes of the plan and provide general direction for achieving these outcomes. The vision characterizes the intended future of the ECSP area, as shaped by both the General Plan and extensive community input during the outreach process. The ECSP vision contains an overarching vision statement and six supporting vision objectives.

In addition to the vision, the ECSP includes goals and policies that provide policy direction for implementing the ECSP's vision. These goals and policies are used by City staff, Commissions, and City Council when reviewing development projects, and can help support applications for grant funding efforts. The ECSP includes 18 goals, each with a range of two to six policies, which are applicable to the entire Specific Plan area, as well as the six subareas. Goals and policies are organized by the following topics, and can be viewed in Chapter 3 of the proposed ECSP (Attachment B):

- Public Realm & Community Cohesion
- Development & Design
- Economic Development
- Subareas

Planning Commission Study Session

The following summarizes the changes made to the draft ECSP in response to the feedback received during the Planning Commission Study Session, and in some cases, the reasoning for staff's recommendation not to make further changes. Changes were also made to the development and public realm standards found in Chapters 4-6 (Attachment B) in response to feedback received during the Study Session.

Public Outreach

Residents, property owners, and other interested parties were notified of upcoming events, community meetings, and hearings via postcard mailers sent to all properties within the current ECSP boundaries as well as within a 500-foot radius of the boundaries to ensure that the greater community surrounding the ECSP was informed of outreach activities. Residents were also informed of upcoming events by signing up for email notifications and by interacting with the OurPasadena webpage and social media. Additionally, information about the Specific Plan Update program was provided through Council District newsletters, flyers sent through the Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena Education Network, and articles in Pasadena Now. Staff also spoke directly with property owners and residents in and around the ECSP area, and engaged with the Pasadena Youth Ambassador program to bring awareness of the Specific Plan Update and urban planning in general to the City's youth. Since the launch of the program, a growing number of community members have engaged in the process by viewing the program website, OurPasadena.org, signing up for e-mail updates, following OurPasadena on social media, participating a pop-up event or youth activity, joining a webinar, navigating the virtual

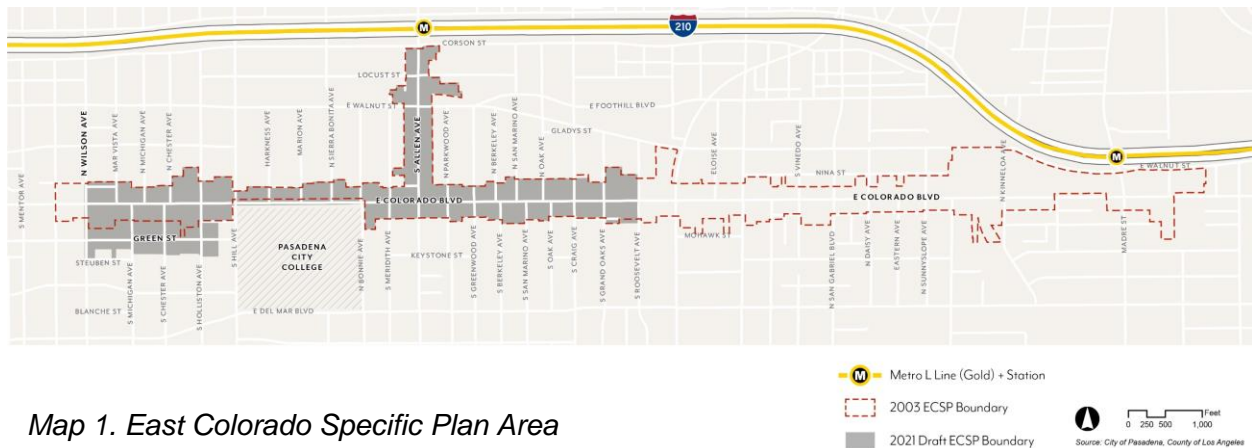
open house, and/or attending a workshop focusing on the ECSP. The following is an overview of participation of each community outreach effort:

- Citywide Open Houses – over 130 participants
- Round 1 Workshop – over 30 participants
- Round 2 Workshop – over 30 participants
- Walking Tour – over 45 participants
- Pasadena City College Pop-up – over 50 participants
- Student Summit – over 40 participants (including 10 students from the Pasadena Youth Ambassadors Program)
- Round 3 Virtual Open House – over 2,600 unique page views
- Round 3 Webinar – over 75 participants

See Attachment E for more information on the public outreach process and community feedback.

