



Agenda Report

February 28, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: EAST COLORADO SPECIFIC PLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Adopt the Addendum to the 2015 Pasadena General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) along with the EIR, and find that the Addendum properly discloses only minor technical changes or additions to the EIR, and none of the conditions triggering a subsequent or supplemental EIR are present, as set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15164;
2. Make the Findings for Approval for the General Plan Map Amendment, Specific Plan Amendment, and Zoning Code Map and Text Amendments;
3. Adopt a resolution approving the General Plan Map Amendment;
4. Adopt a resolution approving the recommended East Colorado Specific Plan; and
5. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance for the Zoning Code and Text Amendments within 90 days consistent with the provisions set forth herein.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On September 22, 2021, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the City Council approve the proposed East Colorado Specific Plan (ECSP), with the following recommended changes:

- Reduce minimum parking requirements in the College District and Gateway Subareas to 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet for certain uses, consistent with the updated Lincoln Avenue Specific Plan parking requirements;
- Revise street frontage land use requirements to allow residential uses along Green Street to maintain uniformity along the corridor;
- Revise the land use table to allow drive-through uses in the Eastern Corridor Subarea with a conditional use permit and other limitations on the number and location of such uses;

- Revise the street setback requirement on Colorado Boulevard between Parkwood and Grand Oaks to 0-3' for 75% of the frontage; and
- Revise terminology in Policy 13.b. from "public open space" to "publicly accessible open space."

Staff refined the proposed ECSP that was presented to the Planning Commission to reflect feedback received. Refer to Attachment A for the recommended ECSP. The 2003 ECSP is also included as Attachment B.

STAFF RECOMMENDED EAST COLORADO SPECIFIC PLAN

The specific plan area encompasses the 1.4-mile section of Colorado Boulevard between Wilson Avenue on the west and Roosevelt Avenue on the east. The plan area also includes Green Street between Wilson and Holliston Avenue, and Allen Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and Corson Street, connecting the educational and commercial uses on Colorado Boulevard to the Metro L (Gold) Line and residential neighborhoods north of the I-210 freeway. Upon adoption of the Recommended ECSP, the following changes would be made to the plan area boundary (Shown in Map 1):

- Parcels fronting on E. Colorado Boulevard between N. Wilson Avenue and S. Catalina Avenue will be removed from the plan area and incorporated into the Central District Specic Plan;
- Parcels fronting on E. Green Street between N. Wilson Avenue and mid-block between S. Holliston Avenue and S. Hill Avenue will be added to the plan area;
- Parcels east of S. Roosevelt Avenue will be removed from the plan area and incorporated into the Lamanda Park or East Pasadena Specific Plans;
- Parcel located between Jones Alley and S. Roosevelt Avenue that currently contains a surface parking lot will be added to the plan area; and
- Northernmost parcel on the east side of N. Craig Avenue within the existing ECSP boundary that is currently developed with a multi-family residential building will be removed from the plan area.

Map 1. East Colorado Specific Plan Area



Recommended Regulations and Standards

A summary of the regulations and standards that implement the plan vision is discussed below. For a comparison of the current and the recommended standards, refer to Attachment D.

Land Uses, Density, and Intensity

In general, the distribution of land uses is similar to the current plan, with a few land use changes proposed in the recommended ECSP consistent with the General Plan, including:

- Introduction of new housing opportunities within the Eastern Corridor subarea at residential densities consistent with the General Plan to complement existing uses and the relatively lower scale character;
- Focus new housing opportunities within the Mid-City, College District, Gateway, and Allen Transit subareas at residential densities that are in some cases greater than the current plan but consistent with the density ranges established by the General Plan;
- Allow new drive-through establishments in the Eastern Corridor subarea between Parkwood and Grand Oaks, subject to a Conditional Use Permit and the existing distant separation requirements for drive-through establishments;
- Prohibit new drive-through establishments throughout the remainder of the plan area, but allow expansions with the requirement to obtain a Minor Conditional Use Permit. Expansion of existing drive-throughs would be subject to potential conditions (i.e., addressing queueing and drive-through lane placement, reduction in parking in exchange for outdoor dining and landscaping, and lighting and noise mitigation measures where located adjacent to residential uses);
- Support restaurants with walk-up windows across the plan area by changing the permit requirement from Conditional Use Permit to a by-right use to encourage pedestrian-accessible restaurant options; and
- Creation of an Innovation District through the introduction of R&D non-offices throughout Mid-City subarea.

