



Agenda Report

November 18, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF A VEHICLE SALES AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED AT 2915 E. COLORADO BOULEVARD

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is intended to provide information to the City Council, no action is required.

BACKGROUND:

The applicant, Rusnak Group, has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application proposing a 100,080 square-foot development consisting of a two-story vehicles sales and service building, accessory battery/parts storage building, and an automated car wash located at 2915 E. Colorado Boulevard. The 220,063 square-foot project site (approximately 5.05 acres) is located at the northeast corner of N Sunnyslope Avenue and Colorado Boulevard. The property is located in the EPSP-d1-IG (East Pasadena Specific Plan, subarea d1, General Industrial District) and ECSP-CG-6 (East Colorado Specific Plan, Chihuahuita subarea) zoning districts. The site is currently improved with multiple single-story industrial and commercial buildings and a large surface parking lot that will be demolished and replaced by the proposed project.

Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.60.040.C.2.a.(4) (Application Preparation and Filing – Predevelopment Plan Review – Applicability – Mandatory review) a PPR is required for projects involving new construction of more than 25,000 square feet of nonresidential gross floor area. The purpose of the PPR is to achieve better projects through early consultation between City staff and applicants. The intent is to coordinate the review of projects among City staff and City departments, familiarize applicants with the regulations and procedures that apply to the projects, and avoid significant investment in the design of a project without preliminary input from City staff. In addition, the purpose is to identify issues that may arise during review of the project, provide opportunities for discussion about the project and an exchange of information on potential issues between the City staff and the applicants, and inform the City Council and the public of proposed development projects defined in the administrative guidelines to be of communitywide significance.

A project is categorized as a project of communitywide significance if it consists of: 1) more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area with one discretionary action; or 2) 50 or more housing units; or 3) any project determined by the Planning Director to be of major importance to the City. Projects of communitywide significance are presented to the City Council for informational purposes. The proposed project consists of more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area with one discretionary action and qualifies as a project of communitywide significance.

This report provides a project description, identifies the anticipated entitlement and environmental review processes, and summarizes key areas of concern regarding Zoning Code and General Plan compliance.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The applicant proposes the demolition of single-story industrial and commercial buildings and construction of the following:

- 100,080 square feet of vehicle sales and service building, battery/parts storage building, and automated car wash

