PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT

DATE: MAY 24, 2022

TO: DESIGN COMMISSION

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

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - NEW 59,780-SQUARE-FOOT AUTOMOBILE SALES BUILDING AND 4,690-SQUARE-FOOT SERVICE BUILDING
2915 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD

Project Description:

This proposal is to demolish all existing buildings and improvements on the project site and construct two new buildings for Porsche, an automobile sales and service use. One building would be approximately 59,780 square feet in size and a smaller building would be 4,690 square feet. The larger, rectangular, two-story building would house new automobile display, sales/leasing offices, and a service and parts departments. The smaller building will house a new automated car wash facility for use only by Porsche. The site is bounded by East Walnut Street to the north, East Colorado Boulevard to the south, North Sunnyslope Avenue to the west and is currently bisected by Nina Street. The project site currently consists of eight parcels totaling 162,078 square feet and separated by Nina Street, which runs east-west and terminates within the project site. This easternmost extension of Nina Street (east of North Sunnyslope Avenue) is proposed to be vacated and incorporated into the project site to create one continuous site. The northern part of the site (north of Nina Street) is currently developed with a rectangular building formerly known as the Swanson and Peterson Furniture Manufacturing building, which includes a main block and two additions along with a garage structure, surface parking, and vacant adjacent lots. The manufacturing building includes a main block that was constructed in 1929 and two, two-story, additions that were added in 1973 and 1979. A detached garage was constructed in 1997. The southern part of the site (south of Nina Street) is occupied by a commercial building built ca. 1924 and surface parking lot. All buildings and all curb cuts except one are proposed to be demolished. There are six trees on the project site, which are not proposed to be removed. There are also thirteen street or public trees surrounding the project site, which are not proposed to be removed.

The main building is proposed to be oriented at the west side of the project site and will include sales and leasing offices, vehicle display and service areas, and upper level and rooftop parking for vehicles waiting to be serviced. The building will be set back approximately 110 feet from the south property line fronting Colorado Boulevard, 50 feet from the west property line fronting Sunnyslope Avenue and 69 feet from the north property line fronting Walnut Street. These street setbacks would be improved with landscaping, pedestrian walkways, parking for vehicle display and customers, and parking lot improvements that include new curb cuts, driveways and drive aisles. Additional, larger areas of landscaping are proposed at the northwest and southwest

corners of the site. The smaller carwash building is proposed to be located at the northeast end of the site, fronting but set back from Walnut Street and will be utilized as an automated car wash facility for the proposed project. The east side of the site will include spaces for additional inventory display and vehicular drive aisles. Vehicles will be able to access the site via three locations – one driveway at the center of the Colorado Boulevard frontage, one at the southern end of the Sunnyslope Avenue frontage, and one near the east end of the Walnut Street frontage.

The main building is proposed to have a two-story massing with the ground floor measuring at approximately 12 feet in height and second floor measuring at 24 feet in height, for a total overall height of 36 feet. The smaller building fronting Walnut Street is proposed to be one-story; due to its size being below 5,000 square feet, it is not subject to design review. The footprint of the main building is generally rectangular, oriented north-south, and will include a glazed curved southwest corner, which will be utilized as the main customer entry. Irregular and minimal fenestration openings or voids at the second floor, accentuated by curved openings, is proposed along with various forms of metal cladding with minimal or no articulated features. The building is designed in a contemporary style with a flat roof, solid, perforated and corrugated metal panel cladding, butt-jointed storefront systems with limited mullions, and curved panels of cladding to provide an eclectic pattern of fenestration openings within the solid metal cladding systems.

