



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** OCTOBER 11, 2022

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

**FROM:** JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, ACTING DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW 3- AND 4-STORY 91,864 SQUARE-FOOT MIXED-USE BUILDING WITH 5,143 SQUARE FEET OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL SPACE, 73 RESIDENTIAL UNITS AND 79 SURFACE PARKING SPACES  
1987-1999 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD, 36 N. BERKELEY AVENUE AND 35-45 N. SAN MARINO AVENUE

---

### Project Description:

The proposed project is the construction of a new 3- and 4-story, 91,864 square-foot, mixed-use building that includes 5,143 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 73 residential dwelling units with 79 at-grade parking spaces at 1999 E. Colorado Boulevard. The project site is located within the EC-MU-G (East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan, Mixed-Use Core) zoning district. The approximately 61,593 square-foot project site is one city block, spanning between Berkeley and N. San Marino Avenues on the north side of E. Colorado Blvd., with frontage on all three streets. The site is currently a car display/storage lot for Rusnak Volvo Dealership. There are no protected trees located on the project site. All existing improvements will be demolished, including two single-family residences located at 36 N. Berkeley Avenue and 45 N. San Marino Avenue.

The surrounding development includes a variety of low-scale one- to two-story commercial, retail, and service-related establishments fronting E. Colorado Boulevard. Transitioning from E. Colorado Boulevard to the north and south of the project site are multi-family residential zoned areas developed with single-family residences and multi-family buildings. The project site is not a designated historic resource and there are no individually designated historic resources or landmark districts located nearby.

The proposed contemporary building has a U-shape footprint that wraps the site along its three street frontages and interrupted only by an open driveway portal along Berkeley Avenue to access the ground-level parking lot. The building incorporates some playful gestures at the ground floor with angled wall planes and treatments that address the two street corners. Its design concept is expressed in and supported by a simple material palette consisting of plaster, limestone panels, corrugated metal panels, wood panels, and vinyl windows. A five-foot setback is proposed from the street property lines with a greater setback of approximately 15 feet along the rear, adjoining the residential zone. The increased setback provides a greater buffer between the proposed project and the existing one- and two-story residential buildings that

adjoin the north property line. The larger setback area shows a meandering pathway that leads to an on-site dog park. At the ground level, and along the primary E. Colorado Boulevard frontage, a large retail space will be provided that turns the corner onto Berkeley Avenue before it meets the driveway. This space could be partitioned into multiple tenant spaces if necessary. On the opposite end, towards the eastern portion of the ground floor, is a leasing office and bicycle and mail rooms that occupy the remaining frontage, with the residential lobby placed at the corner of E. Colorado Boulevard and N. San Marino Avenue. Continuing on north from the corner entry to N. San Marino Avenue are six ground floor residential units, which terminate with a gym at the norther terminus of the site.

On the second floor, in the eastern portion of the building, are additional units that face a double-loaded corridor and a courtyard. The third and fourth floors are stacked and mirror each other with units facing all three street frontages. The second floor features a central open courtyard and patio that extend to the Colorado Boulevard frontage, connecting it to the public realm. The fourth floor features a catwalk near the south end that is a continuation of the double-loaded corridor to the exterior and overlooks the courtyard and open patio below. The upper floors feature projecting balconies, which face the streets and interior courtyard that are offset systematically so that no two balconies are directly on top of each other. This design approach is an added visual dimension and pattern on the facades. With exception to variations in the exterior treatment on the east portion, the building is generally symmetrical as depicted by the south elevation with the outdoor space bisecting the upper floors. As proposed, the building form is further supported by its fenestration pattern, angled parapet, and elevator overruns.

This proposal was submitted, and is being reviewed in tandem, with a companion project at 2011-2025 E. Colorado Boulevard which is located immediately east of the project site. While there are some differences, both projects reflect a similar design concept, scope, site planning, mass/scale, and materiality.