Figure 1: Aerial View



Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan

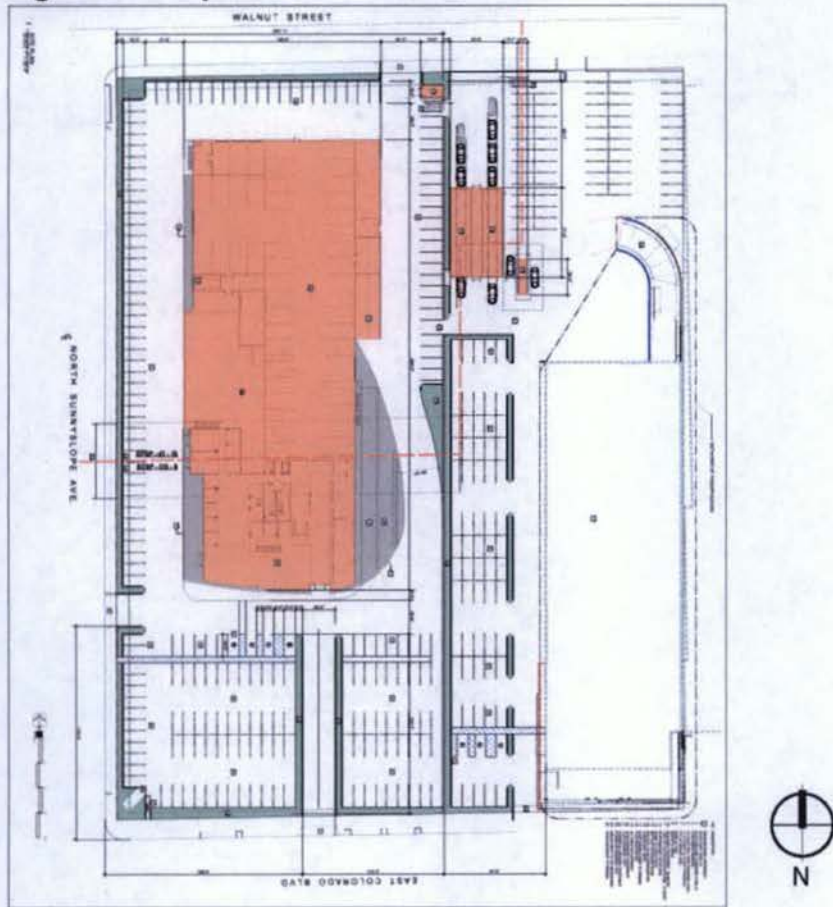
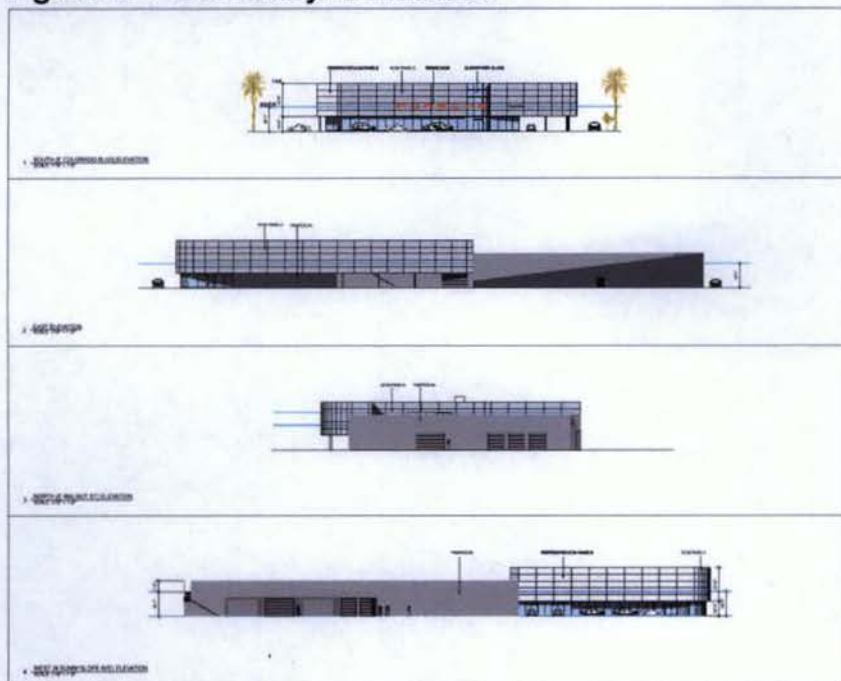


Figure 3: Preliminary Elevations



Challenges in the Auto Sales Industry

In the last 10-15 years, Pasadena has experienced the closure or relocation of many vehicle sales businesses from the City, including Ford, Chevrolet, Acura, Mercedes, Saab, Chrysler, and Jeep. Sales of new and used cars, as well as parts and service, are a large source of tax revenue for cities and counties, therefore the loss of auto dealerships has a large impact on a local jurisdiction's general fund.

In the last decade, the traditional automotive-retail model has been challenged by growing online auto sales companies, ride-sharing services, and changing consumer demands. Fewer new auto dealerships are opening and existing ones are under pressure to consolidate retail locations in order to maintain current levels of profitability. Attracting and retaining auto dealerships has therefore become highly competitive for cities. Pasadena's retail sales are a major source of revenue for the City's general fund and the establishment of a new auto dealership would provide additional funds for the City to maintain and improve services to residents.

PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS:

All applicable City departments reviewed the project as part of the PPR and provided comments that are included in Attachment A. Notable Planning-related standards/comments are discussed below.

