

# **Attachment E**

Design Commission Staff Report  
(w/o attachments), dated Sept. 12, 2017



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

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

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

**SUBJECT:** REVIEW OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN FOR PD-35 (COLORADO-HILL PLANNED DEVELOPMENT)  
1336-1348 AND 1347-1365 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission advise the Planning Commission as follows:

1. Find that the building located at 1336 East Colorado Blvd (south parcel) illustrated in Attachment B of the PD-35 (Colorado Hill Planned Development), exhibits an architectural design that is of "high quality" and is "contextual" to the surrounding neighborhood.
2. A sub-committee of the Design Commission should be convened to review the thoroughness of the construction documents (CD's) & specifications prior to each phase of the design review process and plan check submittal.
3. The developer should be required to provide a large-scale mock-up panel of exterior materials during construction for review and approval by the subcommittee of the Design Commission prior to installation of materials on the building.
4. A qualified Executive Architect (subject to City review and approval) with hospitality experience should be engaged by the applicant to oversee the CD production and construction processes to ensure implementation of high-quality design and materials and, during construction, consistency with the approved building plans.
5. A design- build CD process should be un-acceptable for projects over 10,000 sf.
6. The number of Design & Historic Preservation inspections during construction should be increased to deter field changes, conditionally releasing each floor.
7. Specifications should be written for appropriate, quality materials to lessen the ability to reduce the quality of the finish materials approved by the Design Commission. The subcommittee of the Design Commission should have enough access to the construction process, to make sure that these are followed through.

8. Value engineering that would reduce the quality of materials specifications should not be allowed for this project after design review approval is granted.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### Advisory review

On March 22, 2016, the Design Commission conducted an advisory review to advise the Planning Commission on architectural design for the (then proposed) PD-35 Colorado-Hill Planned Development. The Planned Development (PD) was approved and the related Environmental Impact Report certified on September 12, 2016. The PD site consists of the properties generally located at 1347-1365 East Colorado Boulevard (north parcel) and 1336-1348 East Colorado Boulevard (south parcel). The north parcel would developed with a full-service hotel and the south parcel would be developed with a smaller, boutique hotel.

The General Plan Land Use Designation for the entire site (inclusive of both the north and south parcels) is Medium Mixed-Use (maximum 2.25 floor-to-area ratio (FAR)). However, Policy 4.13 of the General Plan Land Use Element allows a new PD to have a FAR as high as 3.0, provided it could be demonstrated that the architectural design of the PD is contextual and of a high-quality.

At the March 22, 2016 Design Commission meeting, staff's presentation identified the qualities of architectural excellence (listed later in this report) and the Commission generally concurred. The Commission determined that the northern building exhibited these qualities. However, the elevations of the building located on the south parcel had not been developed enough and lacked the visual detail to make a determination regarding architectural excellence.

The applicant has submitted revised drawings of the building on the south parcel and has proposed to revise the PD to allow a hotel on the south parcel that exceeds that maximum allowed 2.25 FAR. The drawings exhibit more design detail than previously provided for the south parcel and the applicant is requesting that the Design Commission advise the Planning Commission as to whether the building on the south parcel exhibits the same qualities of architectural excellence as exhibited on the north building, in order to assist the Planning Commission in its consideration of whether the request for increased FAR is warranted.

### Role of the Design Commission

A PD that intends to take advantage of an increase in the FAR or residential density allowed by Policy 4.13, as noted above, must first be reviewed by the Design Commission, which shall advise the Planning Commission and City Council as to whether the architectural design of the proposed PD is contextual and of a high-quality. This advisement does not replace the Design Review process that would occur upon approval of the project by the City Council. Rather, because exceptional design is the qualifying factor for an increase in FAR or residential density, the Planning Commission and City Council will consider the expertise and advice of the Design Commission as to whether the design of the proposed PD is, "high-quality, contextual, architectural design", deserving of the requested FAR increase. The advice of the Design Commission on the architectural quality of the project will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council when considering the PD and associated plan