For a complete list of allowed uses and permit requirements refer to Chapter 4 of the recommended ECSP (Attachment A).

The recommended ECSP proposes the following density and intensity standards:

- Mid City – Increase density from 32 to 64 du/ac on Green Street slightly west of Chester Avenue and allow residential uses where not allowed today with a maximum density of 64 du/ac east of Chester Avenue, increase density from 48 to 87 du/ac on Colorado Boulevard, and establish a maximum FAR of 2.25 where no FAR limit is currently in place for the subarea;
- College District – Maintain existing density at 48 du/ac and establish a maximum FAR of 2.0 where no FAR limit is currently in place;

- Gateway – Increase density from 48 to 64 du/ac west of Allen Avenue and allow residential uses where not allowed today with a maximum density of 64 du/ac east of Allen Avenue, and establish a maximum FAR of 2.0 where no FAR limit is currently in place;
- Allen Transit – Increase density from 60 to 64 du/ac and establish a maximum FAR of 2.0 where no FAR limit is currently in place; and
- Eastern Corridor – Allow residential uses where not allowed today with a maximum density of 32 du/ac on parcels located between Parkwood to Grand Oaks, and up to 64 du/ac on parcels located between Grand Oaks and Roosevelt, and establish a maximum FAR of 1.0 between Parkwood and Grand Oaks, and 2.0 from Grand Oaks to Roosevelt, where no FAR limit is currently in place.

Building heights (Chapter 6 or the Recommended ECSP)

The recommended ECSP supports mixed-use development, including new housing opportunities throughout most of the plan area. To encourage new development, the following building height limits are proposed:

- Mid-City – 63 feet compared to current 60 feet height limit on Colorado Boulevard, and 51 feet compared to current 36 feet on Green Street west of Chester Avenue and from 45 feet east of Chester Avenue (4 to 5 stories);
- College District – 48 feet compared to current 45 feet height limit (4 stories);
- Gateway – 51 feet compared to current 45 feet height limit (4 stories);
- Allen Transit – 51 feet compared to current maximum of 45 feet with up to 60 feet when located within a quarter mile of a transit station platform (4 stories); and
- Eastern Corridor – 39 feet west of Grand Oaks and 51 feet east of Grand Oaks compared to current height limit of 45 feet (4 stories).

Most of the changes are modest and reflect current building practices of taller floor to ceiling heights while maintaining traditional storefront character on the ground floors. The plan includes additional standards related to height, such as upper story stepbacks and varied roof lines to address concerns expressed by some community members related to height and the urban form.

Public realm and frontages (Chapters 5 and 6 or the Recommended ECSP)

The recommended ECSP includes public realm standards and guidelines to implement the General Plan vision for the plan area and achieve objectives of the Pasadena Street Design Guide and Pasadena Master Street Tree Plan. The plan introduces the concept of minimum sidewalk widths, consistent with the Pasadena Street Design Guide. Existing sidewalk widths range between 12-15 feet along Colorado Boulevard; 15-16 feet along Allen Avenue; and 8-11 feet along Green Street. To support pedestrian mobility and amenities within the sidewalk that is appropriate and relative to adjacent uses, the plan establishes the following minimum sidewalk widths:

- Allen Avenue – 16 feet (between Walnut Avenue and Corson Street) and 15 feet (between Walnut Avenue and Colorado Boulevard);
- Colorado Boulevard – 15 feet;
- Green Street – 12 feet; and
- Wilson Avenue, Michigan Avenue, Chester Avenue, and Holliston Avenue – 12 feet (between Colorado Boulevard and Green Street).

