



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** DECEMBER 9, 2025

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

**FROM:** JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**ADDRESS:** 1364 E. GREEN STREET

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW (DHP2025-00258)  
NEW FOUR-STORY, 93,539 SQUARE-FOOT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WITH 260 AT-GRADE AND SUBTERRANEAN PARKING SPACES

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

**Environmental Determination**

1. Find that the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan designation, with the General Plan goals and policies for the site, and with the applicable zoning designation and regulations; and that the project site has no value as habitat for endangered or threatened species, and can be served by utilities and public services;
2. Find that approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, water quality or cultural resources, and,

Conclude, therefore, that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under §15332, (Class 32) "in-fill development projects" and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

**Findings for Compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance**

Acknowledge that there are no protected trees on the project site.

### **Findings for Concept Design Approval**

Find that the project, upon implementation of the conditions of approval, will comply with the purposes of design review, the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the East Colorado Specific Plan (ECSP), and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Districts.

Based on these findings, approve the application for Concept Design Review subject to the conditions in Attachment A, which shall be further reviewed during Final Design Review.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: Medium Mixed Use (0 – 2.25 FAR; 0-87 du/acre)
- Zoning: EC-MU-N (East Colorado Specific Plan, Mixed-Use Neighborhood)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the 2022 ECSP, and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Residential Districts.
- Site: The project site is 41,573 square feet, is located at the southeast corner of Green Street and Holliston Avenue, and is currently improved with a surface parking lot with 115 spaces. The project site is square in shape with a relatively flat topography and is located one block south of East Colorado Boulevard. There are no trees located on the project site, but a tree inventory submitted with the application identifies four street trees located along the South Holliston Avenue frontage and 11 trees on the adjoining St. Philip the Apostle Church property along the east and south property lines in close proximity to the project site. These trees include eight African Fern Pine trees (*Afrocarpus falcatus*), one Mexican Fan Palm tree (*Washingtonia robusta*), one Crape Myrtle tree (*Lagerstroemia indica*) and one Queen Palm tree (*Syagrus romanzoffianum*), none of which are protected trees. The project site adjoins the PS (Public/Semi-Public) zoning district on the south and east sides of the property.
- Surroundings: The surrounding properties include a mix of multi-family residential, religious and educational buildings ranging from one- to three-stories with varying construction dates and architectural styles. Adjoining the east and south property lines is St. Philip the Apostle Church and School (the closest building to the project site is the St. Philip the Apostle Church rectory building, which is located near the northeast corner of the project site, along Green Street.), across East Green Street and directly north of the project site is a surface parking lot, and to the west, across South Holliston Ave is the Pasadena City College (PCC) Child Development Center. The project site is also situated in close proximity to PCC and Caltech which are located directly one-half block east and two blocks south of the site, respectively. The majority of the nearby buildings are designed in contemporary or vernacular architectural styles. Additionally, there are a number of nearby designated historic resources including:

- Hill Avenue Branch Library (1925, Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury) at 55 S. Hill Avenue
- Early automobile-oriented milestone sign (1906) in the parkway in front of 1304 E. Colorado Boulevard
- Early automobile-oriented property (1929, Pacific Steel Building Company) at 1271 E. Green Street
- Burns R. Eastman Building (1926, Glenn Elwood Smith) at 1275 E. Green Street

The closest historic and landmark districts to the site include Rose Villa-Oakdale Landmark District, located approximately two blocks southeast of the site and the Green Street Village landmark district, located about 3.5 blocks west of the project site.

- Project Description: The project involves the construction of a new four-story, 93,539 square-foot research and development building with 260 parking spaces located at-grade and within a three-level subterranean parking garage. Additionally, two (of four) protected street trees (trees no. 3 and 4), which are a California Fan Palm Tree and an Incense Cedar Tree, respectively, are proposed to be removed to facilitate the proposed project. The request to remove both trees was reviewed by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) on September 10, 2025 and was approved by the City Manager on September 22, 2025. The remaining two street trees (trees no. 1 and 2), which are also a California Fan Palm and Incense Cedar, will be retained and protected during construction.
- Site Design: The proposed building is designed to encompass the entire site with the exception of the required setbacks, which are provided as follows: 8'-0" on the west side (South Holliston Avenue frontage), 15'-0" along the east and south interior lot lines, and 8'-0" on the north side (East Green Street frontage). The setback areas will also accommodate publicly accessible open spaces (PAOS), landscaping, and two driveway portals. The building exhibits a strong northward and westward orientation towards the street frontages; however, the primary façade is oriented towards East Green Street and will accommodate the main pedestrian entry into the building. Vehicular access will enter and exit the site and parking structure through two dedicated driveways at the southwest and northeast corners of the building, respectively. The site design also incorporates PAOS adjoining the sidewalk along both street frontages. The primary PAOS is located along East Green Street that will be integrated with the design of the main building entrance that features benches/seatings as well as an enhanced hardscape design. The second and smaller PAOS is captured in the building/façade break along Holliston Avenue and will also incorporate seatings and a decorative hardscape design. Although not programmed or intended as a PAOS, another landscaped area is identified just south of the driveway at the southwest corner of the site. Additionally, a bike parking area is also provided just east of the building entrance along Green Street.
- Architectural Style: Contemporary
- Developer: TC LA Development, Inc.
- Architects: Gensler
- Landscape Architect: Gensler