Specific Plan Boundary

The specific plan area encompasses the 1.4-mile section of Colorado Boulevard between Wilson Avenue on the west and Roosevelt Avenue on the east. The plan area also includes Green Street between Wilson and Holliston Avenue, and the north/south stretch of Allen Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and Corson Street, connecting the educational and commercial uses on Colorado Boulevard to the Metro L (Gold) Line and residential neighborhoods north of the I-210 freeway. Upon adoption of the Proposed ECSP, the following changes would be made to the plan area boundary (Also shown in Map 1):



Map 1. East Colorado Specific Plan Area

- Parcels fronting on E. Colorado Boulevard between N. Wilson Avenue and S. Catalina Avenue will be removed from the plan area;
- Parcels fronting on E. Green Street between N. Wilson Avenue and mid-block between S. Holliston Avenue and S. Hill Avenue will be added to the plan area;
- Parcels east of S. Roosevelt Avenue will be removed from the plan area;

- Parcel located between Jones Alley and S. Roosevelt Avenue that currently contains a surface parking lot will be added to the plan area; and
- Northernmost parcel on the east side of N. Craig Avenue within the existing ECSP boundary that is currently developed with a multi-family residential building will be removed from the plan area.

All parcels that are proposed to be removed from the ECSP are currently regulated by the Zoning Code, and therefore removing them from the specific plan would not affect how these uses are regulated. The parcels that are currently regulated by the existing ECSP that will not be included in the proposed ECSP will continue to be regulated by existing ECSP standards until such time that future specific plans, including the Lamanda Park and East Pasadena Specific Plans, are adopted with updated regulations for those parcels.

The Planning Commission provided feedback on the plan boundaries, and expressed interest in including the remaining parcels along E. Green Street between S. Holliston Avenue and S. Hill Avenue within the ECSP area. These parcels are currently developed with the Hill Avenue Branch Library, a City-owned public facility, and St. Philip the Apostle Church, which is an institutional use regulated by a Conditional Use Permit. The inclusion of these parcels in the ECSP boundaries would likely have little effect on future development, due to the nature of the existing uses, and existing regulations that would require a zone change and/or Conditional Use Permit if any significant development were to occur on either site. Both scenarios would require a public review process, giving Commissioners, the City Council and the community opportunities to shape any future projects on these sites. For these reasons, staff does not recommend extending the boundaries to include these parcels.

In order to implement the recommended boundary changes as proposed in the ECSP, amendments would be required to the General Plan Land Use Diagram and Zoning Map. These amendments are part of staff's recommendation to the Planning Commission, and if concurred by the Commission, would be forwarded to City Council for final approval.

Drive-Through Uses

The draft ECSP that was presented to the Planning Commission during the study session did not allow the establishment of new drive-through uses anywhere in the plan area. Due to the feedback received from members of the public and the Planning Commission, this prohibition will remain unchanged. The proposed ECSP would continue to allow existing drive-through uses to be altered or enlarged, but such alterations would require approval of a Minor Conditional Use Permit. This is consistent with existing Zoning Code provisions relating to nonconforming uses, and therefore would not represent any change to current regulations.

In order to address concerns about the impact of drive-through uses on pedestrian mobility and neighboring residential uses, Policy 5.f. has been added to the proposed ECSP that speaks to orienting sites, buildings, and landscaping to support pedestrians and focus on the street. Any future application for a Minor Conditional Use Permit to alter or enlarge an existing,

nonconforming drive-through use would require a finding of consistency with this and other policies in the proposed ECSP.

Publicly Accessible Open Space

There was concern expressed with the use of the term 'public open space' to describe the requirement for private development to include open space that is accessible to the public. In response, all references to the term 'public open space' that refer to this requirement have been replaced with the term 'publicly accessible open space,' or the acronym 'PAOS' throughout the proposed ECSP document.