To expand the public realm and enhance the walkability of the plan area the recommended ECSP establishes the following building setback requirements:

- Eastern Corridor – range of 3 to 8 feet;
- Mid-City (Green Street) – range of 3 to 8 feet;
- Mid-City (Wilson and Holliston Avenue) – range of 5 to 10 feet; and
- Mid-City (Michigan and Chester Avenue) – minimum of 10 feet.

This is an increase from the current building setback requirement of 5 feet throughout most of the plan area. It also reflects community feedback for additional space for landscaping and outdoor amenities that contribute to a pleasant and comfortable pedestrian experience.

Another notable change is the introduction of wider sidewalks and street setbacks in the Mid-City subarea along Michigan and Chester Avenue, between Green Street and Colorado Boulevard. When combining the 12 foot minimum sidewalk width with a 10 foot minimum setback, a 22 foot area is created that will accommodate not only a parkway tree canopy, but space for additional trees or landscaping along the setback area. Together, lining each side of the sidewalk with significant landscaping features creates a sense of place and a strong pedestrian connection between Green Street and Colorado Boulevard.

Finally, additional standards have been added to address the design of building frontages at the street level. For example, at least one entrance is required on the primary frontage of each building. Updated transparency requirements increase the amount of glass facing the sidewalk and clarify that it must be located at pedestrian eye level. Shading and pedestrian-scale lighting and signage requirements have also been incorporated. These changes will create engaging storefronts which invite pedestrians inside and improve walkability.

Rear Stepbacks (Chapter 6 or the Recommended ECSP)

The plan also includes slight changes to the current rear stepback requirements, specifically changing the angle of the encroachment plane angle from 30-degrees to 45-degrees to minimize the massing and scale of the upper floors of new development adjacent to multi-family residential neighborhoods and to follow what is in-line with citywide standards for nonresidential buildings next to residential districts.

Modulation (Chapter 6 or the Recommended ECSP)

The plan would include modulation standards that are intended to reduce the scale and “blockiness” of new construction. The standards are written to be general enough as to not mandate a particular building style and have been designed to work together with height, setback, stepback, and open space standards to encourage high-quality design and appropriately scaled building forms. The maximum façade length standard will prevent monolithic block-sized buildings from interrupting the rhythm of smaller-scale neighborhoods. To address feedback from the Design Commission and the public, the plan includes a new provision that would allow modulation standards to be modified through the Design Review process.

Open Space and Paseos (Chapter 6 or the Recommended ECSP)

The plan would increase open space requirements for both residential and nonresidential projects. For residential uses, the plan would update the combined private and common open space requirement from 150 square feet per unit to a per bedroom requirement ranging from 200 to 275 square feet per bedroom, in alignment with recent building practices. For example, a 24-unit building with an even mix of studios, one, two, and three bedroom units, this requirement would increase the required open space from a total of 3,600 square feet to 5,700 square feet, or about 238 square feet per unit. The updated requirement better aligns the amount of open space with the number of people living in a building with the objective of improving quality of life and open space access for residents. Higher open space requirements would also create building modulation opportunities through balconies, terraces, patios, and courtyards. The recommended ECSP also includes new common open space design requirements related to indoor/outdoor space, location, hardscape, landscaping, and trees to encourage the design of successful, usable open spaces.

The recommended ECSP also introduces open space requirements to ensure that new development creates a sense of place for the area. For example, nonresidential projects over 40,000 square feet of floor area will be required to provide a minimum of 5% of the gross non-residential floor area as common open space for building tenants. However, Research and Development (Office and Non-Office) uses are eligible for up to a 50% reduction in this requirement, subject to review and approval of the Design Commission. This provision was included in recognition of the unique use of space often required for R&D that is different from traditional commercial and office spaces. Another example is projects over 80,000 square feet would be required to provide between 2-5% of the building floor area as publicly accessible open space, depending on the project size. Projects within Mid-City would be required to configure its open space as a paseo.