General Plan Land Use Designation Consistency

The proposed project is within the newly established Lamanda Park Specific plan and includes areas that were previously within the East Colorado Specific Plan and the East Pasadena Specific Plan.

According to the General Plan Land Use Element, parcels designated as Low Mixed-Use are intended to support the development of properties and buildings with a mix of compatible uses, including work/live units or ground floor retail and restaurant uses with office and/or residential uses above. Mixed-use buildings may be horizontally- or vertically-oriented. The proposed project is consistent with the intended land uses identified for Low Mixed-Use.

Parcels designated as R&D Flex Space are intended for a wide range of industrial uses such as light manufacturing, research and development, creative office and incubator industries, and limited ancillary commercial and office uses. The proposed project is not consistent with the intended land uses identified for R&D Flex Space and a General Plan Land Use Diagram amendment will be required.

Context and Compatibility

Preliminary project renderings show that the proposed main building will be mainly glass and metal siding with a black and grey color scheme. The project proposes a two-story

sales and service building with a maximum height of over 32' 6". The surrounding area consists primarily of one-to-two story commercial buildings to the south; a mix of one-to-three story commercial and industrial buildings to the west; two-to-three story industrial/warehouse buildings to the north; and two-story commercial and industrial building to the east. The proposed building appears to be of a contemporary modern design. A contemporary modern-style approach may be compatible since the surrounding context is composed of a mix of building types and architectural styles.

Policy 23.3 – Landscaped Setbacks and Walkways: Provide appropriate setbacks, consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, along the street frontage and, where there are setbacks, ensure adequate landscaping is provided.

Policy 23.5 – Streetscapes: Provide ample public spaces and tree-lined sidewalks furnished with pedestrian amenities that contribute to comfortable and attractive settings for pedestrian activity.

Policy 32.1 – Places and Urban Form. Provide for the evolution of strip corridor uses along Colorado Boulevard by clustering development into distinct pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use centers serving as places for people to live, shop, dine, and congregate with their friends, while maintaining intervening areas for less intensive commercial uses.

Policy 33.7 – Public Streetscapes and Places. Redevelop street frontages with streetscape amenities (such as trees, plantings, furniture, and wayfinding signs) that enhance connectivity and walkability. Develop new public places providing opportunities for residents to gather, such as parklets and plazas.

Community Planning staff cited relevant policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and encouraged the applicant to improve the sidewalk environment.

The General Plan Land Use Element also includes specific policies that support more walkable and pedestrian-oriented urban forms within the proposed project area. These policies indicate that new development provide appropriate building setbacks, streetscape improvements, and landscaping to encourage a more comfortable and attractive setting for pedestrian activity. The proposed sales and service building fronting Colorado Boulevard is proposed to be set back from the sidewalk to accommodate at least three rows of surface parking or vehicle inventory display. Submitted site plans show a front setback of approximately 170 feet.

Development Capacities

The proposed project is within the new Lamanda Park Specific Plan area. The 2015 General Plan established caps for residential and nonresidential development in each of the specific plan areas. The original allocated development capacities for the Lamanda Park Specific Plan included 630,000 square feet of nonresidential development. As of August 2019, the balance in allocated non-residential development capacity is 626,344

square feet. The project proposes 100,080 square feet of nonresidential floor area, which is within the remaining development capacity.

Historic Resources

The building at 2914 East Walnut Street is documented as being eligible for special consideration in the location planning process in the East Pasadena Specific Plan Historic Architectural Resources Inventory survey prepared in 1994. The thresholds of eligibility for historic resources have changed since the preparation of this report. As a result, the subject building needs to be re-evaluated to determine if it is an eligible historic resource. If the property is deemed an eligible historic resource, preparation of an Initial Environmental Study (IES) will be required to determine if the demolition of the resource is a significant environmental impact. If the IES determines that the demolition is a significant environmental impact, an Environmental Impact Report may be required to be prepared as part of the entitlement process for this project. Applicants proposing demolition of an eligible historic resource are advised to meet with staff to discuss appropriate alternatives such as relocation or incorporation into the proposed new project.