Additionally, in response to public comment regarding exceptions to open space requirements for R&D uses, the following revisions have been made:

- Allow R&D (Office and Non-Office) uses located east of Holliston to reduce Common Open Space area requirements by up to 50%, subject to review and approval of Design Commission
- Allow R&D (Office & Non-Office) uses located east of Holliston to reduce Publicly Accessible Open Space area requirements by up to 50%, subject to review and approval of Design Commission
- Require any R&D (Office and Non-Office) use that utilizes the open space reductions to remain a Research and Development use for at least 5 years after issuance of Certificate of Occupancy before any change in use can occur.

These revisions would afford greater flexibility to these unique and desirable land uses and make it easier for them to locate within the plan area, which is located in close proximity to the Caltech and Pasadena City College campuses.

Paseo Requirements

The Commission expressed general support for the concept of paseos, and overall interventions that enhance walkability throughout the plan area. However, there were several questions and concerns raised regarding the implementation of the paseo requirements in the proposed ECSP. One concern was that the paseo requirement might negatively impact businesses by restricting access to storefronts due to closures of streets to cars in favor of pedestrians. With regard to this concern, it is important to note that the paseo requirements in the proposed ECSP (and other forthcoming Specific Plan updates) would not result in the alteration of any public right-of-way, including streets or alleys, and would be expected to be accommodated completely within the private property of a given development site.

Some Commissioners also expressed concern about paseo requirements being overly burdensome for smaller developments, and could disincentivize such developments in favor of much more massive developments because they would reduce the development potential of smaller parcels. In response to this concern, staff would like to clarify that the paseo requirements do not represent additional square footage of open space beyond what would otherwise be required as part of a project's Publicly Accessible Open Space (PAOS)

requirement. Additionally, only projects with more than 80,000 square feet of gross floor area would be subject to the PAOS requirement. The paseo standards do not add more PAOS square footage, but simply require that the already required PAOS be configured and located in a manner that creates a paseo connection that is generally consistent with the locations identified in the proposed ECSP.

Finally, Commissioners expressed concern about the timing of the implementation of the proposed paseo network, indicating that developers may hesitate to build in order to avoid being responsible for beginning a paseo that would not connect to an established network because other paseos had not yet been developed. This concern is noted; however staff had previously considered this possibility and determined that most locations where paseos are identified in the proposed ECSP would still allow for connections through the existing blocks due to underutilized sites and surface parking lots. Furthermore, in cases where connections would not be possible without future development completing the paseo network, the initial paseo would still be a worthwhile investment that could be used as a standalone open space until such time as the connection is completed with future development.

Relationship to Adjacent Specific Plans

The Commission expressed appreciation for references in the oral presentation to how the draft ECSP regulations were developed with sensitivity to existing development as well as the draft regulations in the adjacent Specific Plan areas. These include the Central District Specific Plan to the west and the Lamanda Park Specific Plan to the east. The Commission requested that this discussion be included in the proposed ECSP so that the intent of the regulations is clear. Staff has noted this request, and has revised the introductory text in Chapter 1, and added references to adjacent specific plans in Map 1.1-1 in the proposed ECSP accordingly.

Density Bonus

Several Commissioners asked how State Density Bonus Law (SDBL) would affect the proposed development standards, particularly with respect to density, height, and building intensity. In general, SDBL grants developers of residential projects additional density beyond what local regulations allow in exchange for setting aside a percentage of the base units for low, very low, or moderate-income households. The greater the number of affordable units, or the more affordable each unit is, the greater the density bonus allowed. Recent amendments to SDBL now allow density bonuses of up to 50% beyond local limits, however most projects that have been proposed in the City of Pasadena in recent years have requested approximately 30-35% density bonus. In addition to the additional density, SDBL also allows applicants to request concessions or incentives, which allow a project to exceed other development standards, such as height and floor area ratio (FAR) limits unless the City can demonstrate that the concessions would not result in identifiable cost savings to the project. Due to the case-by-case nature of these determinations, there is no standardized limit on the amount of additional height or other concessions a developer may request. However, a review of past density bonus projects in Pasadena has shown that these projects have typically requested up to one or two additional stories, averaging an additional 12 feet above otherwise allowable height limits.