Parking (Chapter 6 or the Recommended ECSP)

The recommended ECSP intends to reduce the visual impact of parking, regulate appropriate parking supply, encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings through new and updated parking requirements. Currently, parking minimums severely limit the

allowed uses of older buildings where parking cannot physically be accommodated on site, and restaurants must use approximately 75% of their land area for parking lots. Parking requirements for commercial uses were refined and are set at 2 per 1,000 square feet in the College District, Allen Transit, and Gateway Subareas in order to encourage more pedestrian friendly commercial uses, such as restaurants and cafes. It also includes exemptions for commercial spaces under 5,000 square feet, uses within designated historic structures, buildings built before 1970, and outdoor dining. New parking would also not be required for changes in use in the College District. Feedback received from the community indicated support for lowering parking requirements as a way to retain existing businesses. Recalibrating parking requirements was also supported by the Planning Commission. For residential uses, the plan seeks to reduce the cost of housing by unbundling parking from the unit itself; any unused parking could then be leased to other tenants. Standards relating to driveways, parking lots and parking structures are also included in the plan.

CONCLUSION:

The recommended ECSP would replace the current 2003 specific plan, refining the plan boundaries, vision, goals, policies, regulations, standards, guidelines, and implementation actions for this specific area. As recommended, the ECSP will establish the vision of a community for shopping, dining, learning, and living within a vibrant and well-connected mixed-use district that provides multi-family housing and neighborhood businesses accessible to transit. The recommended ECSP reflects community and commission feedback and the desire to build upon existing conditions, supporting new development that is contextually appropriate and enhances the area. It also stimulates economic development and balances housing and employment opportunities in the area, promoting sustainable neighborhoods.

On September 22, 2021, the Planning Commission moved unanimously to recommend approval of the ECSP as proposed by staff, with changes as previously outlined. Staff has incorporated many of the Commission's recommendations into the recommended ECSP and related documents for consideration by the City Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

An Initial Study and EIR was prepared for the Pasadena General Plan in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and certified by the City Council on August 17, 2015. An addendum to the EIR has been prepared analyzing the update to the ECSP in compliance with Section 15164 (Addendum to an EIR or Negative Declaration) of the CEQA guidelines (Title 14, Chapter 3, Article 11). The addendum found that the project revisions will not result in any potentially significant impacts that were not already analyzed in the EIR. Refer to Attachment E for the Addendum to the General Plan EIR. For information on the 2015 General Environmental Impact Report refer to Attachment F.

FISCAL IMPACT:

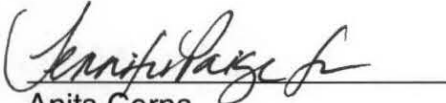
There is no direct fiscal impact to the City by adopting the recommended ECSP. Costs related to some implementation actions such as the Complete Streets Improvement Program, are expected to be partially or fully offset by local, state, and/or federal grant funding as available. Many of the ECSP policies are designed to encourage the retention of existing local businesses and spur additional development within the Plan area, which may serve as a catalyst for increased economic activity. Indirectly, these outcomes may result in increased revenue to the City's General Fund helping to offset costs related to public realm improvements.

Respectfully submitted,



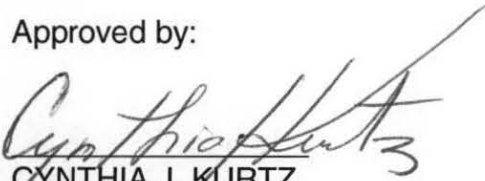
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Attachments: (8) Available at the following link: <https://www.ourpasadena.org/ECSP-CC-HR-022822>

- Attachment A – Recommended East Colorado Specific Plan
- Attachment B – Existing 2003 East Colorado Specific Plan
- Attachment C – Community Engagement Process and Public Feedback
- Attachment D – Comparison Table of Current and Recommended Standards
- Attachment E – Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report
- Attachment F – 2015 General Plan Environmental Impact Report
- Attachment G – Recommended General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments
- Attachment H – Required Findings