

**PLAYHOUSE**  
**DISTRICT**  
**ASSOCIATION**

*Culture, Commerce and Community in the Heart of Pasadena*

July 10, 2018

City of Pasadena  
Design Commission and Staff  
175 N. Garfield Ave.  
Pasadena, CA 91101

Dear Design Commissioners:

The Playhouse District Association (PDA) Board of Directors wishes to express the following comments regarding City staff's recommendation to approve a Consolidated Design Review for the 550 E. Colorado development:

- 1. The deadline to obtain or ask for an extension for a Consolidated Design Review has passed.** According to the staff report, **the window to file for Consolidated Design Review to follow the Final Design Review in 2015 expired on April 27, 2018.** The code is clear in providing schedules and time limits for approvals – such expectations provide assurances that the process is transparent and in the public's interest. With no advance knowledge by the PDA or nearby stakeholders, motivations behind this seemingly arbitrary recommendation are questionable, and establish bad precedent for process and public trust.
- 2. The project's design continues to ignore the adopted Playhouse District Streetscapes, Walkways and Alleys Plan, adopted by City Council on April 15, 1996.** With clear recommendations to add to the Playhouse District's network of alleys and paseos, the streetscapes plan calls for a ground-level courtyard and connection from Converse Alley to Colorado Boulevard at this location – please see the attached diagram from the plan. Neither of these features is incorporated into the design as approved by staff and the Design Commission. Please consider options to improve the project's design by requiring both features as part of the Consolidated Design Review.
- 3. Ongoing planning efforts including the PDA's Vision Framework and the Central District Specific Plan process offer opportunities for a holistic approach to the site.** Building on the foundation of the streetscapes plan, the PDA has adopted a Vision Framework to guide the district's continued evolution and enhancement. This development site and Converse Alley, along with Playhouse Alley, are noted as key catalytic features in enhancing and distinguishing the Playhouse District experience – design concepts are currently being developed. In addition, the Central District Specific Plan process now underway has the opportunity to re-envision this portion of the Playhouse District given economic and development trends. Opportunity exists now to incorporate new, advanced placemaking and urban planning principles for such a pivotal and visible corner in the Central District.

Thank you for your consideration of the PDA's comments on this important development in the Playhouse District.

Sincerely,



Brian Wallace  
Executive Director



Bernard Chua  
Chair, Board of Directors

07/23/2018  
Item 18

## 4.3 Pathway and Courtyards Network

The Pathways and Courtyards Network complements the Streetscapes Grid by providing:

- pedestrian edges between and circulation from existing surface parking areas- some of which may become structured parking and/or retail or other active uses in the future
- connections from the existing and future parking and activity areas to the Streetscapes Grid thus making the entire Playhouse District readily and pleasantly accessible
- smaller, more intimate and contained spaces that create the "quiet but sophisticated setting" defined in the Vision statement- ideal settings for outdoor dining areas or smaller-scale retail uses

Thus the Playhouse District can be defined by a unique Network comprised of the interrelated Streetscapes Grid and Pathways and Courtyards Network.

By designing and constructing the improvements to the Grid and the creation of the Pathways and Courtyards in consort, the District can achieve a unique, pedestrian, romantic, sophisticated setting while properly addressing related functional issues of maintenance, security and loading. Privately developed off-street courtyards can complement the public streetscapes grid.

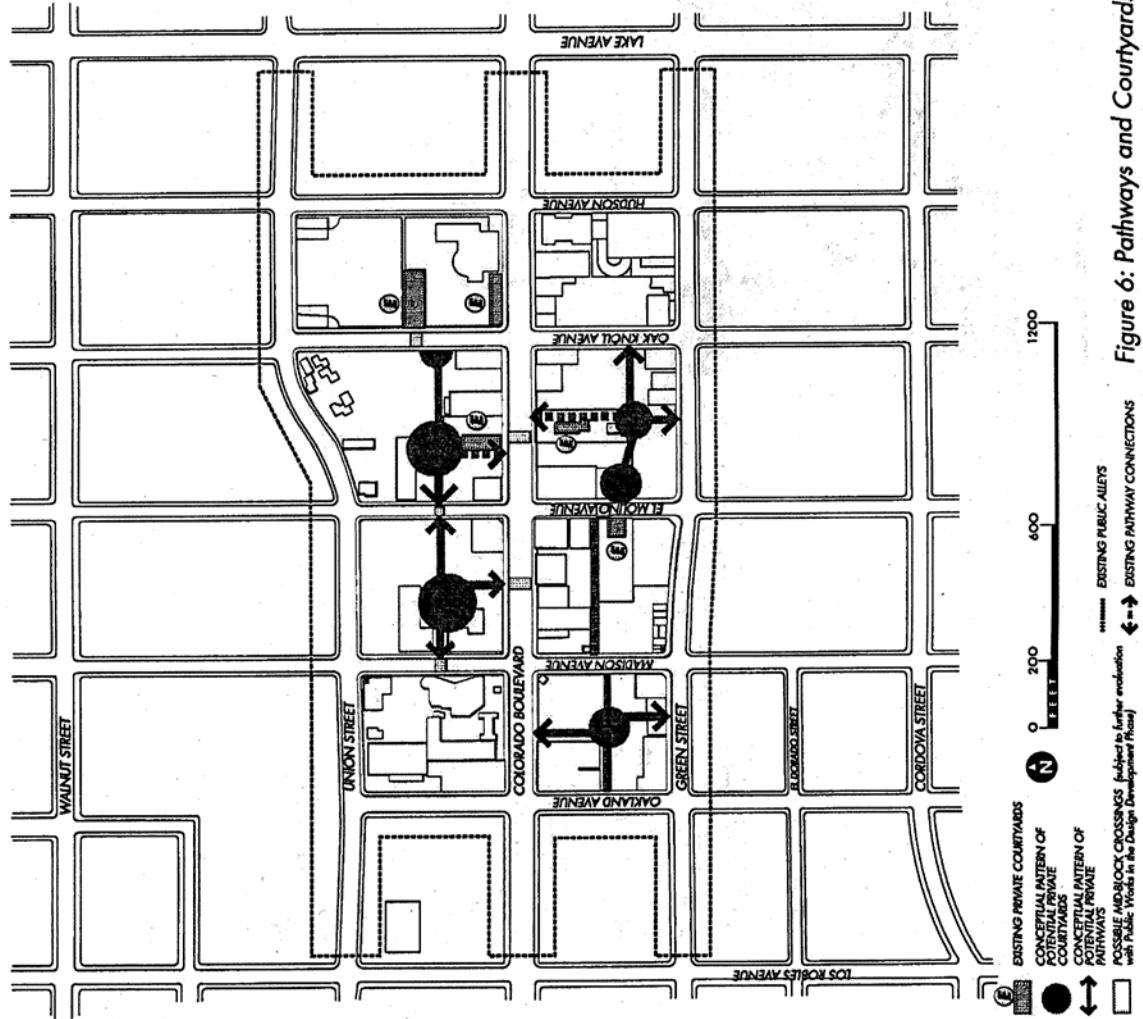


Figure 6: Pathways and Courtyards Concept