The site is split-zoned with the northern half (north of Nina Street) being within the EPSP-d1-IG (East Pasadena Specific Plan, Subarea d1, General Industrial District) Zoning District and the southern half (south of Nina Street) being in the ECSP-CG-6 (East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan, Commercial General, the Chihuahuita area) Zoning District. Surrounding properties include mostly commercial and industrial buildings ranging between one and two stories in height, with sporadic residential buildings dispersed irregularly along Nina Street west of Sunnyslope Avenue. A three-story hotel building sits on the west side of North Sunnyslope Avenue facing the project site. Nearby eligible, undesignated historic resources include Denny's Restaurant at 2627 E. Colorado (1963); the Swiss Lodge at 2800 East Colorado Boulevard (1961), Astro Motel at 2818 East Colorado Boulevard (1962), Third Church of Christ Scientist at 2801-2803 East Colorado Boulevard (1927), Serendipity at 2966-2980 East Colorado Boulevard (1927-1929); ; Fred C. Henson Co. at 3311 East Colorado Boulevard (1939); and C.M. Northrup & Son Real Estate at 3330 East Colorado Boulevard (1924).

Applicable Design Guidelines:

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design Guidelines in the East Colorado Specific Plan (southern portion of site)
- Design Guidelines in the East Pasadena Specific Plan (northern portion of site)
- Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Residential Districts

Previous/Existing Entitlements:

- None

Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:

- Conditional Use Permit, Minor Variances and Street Vacation (Planning Commission for recommendation, and the City Council as the review authority)
- Concept and Final Design Review (Design Commission)
- Building Permits (Building Staff)

CEQA Clearance:

This is preliminary consultation regarding design review and is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff Observations:

Applicable Design Guidelines:

The following design guidelines are applicable to the project and should guide further development and study of the project as it moves forward in the design review process:

Design-Related Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan:

4.10: Locate and design buildings to relate to and frame major public streets, open spaces, and cityscape. New development at intersections should consider any number of corner treatments, and should balance safety and accessibility concerns with the vision of the area and the need for buildings to engage the street and create a distinct urban edge.

4.11: Require that development demonstrates a contextual relationship with neighboring structures and sites addressing such elements as building scale, massing, orientation, setbacks, buffering, the arrangement of shared and private open spaces, visibility, privacy, automobile and truck access, impacts of noise and lighting, landscape quality, infrastructure, and aesthetics.

7.3: Require that new and adaptively re-used buildings are designed to respect and complement the defining built form, massing, scale, modulation, and architectural detailing of their contextual setting.

7.4 Require design review for new and redeveloped projects to assure compatibility with community character, while promoting creativity, innovation, and design quality.

Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial & Multi-Family Districts:

1.1 Relationship to Public Realm. Buildings should be oriented to positively define and frame adjacent public streets, and/or public or common spaces, while promoting the collective form of neighborhoods by:

- Matching or complementing adjacent building setbacks;
- Matching or complementing adjacent building heights and massing;
- Completing the streetscape pattern of the street they front.

1.3 **Corner Lots.** Buildings on corner lots should be designed to positively define and frame the public realm of both streets they front.

1.5 **Holistic Design.** The constituent parts of new projects (building, open space, landscape, parking) should be internally integrated in image and form, while relating compatibly to those of neighboring buildings.

6.3 **Contexts in transition** should receive projects in either a contemporary or traditional style with no limitations that will help to shake the future character of their surroundings.

7.1 **Scale.** Buildings should be scaled to respond to their context by sensitively and positively addressing the scale and massing of their adjacent neighbors. This can be accomplished by:

- Matching existing building heights or exceeding them by only one story. Additional stories should be modulated by setbacks.
- Including elements such as porches, galleries, arcades, etc. to relate the scale of facades to those of existing buildings.
- Introducing landscape and/or trees as a screen between existing and new buildings.

7.2 **Side and rear elevations.** The rear and/or side elevations of new buildings that are visible from the public realm should be designed with equal care and quality as the front or principal facade.

9.1 **Garage entrances.** Parking garage entrances should be designed and composed as an integral part of the building facade and should not interfere with existing adjacent buildings. The garage entrances should be designed as doorways and be gated or secured by doors scaled in proportion to the overall form of the building. Automobile entrances to buildings should be less prominent than pedestrian entrances. This can be accomplished by way of size, massing, or detail variation.