**ANALYSIS:**

**Design Commission Comments from Preliminary Consultation**

On May 13, 2025, the Design Commission reviewed an application for Preliminary Consultation for this project. The Commission’s comments from that meeting, with excerpts from the design team’s responses, and staff’s comments, are detailed in the chart below. The design team’s full responses are incorporated into the set of plans in Attachment C.

<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 1</b></p>
<p>Explore and consider how the project design is responsive to and reflects the unique character and design of the immediate and existing context and neighborhood, including mass and scale, design treatments, roof form, materiality and color. Consider drawing inspiration from buildings on the Pasadena City College campus, nearby historic buildings and landmark districts, and the approved mixed-use and hotel projects on nearby PD-35 zoned sites located at 1347-1365 E. Colorado Boulevard (hotel project) and 1336-1350 E. Colorado Boulevard (mixed-use project).</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p>
<p>“...Surveying E. Green Street in its entirety reveals an amalgamation of neighborhoods, historic character, and architectural variety. As a single line it traverses the Old Pasadena, Civic Center, Playhouse, and Green Street Village historic districts. The buildings in these districts of similar scale to 1364 E. Green Street are characterized by architecture as varied as their histories: from Spanish Colonial Revival at Castle Green to Mediterranean Revival at the Pasadena Civic Center, from the highly contemporary Kaiser-Permanente School of Medicine to the prominent office developments of 70 &amp; 80 S. Lake.</p> <p>...After analyzing the PCC campus buildings and the recently approved hotel and mixed-use projects on Colorado Boulevard, 1364 E. Green Street implements a simple, yet highly rationalized grid for its façade, echoing the geometric rigor of its neighbors. This grid is softened using filleted pilasters, which lighten the project in both light and shadow. Composed primarily of glazing and metal panels, the building’s envelope offers a high degree of transparency throughout while the metal panels are arranged uniquely at each elevation. Along Green Street, where the building entrance is centered, the metal panels are aligned vertically, a subtle nod to the dominant verticality of the primary facades at both PCC and the approved developments. The proposed green color of the panels, solid vertical geometry, and flat rooflines further connect 1364 E. Green Street to those projects. Finally, the dominant material of the project features a neutral off-white tone, tying the project closer to the nature plaster and stucco palette found in historic Green Street Village nearby, as well as the site’s neighboring church and school. The combined designed elements softly integrate architectural details that are responsive to and reflect the unique character and design of the immediate and existing context and neighborhood, including mass and scale, design treatments, roof form, materiality and color. More specifically, the design strengthens the connection between PCC and Green Street, while providing a sensitive transition to the adjacent residential neighborhoods and designated historic properties through upper story stepback and setbacks.”</p>
<p><b>Staff Analysis:</b> <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p>
<p>The design team has studied the nearby and surrounding context in order to identify relevant architectural precedents across a number of historic districts and has concluded that there is no single predominant architectural style in the area. Instead, due to its location near the last parcel at the east end of Green Street and the site’s proximity to PCC and the newly approved mixed-use and hotel projects on the nearby PD-35 parcels, the proposed design incorporates architectural influences from these projects and the buildings on the PCC campus. Some of these characteristics include the building’s form, fenestration and patterning, and detailing as well as its material and color palette to achieve a complementary visual relationship within the immediate area. The proposed design approach allows the proposed building to stand out while also fitting in.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 2</b></p>
<p>Consider a differentiated façade treatment to capture and reflect the resiliency of the building, its solar exposures and its programmatic goals.</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p>
<p>“Further façade studies have been developed with particular consideration given to orientation and solar exposure at each façade, as well the neighborhood context.</p>
<p><b>North Façade Strategy and Performance</b> – Facing Green Street and marking the building’s main entrance, the north façade features vertically aligned metal panels. With lower solar exposure, the north façade prioritizes</p>

contextual identify over shading, using uniform vertical panels to enhance daylight and frame views of the northern mountains.