**Applicable Design Guidelines:**

- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan
- Design-Related Goals and Policies in the East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan
- Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts

**Previous/Existing Entitlements:**

- None

**Approvals Needed/Project Scheduling:**

- 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.
- 7.1: Design each building as a high-quality, long-term addition to the City's urban fabric; exterior design and buildings material shall exhibit permanence and quality, minimize maintenance concerns, and extend the life of the building.
- 7.2: Allow for the development of a diversity of buildings styles. Support innovative and creative design solutions to issues related to context and environmental sustainability.
- 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.
- 10.7: Encourage sustainable practices for landscape materials, landscape design, and land development.
- 23.3: Provide appropriate setbacks, consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, along the street frontage and, where there are setbacks, ensure adequate landscaping is provided.
- 25.4: Require that new development protect community character by providing architecture, landscaping, and urban design of equal or greater quality than existing and by respecting the architectural character and scale of adjacent buildings.

***East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan:***

Goal 1: A public realm, including sidewalks, paseos, plazas, and pocket parks, that are safe and accessible to the general public and contribute to the ECSP area’s overall identity and sense of place.

Policy: 1.c: Enhanced Storefronts. Promote enhanced storefronts that engage the public realm with street-oriented entrances, modulated facades, and pedestrian amenities in the public realm.

Policy 1.d: Colorado Boulevard. Strengthen Colorado Boulevard as the City’s preeminent corridor and historic “main street” through a high-quality public realm with consistent street trees, lighting, and setbacks, supported by well-designed facades and ground floors that bring activity and visual interest to the corridor.

Goal 5: Complementary building forms that fit the scale of the neighborhood and support a vibrant, walkable district.

Policy 5.a: Architectural Diversity. Allow for a range of architectural styles and forms that provide visual interest and quality design through massing and façade standards.

Policy 5.b: Scaled Transitions. Provide upper floor stepbacks where new development is adjacent to lower density residential districts.

Goal 6: Ample access to open space for both passive and active enjoyment.

Policy 6.b: Commercial Open Space. Require large nonresidential or mixed-use projects to provide open space for residents, employees, and visitors.

Policy 6.c: Quality Design. Introduce open space design standards meant to create usable and functional open space for residents, employees, and visitors alike.

Policy 6.d: Urban Greening. Use all open space areas to further environmental goals – such as carbon sequestration and reducing the urban heat island effect – through tree planting, stormwater capture, and native landscaping.

Goal 14: A commercial corridor supported by a mix of uses and housing opportunities connected by an enhanced public realm.

Policy 14.c: Pedestrian-Oriented Design. Balance the needs of auto-oriented uses with the desire for a walkable neighborhood character and enhanced pedestrian mobility by requiring pedestrian-oriented site design and features.

Policy 14.d: Lower-Scale Character. Maintain character to reflect existing form and strengthen neighborhood identity.

***Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts:***

- 2.2 Activating the street. New multi-family and mixed-use buildings should be designed with frontages that activate the street by providing direct access to their ground floor dwellings and commercial spaces.
- 5.1: Provide well-marked, articulated building entrances oriented to streets and public space.
- 7.1 Side and rear elevations. The rear and/or side elevations of new building that are visible from the public realm should be designed with equal care and quality as the front or principal façade.
- 11.1 All buildings should incorporate: A full array of architectural elements associated with their chosen style; the compositional, structural, and constructional logic associated with that style; and the material logic associated with that style.
- 11.2 The style of a new building should be clear and consistent, whether traditional or contemporary. Hybrid projects are discouraged.
- 11.4 Contemporary architecture. Buildings designed in contemporary styles may adhere to a set of rules that is established and followed through by the designer. The design strategy must be described in conformance with Appendix A3 (Preliminary Review).
- 13. The means and methods of construction of new buildings should contribute to their durability, usefulness, and compatibility.
- 14.1 Details. Window and door assemblies should be chosen that conform to the precedents of traditional styles or the intentions of contemporary design in terms of material, dimension, and detail.
- 14.3 Configurations. The orientation and proportion of openings should be consistent with the architectural language chosen for a project. Openings should relate to one another according to a clear system of composition and structure.
- 18 Landscape and hardscape. Landscape and hardscape should enhance the character of new buildings, address the Pasadena climate, and facilitate sustainable water use and drainage strategies.
- 18.1 Compatibility. Landscape and hardscape design should be compatible with the chosen architectural style of a building.