The proposed project site includes new construction that straddles multiple lots that are subject to the design guidelines in the East Colorado Specific Plan and the East Pasadena Specific Plan. Relevant guidelines under each plan are detailed below.

East Colorado Specific Plan:

The southern portion of the project site is within the Chihuahuita subarea of the East Colorado Specific Plan area. This sub-Area encourages “a vibrant mix of land uses, a unified streetscape and a series of distinct places along a portion of Colorado Boulevard, approximately 3 miles in length, extending eastward from Catalina Avenue to the eastern City limits at Sycamore Avenue.”

A. Community Character

Guideline 2. Route 66 Architectural Style

Recommendation 1.2: “Off the shelf” or “chain” corporate architecture and generic designs are not recommended for new development along East Colorado Boulevard. Each project should strive to achieve the unique theme of the corridor.

C. Site Planning and Development

Guideline 1. Encourage Integrate Site Planning

Recommendation 1.1: Avoid large blank walls adjacent to street frontages.

Recommendation 1.3: Locate and orient buildings to positively define public streets and civic spaces such as public plazas; maintain a continuous building street wall and in general limit spatial gaps to those necessary to accommodate vehicular and pedestrian access.

Recommendation 1.5: Due to the high visibility of corner properties, extra care should be given to building location and articulation. Corner buildings should have prominent architectural features to anchor their location whenever possible while still allowing sight lines at corners.

Guideline 3. Control Access, Circulation and Parking

Recommendation 1.2: Site surface parking lots behind buildings or interior to a block, not to the front and preferably not to the side of a building in relation to the street; most importantly, surface parking is not to be located at a street corner.

Recommendation 1.3: When parking must occur at the street edge, screen views of automobiles from public view and adjacent sensitive land uses, including adequate screening for parking garages; dense planting and low-profile walls are often an effective screen for surface parking.

D. Building Design

Guideline 1. Respect Surrounding Character

Recommendation 1.3: Respond to the regulating lines and rhythms of adjacent buildings that also support a street-oriented environment; regulating lines and rhythms include vertical and horizontal patterns as expressed by cornice lines, belt lines, doors, and windows.

Recommendation 1.4: Use regulating lines to promote contextual harmony, solidify the relationship between new and old buildings, and lead the eye down the street.

Guideline 2. Mitigate Massing and Bulk

Recommendation 1.1: Design building volumes to maintain a compatible scale with their surroundings. Large buildings should have variations in the vertical and horizontal planes in order to break up a “big box” appearance.
Recommendation 1.3: Buildings should be designed to be viewed from all public areas/easements, including sidewalks, alleys, and streets.

Recommendation 1.5: When buildings must be set back from the street, smaller, freestanding structures can be used to provide a street-front presence, provide a buffer to the parking, and/or reduce the impact of large buildings.

Recommendation 1.6: Employ simple, yet varied masses, and emphasize deep openings that create shadow lines and provide visual relief; discourage monolithic vertical extrusions of a maximum building footprint.

Guideline 3. Emphasize Human-Scale Design

Recommendation 1.2: Use design elements such as separate storefronts, display windows, shop entrances, exterior light fixtures, awnings and overhangs to add interest and give a human dimension to street-level building facades.

Recommendation 1.4: Architectural detail should be used to enhance the building and the adjacent pedestrian spaces by adding color, shadows, and appropriate variation in form.

Recommendation 1.5: Pedestrian-level exterior walls should have elements of building depth and character. Emphasize windows, trellises, roof overhangs, recessed or projected stories, columns, balconies, wainscots, and awnings.

Guideline 4. Unify and Articulate Building Facades

Recommendation 1.1: Each building should have a definable base such as a wainscot or bulkhead, a roofline, parapet or cap detail, and identifiable entry.

Recommendation 1.2: Variation in patterns, changes in material, building pop-outs, columns, and recessed areas should be used to create patterns of shadow and depth on the wall surfaces.