**West Façade Strategy and Performance** – Facing Holliston Ave and adjacent to residential neighbors, the west façade has a staggered rhythm that is differentiated from that of the north and south. Due to the high solar exposure on the west façade, the design incorporates wider vertical panels to reduce area of solar exposure and enhance privacy for adjacent neighbors.

**South Façade Strategy and Performance** – To address higher solar exposure on the south façade, a horizontal shading shelf is incorporated to block direct sunlight. The staggered rhythm from the west elevation continues onto the south façade to maintain a cohesive and neighborhood-friendly façade. A study was conducted to apply the aligned Type A façade pattern to the south, but it was ultimately rejected, as the extra bay on the south side – caused by the absence of a central break – would have disrupted the visual rhythm and created an off-module condition.

**East Façade Strategy and Performance** – Like the west façade, the east façade is exposed to significant sunlight and is adjacent to a residential neighbor. To address this, wider vertical panels are used to reduce solar gain and enhance privacy.

The staggered rhythm from the south façade continues here to maintain visual continuity. Since both the south and east facades have one additional module compared to the north, applying the aligned Type A façade would disrupt the overall design harmony.

By having a strategy that deliberately addresses resilience, solar exposures, and contextual relationships for each façade, the project is enhanced by an overall 50% reduction in total solar radiation. This was achieved primarily by introducing both vertical and horizontal solid panels, thereby reducing the total area of glazing. This design strategy effectively reduces solar heat gain on all four elevations, with the most notable improvements observed on the south, west, and east facades. The width of solid panels varies on each side to strike a balance between minimizing solar gain and maximizing daylight penetration into the interior, as well as increasing privacy to adjacent neighbors.”

**Staff Analysis:** *Comment satisfactorily addressed.*

The revised design reflects a subtle, but differentiated treatment of the facades in consideration to the solar orientation and exposure while maintaining visual consistency in the fenestration, proportion, and application of materials and color. As explained by the design team, the north façade facing Green Street reflects a consistent and uniform appearance through the arrangement of the vertical panels to assist the building establish a clear identity within its context along the primary façade while also framing the view of the mountains looking north. The differentiation was more actively pursued to address solar orientation on the south, east and west facades in the way the metal panels are shifted, staggered and/or sized in concert with the glazing to account for the direction of and level of sun exposure as well as privacy consideration. The resulting treatments, while differentiated, maintains a cohesive design throughout and consistent with the building’s architectural concept.

**Preliminary Consultation Comment 3**

With exception of the design treatment for the entrance, openings for driveway and loading zone and stepped north façade of the fourth floor, the facades appear rigid and repetitious, particularly the east and south elevations, which adjoin existing and lower scale developments. Consider if it would be more beneficial to step the fourth floor along the southern edge, similar to the front East Green Street façade, to create additional relief to the adjoining building by offsetting the mass (and height) away from the property line.

**Applicant Response**

“Since Preliminary Consultation, the facades at the fourth floor have been stepped back at every elevation to provide relief to the building mass and reduce the scale of the project towards its residential neighbors. Additional human-scale elements have been incorporated, including:

- Vertical and horizontal metal panels along the south façade to provide solar shading and architectural depth across the façade
- Landscaping extended along the east façade at Level 04

The architectural language of the fourth floor has also been simplified throughout, further distinguishing it as the building’s “top” section.

Facing Holliston Avenue and adjacent to residential neighbors, the west façade features a staggered rhythm that distinguishes it from the north and south elevations. The design incorporates wider vertical panels which enhances privacy for nearby residences. The staggered panel pattern-mirrored across the façade break – adds visual interest while reinforcing the unique character of this elevation. In addition, the stepping back at level 4 accentuates the three-story base, with a distinct upper volume framed by surrounding terraces. At the south elevation, the fourth floor façade recess and staggered pattern continues from the west, then turn the corner

towards the east. A mirror of the west elevation, the east elevation carries the same wider panel to reduce the overall glazing area and enhance privacy to the neighbor at the east. The staggered pattern continues, differentiates this façade from that of the north. Since Preliminary Consultation, the project’s façade now carries a common architectural language and expression that allows for variation at each elevation. The stepping back of fourth floor facades at the north and east, together with the landscaped terrace, provides relief to the 2-story residential neighbor to the east. The wider metal panels on the east façade further enhances privacy.”

**Staff Analysis:** *Comment satisfactorily addressed.*

The revised design reflects a stepped 4<sup>th</sup> floor along all sides which is an improvement over the previous design in providing relief to the adjoining developments. On the north, this area will be designed as a roof terrace that will be appropriately oriented to capture views of the mountains. The step back on the south, east, and west elevations will result in unoccupiable or inaccessible space that will help minimize views onto the adjoining site, particularly along the south and east facades that share the boundary with St. Philip the Apostle Church and School.

