



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

DATE: OCTOBER 11, 2022
TO: DESIGN COMMISSION
FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, ACTING DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION - CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW 3- AND 4-STORY, 92,228 SQUARE-FOOT, MIXED-USE BUILDING WITH 4,500 SQUARE FEET OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL SPACE, 77 RESIDENTIAL UNITS AND 77 SURFACE PARKING SPACES
2011-2055 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD, 36 NORTH SAN MARINO AVENUE AND 35 NORTH OAK AVENUE

Project Description:

The proposed project is the construction of a new 3- and 4-story, 92,228 square-foot, mixed-use building consisting of 4,500 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 77 residential dwelling units, including 77 at-grade parking spaces at 2025 E. Colorado Boulevard. The project site is located within the EC-MU-G (East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan, Mixed-Use Core) zoning district. The 62,951 square-foot project site is located on the north side of E. Colorado Boulevard, between N. San Marino and Oak Avenues (excluding a parcel at the immediate corner of E. Colorado Boulevard and Oak Avenue) and has frontage on all three streets. The site is currently developed with four buildings; a 14,418 square-foot sales building, a 922 square-foot storage building, a 7,417 square-foot service building for Rusnak Volvo Dealership and a 7,267 square-foot commercial building east of the service building. All existing improvements will be demolished. The project will consolidate five adjoining parcels into a single project site. There are no protected trees located on the project site.

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 zoned properties developed with one- to two-story 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 in the vicinity.

The proposed contemporary building has an O-shape footprint. The building wraps the site along two street frontages (E. Colorado Blvd. and N. San Marino Avenue) and a proposed dog park fronts the third street (Oak Avenue). The ground floor features two commercial spaces that extend along the majority of the E. Colorado Blvd street frontage. The amenities supporting the residential component of the project, such as the lobby, leasing office, gym, and mail and bicycle rooms are oriented toward San Marino Avenue. Along the rear (north) portion of the lot, eight ground floor residential units are proposed. The retail spaces, residential amenities, and

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residential units surround a surface parking lot within the center of the site. Access to the parking lot is from San Marino Avenue towards the rear of the lot. A similar opening is carved out on the ground floor along the E. Colorado Boulevard façade that connects the parking lot to a publicly accessible open space (patio) and sidewalk. This feature improves the streetscape and the pedestrian experience as intended by the East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan.

A five-foot setback is proposed from the street property lines with a greater setback of approximately 20 feet along the rear property line, adjoining the residential zone. The increased setback provides a sensitive buffer between the proposed project and the existing one- and two-story residential buildings. The larger rear setback also provides access to the ground floor residential units and the dog park.

The second, third and fourth floors contain stacked units facing double-loaded corridors that are arranged around an open courtyard and at the southeast corner, a patio deck is proposed at the second floor. While the central courtyard does not connect to E. Colorado Boulevard, the large patio deck visually connects to the street below. While the patio deck improves a sense of scale and a lower building height and therefore, improves the relationship to the pedestrian realm, an opening at the corner creates a visually odd design component that appears to lack connection to the rest of the building and its overall design concept. The upper floors feature projecting balconies facing 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. As proposed, the building form is further supported by its fenestration pattern, angled parapet, and elevator overruns.

The building incorporates some playful forms at the ground floor with angled wall planes on the retail façades. Its design concept is supported by a simple material palette consisting of plaster, limestone panels, corrugated metal panels, wood panels, and vinyl windows.

This proposal was submitted, and is being reviewed in tandem, with a companion project at 1999 E. Colorado Boulevard which is located immediately west 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:

- The East Colorado Specific Plan encourages architectural diversity while also achieving sensitivity and design consistency with its context. To this end, the 1999 or 2025 E. Colorado Boulevard project should consider a different design since both projects together occupy almost two city blocks on the same side of the street. Consider a design that sets the projects apart, but also communicates to each other.
- The site plan and arrangement of the ground floor spaces should be further studied to facilitate activation of the street, sidewalk and public realm. The ground floor patio should be carefully considered and designed as passive outdoor space that supports visitors to the buildings and pedestrians. Explore opportunities to enlarge the outdoor space by extending the patio further into the development so that it could also serve as outdoor spaces for the commercial tenants; for example, as outdoor dining. As it is currently designed, any expansion will be limited by the surface parking that is beyond the opening. For this reason, parking should be redesigned and/or placed underground as typically the case for a project of this scope.
- 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 more attractive and usable ground floor open space with public amenities.
- Study how the proposal maintains or achieves 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 or connected to the sidewalk and streetscape.
- 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 roof parapet that create variation while also assists in screening rooftop equipment.
- The design treatment of the two corners 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 remain welcoming and 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.

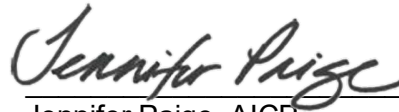
- A stepped back upper level, such as the patio deck at the southeast corner improves the pedestrian scale. However, the proposed feature and its treatment appears disconnected to the rest of the building and its general design concept. The placement of this patio and integration into the building as a whole should be re-addressed.
- 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 programmed for active uses, relaxation and socialization. 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 utilized in various locations along the front elevation and nowhere else on the elevations. 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 north elevation sensitively transitions to the lower scale residential buildings to the north of the project site.
- Restudy the solid-to-void ratio of the north elevation. All elevations should possess the same or similar design quality.
- 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.
- Restudy the ground floor of the east elevation and its solid-to-void ratio.
- Consider overall signage design and particularly the location of signs and how they can be incorporated into the building design. The location of the two signs that read "RETAIL 01" and "RETAIL 02" are too high and do not relate to a pedestrian scale and are not consistent with other signs along the same façade.

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Project Scheduling/Sequencing:

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

Respectfully Submitted,



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Attachments:

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