Discretionary Entitlements

General Plan Land Use Diagram Amendment

An amendment to the Land Use Diagram of the General Plan Land Use Element would be required for parcels designated as R&D Flex Space in order to facilitate the proposed project. The R&D Flex Space land use designation, intended for a wide range of industrial uses such as light manufacturing, research and development, creative office and incubator industries, with limited ancillary commercial and office uses, would not permit the proposed vehicle sales and service use. Therefore, an amendment to the Land Use Diagram would be needed.

Land Use Diagram amendments may be initiated by a property owner, subject to the appropriate environmental review (i.e. CEQA), with a recommendation by the Planning Commission to the City Council, who is the decision maker for such amendments.

Conditional Use Permit(s)

The project as proposed will require two Conditional Use Permits. A Conditional Use Permit is required for the proposed vehicle service land use located within the ECSP-CG-6 zoning district pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.31.040.A (ECSP District Land Uses and Permit Requirements – Allowable land uses and permit requirements). Projects where nonresidential development exceeds 25,000 gross square feet (> 25,000), qualify as “Major Construction” pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.61.050.J.2 (Conditional Use Permits and Master Plans – Specialized Conditional Use Permits and Minor Conditional Use Permits – Major Construction) and require approval of another Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The proposal includes 100,080

square feet of nonresidential floor area. The CUP application is reviewed by the Planning Commission when the nonresidential floor area exceeds 75,000 square feet.

Tentative Tract Map

A Tentative Tract Map (TTM) would be required to facilitate the Nina Street vacation as proposed. The TTM will be proposed with the CUP application.

Variance

A Variance would be required for the front and corner setbacks of the proposed project which do not comply with current front and corner setback requirements.

Planned Development (PD)

As an alternative to the Variances, the proposed project may pursue an entitlement of a Planned Development (PD). Setbacks for a PD are prescribed by the PD Plan. The Planning Commission must review the application for reclassification to a PD zoning district and, at the same time, consider the proposed PD plan accompanying the application. The Commission will make a written recommendation to the Council. Upon receipt of the Commission's recommendation, the Council shall, approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the proposed amendment.

Preliminary Consultation-Design Review

This project must be reviewed by the Design Commission through the Preliminary Consultation process for preliminary advisory comments. Preliminary Consultation is intended to allow architects to obtain input on their design concept prior to investing in detailed design drawings that would be difficult to modify.

Concept & Final-Design Review

This project must also be reviewed by the Design Commission through the Concept and Final Design Review process. Concept design review addresses basic project design, including massing, modulation, siting, proportions, solid-to-void relationships, compatibility with surroundings, and compliance with design guidelines. Final Design Review focuses on compliance with the conditions of approval (if any) of Concept Design Review and on construction details, paint colors, finishes, doors and windows, landscaping, exterior lighting, location/screening of mechanical equipment, etc.

Environmental Review

This project will be subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A traffic study will be required by the Department of Transportation. Additional environmental studies may also be required to determine what type of CEQA analysis is required for the project.

NEXT STEPS:

Public hearings before the Planning Commission and Design Commission are necessary in order to carry out the proposed project. Environmental review of this project will occur consistent with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The following identifies the steps in the review process:

- Environmental Review;
- Public hearing review (Planning Commission and City Council) of General Plan Land Use Diagram Amendment, entitlements (CUP, Variances, PD, TTM, etc.), consider Nina Street vacation, and adoption of the environmental review;
- Design Commission review (Concept and Final).

FISCAL IMPACT:

This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments: (3)

Attachment A – Predevelopment Plan Review Comments to Applicant
Attachment B – Predevelopment Plan Review Plans
Attachment C – Project Characteristics