**Preliminary Consultation Comment 4**

Restudy the fourth floor and how it could be further differentiated to clearly appear as the top section or termination of the building consistent with the differentiated based and middle sections.

**Applicant Response**

“Since Preliminary Consultation, the facades at the fourth floor have been stepped back at every elevation to provide relief to the building mass and reduce the scale of the project towards its residential neighbors. Additional human-scale elements have been incorporated, including:

- \* Vertical and horizontal metal panels along the south façade to provide solar shading and architectural depth across the façade
- \* Landscaping extended along the east façade at Level 04

The architectural language of the fourth floor has also been simplified throughout, further distinguishing it as the building’s “top” section. Facing Holliston Avenue and adjacent to residential neighbors, the west façade features a staggered rhythm that distinguishes it from the north and south elevations. The design incorporates wider vertical panels which enhances privacy for nearby residences. The staggered panel pattern-mirrored across the façade break – adds visual interest while reinforcing the unique character of this elevation. In addition, the stepping back at level 4 accentuates the three-story base, with a distinct upper volume framed by surrounding terraces. At the south elevation, the fourth floor façade recess and staggered pattern continues from the west, then turn the corner towards the east. A mirror of the west elevation, the east elevation carries the same wider panel to reduce the overall glazing area and enhance privacy to the neighbor at the east. The staggered pattern continues, differentiates this façade from that of the north. Since Preliminary Consultation, the project’s façade now carries a common architectural language and expression that allows for variation at each elevation. The stepping back of fourth floor facades at the north and east, together with the landscaped terrace, provides relief to the 2-story residential neighbor to the east. The wider metal panels on the east façade further enhances privacy.”

**Staff Analysis:** *Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 4.*

The revised design incorporates a fourth floor that is stepped back from the floors below it. This modification helps the building achieve a clear delineation of the fourth floor and establish a clear “top” section of the building. The expansive glazing and its proportion as well as the resulting fenestration pattern signify a departure from the floors below giving it a lighter appearance and further highlights the termination point of the building’s 4<sup>th</sup> floor.

However, the rooftop mechanical screen and its proposed 17-foot height depicted on Sheet PAS-A2.101, is taller than the 15-foot high 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors and visually competes with the design to the building overall and especially the intended and differentiated top section (4<sup>th</sup> floor) of the building. For this reason, condition of approval no. 4 is recommended to require the height of the roof top mechanical screen to be studied further and explore opportunities to lower its height to the degree possible so that the screen becomes a background feature of the building design.

<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 5</b></p>
<p>Further study the design of the two driveways relating to usability and circulation particularly at the southeast junction where they intersect and how that would impact the design. Also consider if it is more beneficial to consolidate the driveway approach into one and to a single location.</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p>
<p>“Since Preliminary Consultation, multiple studies have been conducted to provide a code compliant vehicular entrance that complements the building design and streetscape experience. The primary vehicular ingress has been relocated from Green Street to Holliston Ave, with traffic consolidated into a single driveway under the building footprint, rather than outside. The revised design pulls vehicular traffic off Holliston and Greet Street by providing longer driveways within the site. This design also dramatically cleans up the project’s Green Street façade, its primary elevation, minimized façade cutouts for vehicular traffic, and enhances the pedestrian experience at street-level. Circulation studies were conducted to determine whether one entry/exit driveway could serve the facility; however, it was determined to be infeasible when the building loading program, the turning radius and structural grids were taken into account.”</p>
<p><b>Staff Analysis:</b> <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 5.</i></p>
<p>The applicant has studied various iterations of the parking design with particular emphasis on the circulation on and around the site, including the location and number of driveways, access into/out of the site and with consideration to how each design might impact the design quality of the site, treatment and design of the facades as well as potential impacts to the public realm. While consolidation of the two driveways into one could not be achieved due to the programmatic requirements of the project, the proposed design was deemed to be the best option. In this design scheme, two one-way driveways will be provided at the southwest and northeast corners of the site. Their locations ensure minimal interruption to the use of the public right-of-way as well as the disruption to the site and building frontages along the streets. Additionally, the openings (and width) of the driveways correspond to the rhythm of the ground floor facades and respect the spans of the columns and window frames to achieve a consistent and appropriate alignment. The southwest driveway from Holliston Avenue traverses underneath the building and will serve as an entrance only to access at-grade, subterranean parking and loading spaces. The driveway at the northeast corner is located outside of the building footprint and will serve as an exit onto Green Street. If security gates are proposed in the driveway portals, their location and design shall be shown on the plans submitted for Final Design Review as well as the corresponding manufacturer’s specifications for the gates as recommended by condition no. 5 to ensure the material and design are complementary to the building design.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 6</b></p>
<p>Carefully consider and minimize the height of the rooftop mechanical screen to the degree possible to avoid the appearance of a fifth floor or unnecessary height. The screening material should be carefully considered to serve as an effective screen while also being high quality, and complementary to the building’s design and material palette.</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p>
<p>“The overall height of the mechanical screen has been reduced by 2’-0”. In addition, the design of the screen has been simplified and brought closer to the updated material palette of the project. The screen also introduces a perforated portion towards its tops, which functionally screens the equipment behind while also visually reducing its perceived height.”</p>
<p><b>Staff Analysis:</b> <i>Comment to be addressed through recommended condition of approval no. 4.</i></p>
<p>Although the height of the rooftop mechanical screen has been reduced by two feet, it’s overall height at 17 feet high continues to appear too high, especially when compared to the floors below it which are 15 feet high. The proposed perforated material in the top section helps minimize the visual impact due to its lighter and more porous appearance, but the overall height of the screen should continue to be studied and if possible, reduced to the degree possible so that it is lower than the height of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor to avoid overwhelming the building design while also reducing the building height as recommended by condition no. 4.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 7</b></p>
<p>Ensure that the communal spaces for the project are programmed and include amenities that will allow for their active use and appeal to different users. Similarly, the publicly accessible open spaces at the ground floor should also be adequately programmed and/or provided with seating or benches.</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p>
<p>“<b>Ground level:</b> The project has been deliberately held back to its maximum setbacks along Green Street and Holliston Ave, offering as much green space to the street level as possible, complementing the ECSP’s desire to implement wider sidewalks with a robust tree canopy and seating to create shaded, walkable connections between Colorado Boulevard and Green Street. Elements of the landscape design have been developed to incorporate</p>