As part of recent changes to Pasadena’s local inclusionary housing requirements, the City Council adopted a concession menu that allows up to two by-right concessions in order to incentivize density bonus projects to accommodate as many affordable units as possible, but also design projects that are relatively consistent with the surrounding character and anticipated scale of development. The concession menu allows up to 12 feet of additional height over no more than 60% of the building footprint, as well as an additional 0.5 FAR, among other options. The menu has so far been effective at limiting the number of projects that seek additional height beyond what is offered on the menu. Because of the availability of the concession menu, the uncertainty of project economics that vary case by case, and the possibility of future changes to SDBL by the State legislature, staff does not recommend making changes to the development standards in the proposed ECSP because of SDBL.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

The proposed ECSP will be primarily implemented through the adoption of the plan’s new land use, public realm, and development regulations, which align private sector investment with the plan’s vision, goals, and policies. In addition, public sector improvements and programs funded through the City and outside sources, can further implement the plan, particularly where redevelopment is less likely to occur.

The proposed ECSP includes targeted implementation actions intended to help guide and prioritize the implementation of the plan. It also provides an overview of existing services, plans, and programs, all of which can be leveraged to help implement the plan. A summary of funding sources is also included to guide the City in understanding and selecting available funding sources to implement the improvements and programs identified in the proposed ECSP. The following implementation actions are intended to guide the City in implementing the proposed ECSP over time with generalized timeframes as follows:

- On-going – periodic or on a continuing basis;
- Immediate – upon adoption of the Specific Plan;
- Near-term – 0 to 5 years; and
- Medium-term – 5 to 10 years.

On-going Implementation

Specific plans are implemented on an on-going basis, and used by various City departments when reviewing projects, seeking funding, and to understand the vision, goals, and policies of specified geographic areas to guide improvements and programming. Implementing a specific plan requires collaboration across City departments and coordination with existing citywide implementation programs, plans, and efforts. For example, the City appropriates capital funds by department and project category through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) on an annual basis. The CIP budget consists of projects aimed at improving the city’s public infrastructure such as streets, transportation issues, street lights, traffic signals, parks, public buildings, sewer and storm drains, the Rose Bowl, the Pasadena Center, technology and water and power projects. Projects can be short, medium or long-term.

On an on-going basis, the City monitors new development within the specific plan areas to ensure that new development does not exceed the number of residential units and non-residential square feet specified in the Land Use Element, referred to as the development capacities. As of July 2021, 297 out of the 300 residential unit development capacity remains, with 297,166 square feet of the 300,000 square foot non-residential cap still available. Any development of new affordable residential units would not count toward the development capacity for the ECSP area.

Immediate Implementation

Upon adoption of the proposed ECSP, the Zoning Code text would be amended to replace existing permitted uses and development standards with the uses and development standards provided in proposed ECSP. The Zoning Map would also be amended to replace zoning district designations indicated on the Zoning Map with the new ECSP zoning districts. Another immediate action would include an amendment to the General Plan Land Use Diagram, which establishes the type of land uses, densities, and intensities that are allowed on a particular site in the City. As proposed, a General Plan Land Use Diagram amendment would be required to update the land use designation on the Land Use Diagram from Med-High Density Residential (0-32 dwelling units per acre [du/ac]) to Med Mixed Use (0-87 du/ac and 0-2.25 Floor Area Ratio) on two parcels located south of Jones Alley between S. Grand Oaks Avenue and S. Roosevelt Avenue. A General Plan Land Use Diagram amendment is also required to add and remove parcels as proposed in the ECSP. See Attachment H for details on the proposed General Plan Land Use Diagram, Zoning Map, and Zoning Code amendments.

Mid-term Implementation

The proposed ECSP includes targeted implementation programs intended to help guide and prioritize the implementation of the plan, including:

- Working with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to identify opportunities for safety and mobility improvements consistent with the Complete Streets Program, such as north-south pedestrian signalized crosswalks along Colorado Boulevard, and bulb-outs with sustainable elements, like bioswales.
- Supporting implementation of bicycle infrastructure in alignment with DOT's Bicycle Transportation action Plan, including proposed greenways with traffic calming improvements like signalized pedestrian crossings along Holliston, Sierra Bonita, and Craig Avenues.
- Working with DOT to implement the Allen Station Gold Line Safety Enhancement project and other mobility improvements consistent with the Complete Streets Program;
- Working with the Public Works Department to update the tree palette in the Master Street Tree Plan;
- Exploring opportunities to integrate public art and gateway concepts in the Allen Avenue I-210 freeway underpass as part of preliminary designs for the Allen station enhancements; and
- Considering formation of a Business Improvement District/Property-Based Business Improvement District to strengthen opportunities for placemaking and community identity, in addition to marketing within the ECSP area.