Recommendation 1.3: Architectural detail should be used to enhance the building and the adjacent pedestrian spaces by adding color, shadows, and appropriate variation in form. Ornamental tile, built up stucco relief, and prefabricated molding forms (including cast materials) are a few suggested uses of material that should be considered.

Recommendation 1.6: Material and color should work in conjunction with the desired architectural building character and style. Appropriate materials for walls and facades include, but are not limited to, stucco, stone, tile, split-faced block, brick and wood lap siding.

Guideline 5. Windows, Doors, and Storefronts

Recommendation 1.2: All storefronts should be appropriately detailed using elements that are of texture, shade and shadow, and with a clear sense of entry, identification, and pedestrian scale.

Recommendation 1.3: Window type, material, shape, and proportion should complement the architectural style of the building entry. Balance and the effect on the overall facade design should be carefully considered.

Recommendation 1.8: Doors, windows, and openings should be used to add character and interest to the wall plane.

Guideline 5. Design Roof Silhouettes

Recommendation 1.1: Express roofs in a visually interesting manner that complements the composition of the building and the surrounding area; sculpted roof forms are encouraged.

Recommendation 1.11: Avoid long inarticulate flat roofs by incorporating vertical projections and corner details.

East Pasadena Specific Plan:

The northern portion of the project site is within the d1 East Foothill Industrial District of the East Pasadena Specific Plan area. This subdistrict encourages "the area's continued use as an industrial district with moderate amounts of additional office and commercial development."

6.5.2 Building Architecture, Massing and Height

- To promote a "pedestrian friendly" character and avoid large blocky facades, building facades should be articulated with architectural features such as awnings, pilasters, bay windows, a distinct base, recessed display windows, a cornice or varied roof line.
- Buildings should be designed to be attractive from all directions. Where rear or sides of buildings are visible from adjacent streets, these facades shall receive equal design treatment as the front or main façade.
- Accessory structures and enclosures, including enclosed storage areas, shall be integrated with the design of the primary building on the parcel and shall not be designed as an appendage attached to the building.
- Quality materials are desired such as smooth sand finish stucco rather than swirling applications, and brick and stone pavers rather than asphalt. The following are examples of building materials, which are preferred
    - Smooth finish stucco; screed expansion joints are favored, which are integrated with the design of windows and doors
    - Brick and/or brick veneer with a natural color grout
    - Precast concrete panels for structures taller than two stories
    - Cut stone, tile or other smooth, durable material on the ground level (the base) for visual interest and for ease of graffiti removal
    - Terra cotta or ceramic roof tiles

- Steel or a wrought iron grill work or concrete block grills, not chain link or barbed wire
- Canvas awnings, not vinyl
- Wood, steel or aluminum and clear glass on storefronts, windows, doors, or atrium spaces

Potential Design Issues:

- The immediate context is in transition and includes a number of automobile sales and service facilities and large-format retail developments. As such, a new, contemporary-designed automobile sales building such as the proposed building is appropriate and compatible with the surrounding context.
- As the landscape design is developed, consider the use of alternative pavement materials that are permeable, and that reduce solar heat gains as further sustainability enhancements to the project. In addition, the open parking areas of the site should be richly landscaped to soften the paved areas and the building itself.
- Consider a freestanding structure along the street edge to enhance the pedestrian environment, and to create a relationship to the broader context of Pasadena's architectural legacy along Colorado Boulevard.
- Consider including design elements to the building that can further enhance the pedestrian experience through appropriately-scaled architectural features such as shading elements, façade softening through landscape, or other means, particularly along the southwest corner elevation. At the storefront, consider window treatments or designs that provide depth.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Paige for

David M. Reyes
Director of Planning & Community Development Department

Prepared by:

Stephanie Cisneros
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:

Kevin Johnson
Principal Planner

Attachments:

A. Current Planning (Zoning) compliance matrix
B. Applicant submittal package