programmed spaces, such as benches and a canopy at the Entry Plaza and Holliston communal space, and meandering paths lined with purposeful hardscape and planting. The street level setbacks support the desired amenity/walk/setback zone within the ECSP, allowing for a consistent pedestrian walkway path from the east side of the property on Green Street, to the south side of the property on Holliston. Additional landscaping is provided along the frontage of the building.

**Terrace level:** Elements of the landscape design have been developed to incorporate programmed spaces and to create attractive and inviting views and spaces for tenants and the public.

- Planters along the floor perimeter visible to the street
- Planting and 4 trees on north side of outdoor deck
- Seatings and tables under shade structure
- Secluded seating terrace on West"

**Staff Analysis:** *Comment satisfactorily addressed.*

Publicly accessible open spaces (PAOS) are provided on the ground floor at the building entrance facing Green Street and along Holliston Avenue. These areas will be enhanced with integrated seatings/benches, decorative hardscape/paving and shade trees. Additionally, common outdoor space for the building occupants is a 3,757 square-foot roof terrace located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. This outdoor space is situated along the north façade overlooking East Green Street and northward towards mountains. The design of this space is a mix of softscape and hardscape including shade trees and a variety of shrubs in raised planters along the exterior edge and interspersed between seating areas with tables and chairs in different configurations. The entire space is framed by two pergola structures positioned on the eastern and western side of the building flanking the entry below. The plans provided on Sheets COOR-L1.001 and COOR-L1.004 are conceptual at this stage of review and will be further developed for the Final Design Review submittal.

#### **Preliminary Consultation Comment 8**

The proposed project should carefully consider its site landscaping both at the ground and roof terrace, public and common outdoor spaces, and hardscape design as an opportunity to enhance the site and building design, while also highlighting important building features as well as create an attractive, inviting and usable outdoor spaces for employees, visitors and the public. The landscape on the ground floor should facilitate safe and attractive paths of travel while creating a seamless transition between the public and private realm at the sidewalk edge.

#### **Applicant Response**

**Ground level:** The project has been deliberately held back to its maximum setbacks along Green Street and Holliston Ave, offering as much green space to the street level as possible, complementing the ECSP's desire to implement wider sidewalks with a robust tree canopy and seating to create shaded, walkable connections between Colorado Boulevard and Green Street. Elements of the landscape design have been developed to incorporate programmed spaces, such as benches and a canopy at the Entry Plaza and Holliston communal space, and meandering paths lined with purposeful hardscape and planting. The street level setbacks support the desired amenity/walk/setback zone within the ECSP, allowing for a consistent pedestrian walkway path from the east side of the property on Green Street, to the south side of the property on Holliston. Additional landscaping is provided along the frontage of the building.