For more information on implementation actions refer to Chapter 7 of the Proposed ECSP.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

An Initial Study and EIR was prepared for the Pasadena General Plan in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and certified by the City Council on August 17, 2015. An addendum to the IS/EIR has been prepared analyzing the East Colorado Specific Plan Update in compliance with Section 15164 (Addendum to an EIR or Negative Declaration) of the CEQA guidelines (Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 11). The addendum found that the project revisions will not result in any potentially significant impacts that were not already analyzed in the IS/EIR.

Addendum to Certified EIR

The original Project evaluated in the Certified EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2013091009) analyzed potential citywide impacts, broad policy alternatives, and programmatic mitigation measures associated with the General Plan Update. The certified EIR analyzed the update of the General Plan and specific plan amendments, which updated development caps within each of the City's eight specific plan areas.

The City is proposing updates to the ECSP previously analyzed in the EIR. Updates to the ECSP primarily focus on refining and/or establishing objective development standards to achieve the goals and vision of the General Plan. The revised project includes updates to the following components of the ECSP to bring it into alignment with the General Plan: Specific Plan Area boundary; types of use; policies; design standards, public realm standards; density and intensity of development; height and/or overall scale of buildings and structures; setback and stepbacks; parking requirements; types and amount of open space and landscaping and open space requirements; and implementation programs. The Addendum was prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15164(a) which allows a lead agency to prepare an addendum to a previously certified EIR if only minor technical changes or additions to the previously certified EIR are necessary but none of the conditions described in CEQA Guidelines § 15162 requiring preparation of a subsequent EIR are present.

CEQA Guidelines § 15162 states that no subsequent EIR shall be prepared unless one or more of the following occurs:

- Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete, shows any of the following:
 - The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR;

- Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
- Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
- Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

Public Resources Code (“PRC”) § 21166 provides that unless one or more of the conditions set forth are met, no subsequent or supplemental environmental impact report is required.

The analysis demonstrates that the proposed modifications evaluated in the Addendum would not result in conditions meeting the criteria set forth in CEQA Guidelines § 15162. Therefore, pursuant to PRC § 21166 and CEQA Guidelines § 15162, preparation of a subsequent EIR is not required. Refer to Attachment F for the Addendum to the General Plan EIR.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed ECSP would replace the current 2003 specific plan, refining the plan boundaries, vision, goals, policies, regulations, standards, guidelines, and implementation actions for this specific area. The proposed ECSP could accomplish the vision for a vibrant neighborhood-oriented district that is unique and special, with a mix of uses, services, and amenities, complemented by enhanced streetscapes. The proposed ECSP reflects community feedback and the desire to build upon existing conditions, supporting new development that is contextually appropriate and enhances the area. It also stimulates economic development and balances housing and employment opportunities in the area.

Respectfully submitted,



DAVID M. REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Anita Cerna
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



David Sanchez
Principal Planner

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Required Findings
- Attachment B – Proposed East Colorado Specific Plan (2021)
- Attachment C – Existing 2003 East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan
- Attachment D – Comparison Table of Current and Proposed Standards
- Attachment E – Community Engagement Process and Public Feedback
- Attachment F – Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report
- Attachment G – General Plan Environmental Impact Report
- Attachment H – General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments

Attachments are available at the following link: <https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT A
REQUIRED FINDINGS**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT B
PROPOSED EAST COLORADO SPECIFIC PLAN (2021)**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT C
EXISTING 2003 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD SPECIFIC PLAN**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT D
COMPARISON TABLE OF CURRENT AND PROPOSED STANDARDS**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT E
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND PUBLIC FEEDBACK**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT F
ADDENDUM TO THE GENERAL PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT G
GENERAL PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>

**ATTACHMENT H
GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS**

Can be viewed at:

<https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-PC-HR-092221>