**Potential Design Issues:**

- Historic Resource Evaluations will be required for the proposed demolition of the existing single-family residences that are 45 years or older.
- The site plan and arrangement of the ground floor spaces should be further studied to facilitate the activation of the street, sidewalk and public realm. To that end, consider relocating the driveway along Berkeley Avenue further north to achieve an uninterrupted, continuous, safe and protected pedestrian realm along the sidewalk and improve traffic circulation. Extend the retail frontage to continue along Berkeley Avenue or introduce residential units on the ground floor similar to the units fronting N. San Marino Avenue. The residents' gym at the northern edge of the site along N. San Marino is oddly placed and appears disconnected as is the mechanical room next to the lobby. A gym is an active use that can help enliven the E. Colorado Blvd frontage and/or the corner. Consider relocating the mail, bicycle and MEP rooms further north of the site or integrate them into the parking garage.
- The surface ground floor parking garage occupies a substantial footprint and limits the full exploration of design potential for the site. Consistent with a project of this scale, consider locating the parking in an underground subterranean level. This alternative would permit alternative site planning and additional design flexibility throughout the site. For example, it would create an opportunity for a ground floor open space with public amenities, such as a central courtyard/landscape design that can open to and connect with the street similar to the third floor roof patio, in addition to engaging with the proposed ground-level residential units.
- Study how the proposal maintains a view corridor north to the San Gabriel Mountains from all outdoor spaces, especially common outdoor areas.
- Consider incorporating public open space on the ground floor as in a courtyard that is designed as an extension of the sidewalk and streetscape.
- The East Colorado Specific Plan encourages architectural diversity while also achieving sensitivity and design consistency with its context. To this end, this project should consider a different design than the accompanying project at 1999 E. Colorado Boulevard; both projects together occupy two city blocks on the same side of the street. Consider a design that sets the projects apart, but also communicates to each other.
- Ensure that the overall architectural concept is grounded in established design precedents. All components of the building, such as building volume, mass, scale, design features and treatments, and detailing should support a cohesive and quality design throughout the development and should be compatible with the existing and surrounding context. In general, study the overall composition of the building and consider how different features relate to each other into a collective whole and strengthens the design. Introduce greater variation in the facades at the ground and upper floors. Carefully consider how the ground floor transitions to the upper levels whether through design detail or material application, or both. Restudy the roofline,

including a roof parapet that creates variation while also assists in screening rooftop equipment.

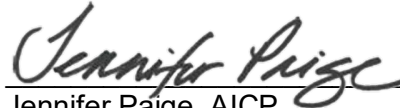
- The design treatment of the two corners where the streets intersect should be carefully considered as focal points of the building and/or points of entry. Both corners should be highlighted to become more prominent or architecturally differentiated, but welcoming and should continue to maintain design consistency with the rest of the building. All entrances should be articulated and orient toward the street or open spaces for a seamless transition between private and public realms.
- All courtyards and common open spaces should be of sufficient size to accommodate residents and visitors. Each outdoor space should be designed with a variety of landscape features and amenities and be programmed for active uses, relaxation and socialization. Some smaller, but usable spaces may be acceptable in conjunction with larger areas. These outdoor spaces should avoid being pass-through spaces.
- Carefully consider how materials are utilized and where they are applied to strengthen the building design and cohesion across all elevations. For example, corrugated metal is only used on the southeast corner. Consider eliminating this material from the design, as it has proven to be poor quality and incompatible with the City's existing fabric.
- Consider how the building's north elevation sensitively transitions to the lower scale residential buildings to the north of the project site.
- The ground floor should be carefully designed to achieve a pedestrian scale, create transparency into and out of the building and contribute to an activated street front.
- Further consider how the balcony recesses are treated whether through the use of color, texture, or material.
- Consider overall signage design and particularly the location of signs and how they can be incorporated into the building design.
- Murals should not be incorporated in lieu of meaningful and high quality design treatment of a wall or façade.
- Provide entry stoops directly from the sidewalk for the ground floor residential units along street frontages.

Design Commission  
Preliminary Consultation – 1987-1999 E. Colorado Blvd., 36 N. Berkeley Ave. and  
35-45 N. San Marino Ave.  
October 11, 2022  
Page 8 of 8

**Project Scheduling/Sequencing:**

- Concept and Final Design Review by the Design Commission
- Building Permits

Respectfully Submitted,



Jennifer Paige, AICP  
Acting Director of Planning & Community  
Development Department

Prepared by:



---

Rathar Duong  
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:



---

Kevin Johnson  
Principal Planner

**Attachments:**

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