**Terrace level:** Elements of the landscape design have been developed to incorporate programmed spaces and to create attractive and inviting views and spaces for tenants and the public.

- Planters along the floor perimeter visible to the street
- Planting and 4 trees on north side of outdoor deck
- Seatings and tables under shade structure
- Secluded seating terrace on West"

**Staff Analysis:** *Comment satisfactorily addressed.*

As demonstrated on the conceptual landscape plans for the ground floor and roof terrace and discussed under Preliminary Consultation Comment 7, both publicly and privately accessible common open spaces will be attractively landscaped with a variety of landscape and hardscape features that include seating options and shade trees or shade structures. The proposed design enhances the usability and quality of the outdoor spaces while also complementing the building design and functionality of its interior spaces. At the ground floor, the setback along both street frontages, with the exception of pedestrian path of travel and driveways, will be landscaped and will soften and enhance the street edge and the pedestrian experience. Similar to the roof terrace, the publicly accessible open spaces on the ground floor are strategically situated along the building frontages and at the entrance that are complemented by benches, trees and enhanced hardscape design to create areas of respite for visitors and passerby.

<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 9</b></p> <p>Early consideration of the building materials should be studied by the design team to ensure the design incorporates a variety of high quality and durable materials along with an attractive color palette. Materials and colors should be carefully employed and in areas of the façades that will strengthen the architectural concept and achieve a cohesive design throughout the building while also helping minimize the appearance of unresolved mass. Materials should be employed to achieve a differentiated base that anchors the building to the site, such as materials that appear heavier and/or darker. Additionally, exterior finishes should not be reflective and changes in materials and colors should not create in-plane transitions, but terminate or wrap at/along the inside corner or similar natural stopping points.</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p> <p>"The material palette draws inspiration from notable building in the neighborhood, such as PCC, Caltech, and the upcoming developments on Colorado Blvd. The primary architectural element – the pilaster – is articulated with a high-quality stucco finish, echoing the character of these surrounding landmarks. Two shades of green metal panels define the secondary façade elements, introducing subtle contrast and depth. A green spandrel panel further enriches the composition, offering a nuanced interpretation of the color palette. Biophilic elements, such as planters and terrace landscaping, not only support programmatic goals but also enhance the building's visual appeal for passersby. Finally, bronze-toned perforated and solid screens introduce warmth and an earthy quality to the overall expression. The façade design emphasizes clarity and cohesion but with a slight play on rhythm. The developed minimized the appearance of unresolved mass and avoided in-plane material transitions. A darker green panel is intentionally used at the ground level to distinguish the base and, together with perimeter landscaping and trees, fosters a grounded, vibrant, and welcoming atmosphere."</p>
<p><b>Staff Analysis:</b> <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>The contemporary building will be supported and enhanced by a simple and high-quality material/color palette consistent with the finishes found within the surrounding context, including the buildings on the PCC and Caltech campuses as well as the newly approved mixed-use and hotel projects at the corner of Colorado Blvd and Hill Street/Holliston Avenue on the PD-35 site. The treatment of the facades includes extensive glazing, metal panels as accents and shade, spandrel glass panels, and perforated and solid equipment screens that are complementary to each other and provide visual richness and depth to the building.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary Consultation Comment 10</b></p> <p>Study the design of the parking structure to ensure it does not impact the existing street trees along South Holliston Avenue. Work with staff in the Department of Public Works to determine appropriate methods to ensure public tree protection. Any public tree removals that may be proposed shall require review by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee and approval by the City Manager.</p>
<p><b>Applicant Response</b></p> <p>"In response to comments received from the City, numerous studies have been carried out to consolidate vehicular circulation and minimize disruptions along Green Street. The proposed entrance for parking and loading has been relocated from Green Street to Holliston Avenue. To achieve this, the project proposes the removal of 2 existing trees along Holliston Ave: 1 California Fan Palm and 1 Incense Cedar. Additionally, the project proposes a total of 18 new trees to meet both off-site and on-site tree requirements as follows:</p> <p><b>Off-Site:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Required per ESCP: Tree is to be provided every 30 feet</li> <li>* Proposed: 8 new trees total</li> </ul> <p>Holliston Ave: Keep 2 existing, add 4 new. All 6 trees @30' o.c.          Green St: 4 new trees @ 40' o.c."</p>
<p><b>Staff Analysis:</b> <i>Comment satisfactorily addressed.</i></p> <p>Due to the redesign of the vehicular access, two public trees (California Fan Palm and Incense Cedar) located along the Holliston Avenue frontage were recommended for removal by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC) on September 10, 2025 and approved by the City Manager on September 22, 2025. As conditions of approval, the applicant is required to pay for the tree replacement fee and tree removal cost of both trees. Additionally, the proposed project also includes the planting of 18 new trees on- and off-site.</p>