## **ANALYSIS:**

At the March 22, 2016 Design Commission staff identified the following characteristics that demonstrate high architectural quality:

- Relates to the site and to its neighbors in terms of setbacks, height, massing, scale, frontage, materiality, open space, landscape, solar orientation, and topography;
- Building elevations are well articulated to provide visual interest along the street;
- Incorporates materials and finishes that express the permanence of the building and reinforce the design concept;
- If a project is located adjacent to a designated or eligible resource, measures have been employed to ensure the proposed buildings respond to or enhance the historic resource;
- Facilitates the movement and activity of pedestrians along major thoroughfares;
- Facilitates the introduction of ground-floor retail and/or restaurant uses to enhance visitor or pedestrian experience; and
- Project thoroughly engages the surrounding commercial and residential districts.

From an architectural perspective, the surrounding context is highly mixed and consists of small-scale commercial and auto-oriented uses as well as larger-scaled buildings on the campus of Pasadena City College (PCC), several churches and a four-story hotel. Photographs of some of these buildings, as well as of the project site, are included in the package of drawings submitted by the applicant. The proposed buildings on the north parcel are designed to maintain a compatible height and mass along the perimeter of the site and to avoid overwhelming on- and off-site historic resources, while rising to a seven-story height within the center of the site. The exterior elevation articulation results in a building that appears to exhibit visual interest and activity. The Design Commission previously determined on March 22, 2016 that the building on the north parcel exhibits the above qualities of architectural excellence and the design of this building has not changed since that time.

The building on the southern site is smaller in scale than on the north site and also employs massing strategies that break down the overall mass of the building to relate to smaller-scaled adjacent buildings. As such, the project is designed to be responsive to its context by organizing transitional building volumes to avoid adversely affecting surrounding smaller-scale buildings. The proposed design is also architecturally consistent with nearby historic resources as well as the monumental quality of the main PCC buildings along Colorado Boulevard. The project has a strong street presence that will encourage pedestrian activity. Overall, staff finds the building to be responsive to its context and, from a massing and architectural perspective, to be a high quality design. The quality of final exterior building materials will be a consideration by the Design Commission during Final Design Review. To ensure a high quality design is implemented through the design review, plan check and construction process, staff recommends that the Design Commission provide the Planning Commission with a series of recommended PD conditions that would establish a more rigorous set of review requirements for this project and require a City-approved Executive Architect to oversee the project. This will ensure that the additional FAR that may be granted to this project results in a superior, high-quality design that is carried through to the final construction.

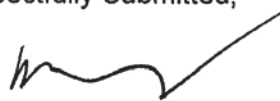
The applicant has submitted a design narrative (Attachment A) which explains in more detail how the building on the south parcel exhibits qualities of design excellence. The narrative further enhances the "qualities of excellence" listed above and staff concurs with the applicant's comments.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Colorado-Hill PD application requests to develop the north and south parcels with a project that would exceed the maximum FAR established by the Medium Mixed-Use land use designation prescribed by the General Plan. The FAR of a PD is not allowed to exceed the maximum permitted unless approved by the City Council. The City Council can approve an FAR up to 3.0 only when it can be demonstrated that the architectural design of the PD is contextual and of a high-quality.

The Design Commission has been identified as the appropriate body to advise the Planning Commission and City Council as to whether the architectural design of the proposed PD justifies the increase in FAR. Based on the information provided by the applicant at this stage, staff believes the buildings are responsive to their context and of a high quality design. The quality of the final exterior building materials will be reviewed and affirmed by the Design Commission during the Final Design Review and the comments that staff recommends be forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration will ensure that the project design and material quality is highly scrutinized and implemented in both the design and construction processes

Respectfully Submitted,



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Development Department

Prepared by:



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Attachment A: Applicant Narrative  
Attachment B: Proposed plans