## Programming and Circulation

The proposed project is a four-story research and development building that will be programmed with office and laboratory spaces and situated above a three-level subterranean parking garage with 260 spaces. The ground floor features laboratory and office spaces within

the front portions of the building, flanking an entrance lobby that leads and is connected to the building's vertical circulation consisting of three elevators and two stairwells within the building's central core and which serve all occupiable floors and the subterranean parking levels. The rear section of the ground floor is dedicated to back-of-house features, such as a generator, refuse collection, and bike storage/parking rooms. A significant portion of the rear section of the ground floor will provide 14 at-grade parking spaces as well as two loading spaces. The second through fourth floors provide the majority of the office/lab space within the building. The fourth floor is pulled back 42'-5" from the front façade to accommodate a roof terrace overlooking East Green Street with outdoor seatings, landscape features, and related amenities, with additional 4'-6" setbacks from the facade on the east and south sides and 9'-11" on the west side.

As designed, pedestrian access is provided from East Green Street, which helps activate the site's primary frontage. Vehicular access is achieved through a one-way ingress-only driveway located at the southwest corner of the site from South Holliston Avenue. This driveway serves all at-grade parking spaces before approaching the ramp to the subterranean levels. Vehicles exit the onsite parking via a second one-way egress-only driveway along the eastern edge of the site that leads to East Green Street. Additionally, fire access is provided along the southern and eastern property lines by a continuous pathway. The proposed circulation plan is provided on Sheet PAS-A1.103. The locations of the pedestrian entry and vehicular entrance/exits take advantage of the site characteristics and conditions to ensure safe paths of travel for both pedestrians and vehicles. Overall, the programming and proposed circulation are consistent with the building and site design and with the applicable design guidelines while also being responsive to the Design Commission's Preliminary Consultation comments.

### **Orientation**

The proposed project takes advantage of its corner site with a building design that addresses its primary frontage along East Green Street and its secondary frontage along South Holliston Avenue. Both street-facing north and west façades express a strong orientation toward both streets through their consistent design treatments, expansive glazing throughout, and location of pedestrian and vehicular access and exit. The main building entrance is positioned along the north façade facing East Green Street with an articulated and defined entry accented by a canopy that support a pedestrian scale. All facades feature expansive glazing that allow views and light into and out of the interior spaces and are consistently treated with variation to the placement and size of proposed metal panels to achieve a level of differentiation with consideration to solar orientation and exposure. The fourth-floor roof terrace is also oriented towards and overlooks the street below while also taking advantage of northern views of the mountains beyond. Driveway entrance and exit located at the southwest and northeast corners of the site are placed away from the pedestrian entrance to minimize disruption to the public realm and ensure safe paths of travel in and around the project site. As designed, staff finds that the project achieves an appropriate orientation to and engagement with the public realm that is consistent with its context and applicable design guidelines.

### **Height, Massing and Modulation**

The proposed four-story building is 79'-0" high and is compliant with the maximum allowable height for research and development land uses. The surrounding context includes residential and institutional buildings ranging between one- to four-stories in height. The proposed project incorporates a variety of design treatments to achieve an appropriate and compatible mass and

scale within its context through a stepped-back fourth floor, a façade break on each street facade, materiality, and fenestration. For example, both street-facing façades along East Green Street and South Holliston Avenue introduce recesses to articulate and signify the building entrance and accommodate the publicly accessible open space. Similarly, the fourth floor is stepped back on all sides and is significantly pulled back along the north façade to create a roof terrace. These design treatments help minimize the perceived mass and scale of the building and reduce its height to respond to the immediate context while also introducing a three-dimensionality quality to the building form and volume. The design of the facades presents a simple arrangement of similarly sized windows enhanced with metal panels and spandrels to create a layered appearance, while the columns, horizontal banding, window frames and wide overhangs at the roof level add depth to the facades. Moreover, the differentiated design of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor from the floors below it features continuous glazing on all sides and assists in minimizing the height of the building due to its light and transparent appearance. Overall, and for the reasons discussed above, the massing and modulation depicted in the elevation drawings are appropriate and responsive to the design guidelines.

### **Architectural Style and Detailing**

The proposed building is designed in a contemporary style within a rectilinear form that features a flat roof and expansive glazing set within frames and accented with metal panels and spandrels. The front elevation facing East Green Street depicts a repeated fenestration pattern, while the remaining elevations are subtly differentiated through the shifting/staggering of the metal panels and their size to address solar orientation. The “framing” element in stucco around each window/panel composition is a common feature that helps maintain a consistent pattern throughout the building. The 4<sup>th</sup> floor is set back from the floors below and is exclusively clad in glazing to achieve a differentiated, but complementary expression that is consistent with the contemporary style. The composition of the building expresses a base by way of a taller plate height and entry canopy, a middle section of the repeated 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors and finally a top section with the differentiated and stepped 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Finally, the design is supported by high quality, modern finishes in neutral colors such as concrete with a skim coat layer for the horizontal banding between the second and third floors and the fourth floor, metal panels, laminated spandrel and vision glass, and EIFS with stucco finish for the vertical framing element on the first to third floors. The geometric volume and modulated form of the building is consistent with the style and is further supported by the evenly distributed and stacked fenestration that is achieved through the arrangement of windows, metal panels and spandrel glass that results in a balanced solid to void relationship.

Overall, staff finds that the architectural concept of the proposed design is consistent with the design guidelines and will defer to Final Design Review for additional specifications and details of the proposed materials and details for the implementation of the proposed design treatments and features.

### **Compatibility**

The surrounding context lacks a predominant architectural precedent, but the design draws inspiration from the nearby PCC and Caltech campuses to inform the project’s design, building form, and finishes to achieve a compatible relationship with the surrounding neighborhood. The project design team also found inspiration in the recently approved mixed-use and hotel projects located at the corner of Colorado Boulevard and Hill and Holliston Avenues on PD-35 sites. As

such, the proposed building fits well with its immediate surroundings, in terms of its height, massing, setbacks, materiality and architectural design. The revised design submitted for this review reflects an improved and compatible relationship to the immediate context while the massing and modulation of the building have been further refined since Preliminary Consultation to achieve consistency with the design guidelines and visually reduce the appearance of mass in response to lower-scaled buildings in the vicinity.

### **Conceptual Landscape Design**

The proposed project will provide landscaping at the ground floor within the front setback and the PAOS located along Green Street and Holliston Avenue. These areas connect to the public right-of-way and the proposed landscape will enhance the street edge while also complementing and softening the building design. The PAOS will be further enhanced with seatings/benches and hardscape design. Additionally, a roof terrace is also proposed on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor as outdoor common space for the building occupants. Due to its expansive area, this outdoor space features different seating configurations within a variety of spaces and two pergola structures. The landscape design features plantings along the perimeter of the terrace and between the seating areas. The plant palette has been identified for both ground floor and roof terrace landscaping and includes a variety of shade trees and various shrubs. However, a detailed landscape plan that specifies the location and arrangement of the plants and their quantity has not been provided at this stage of review, but will be required as the project proceeds to Final Design Review. Based on the initial conceptual design, the proposed landscaping in both areas will further enhance the site and complement the development overall.

### **COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS:**

Staff routed the project for comment to several City departments, as well as other divisions of the Planning & Community Development Department, including the Public Works, Transportation, Fire and Housing Departments and the Building, Current Planning and Cultural Affairs Divisions of the Planning & Community Development Department. In particular, the Department of Transportation conducted a Local Mobility Analysis, which is included in Attachment D and recommended conditions of approval resulting from that analysis, and from all reviewing City Departments, are included in Attachment A.

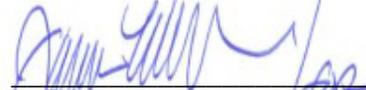
### **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

Staff recommends that the Commission determine the project to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), §15332, Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects. Based on the technical studies prepared by EcoTierra Consulting and Fehr & Peers (Attachments D and E), environmental consulting firms under contract to the City, the project would not have the potential to result in significant impacts related to air quality, noise or traffic. The project is consistent with the General Plan, the 2022 ECSP and the site's Zoning designation and applicable development standards. The project site is 41,573 square feet (less than five acres) and surrounded by other commercial and residential uses. The project site has been previously developed and graded and is currently improved with a 115-space surface parking lot. The project site is located in an urban area where utilities and public services can be adequately provided. Furthermore, there are no unusual circumstances that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class.

**CONCLUSION:**

Subject to the recommended conditions of approval, the revised project design has satisfactorily addressed the comments provided during Preliminary Consultation and is consistent with the design-related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the ECSP, and the Design Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-family Districts. Staff recommends approval of the application for Concept Design Review for the project with the conditions of approval described above and included in Attachment A, which will be reviewed during Final Design Review.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Reviewed by:



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Attachments:

- A. Recommended Conditions of Approval
- B. Current Plans & Elevations
- C. Responses to Preliminary Consultation Comments
- D. Local Mobility Analysis
- E. Environmental Documentation