



CITY OF MONTCLAIR
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

REGULAR ADJOURNED MEETING
September 14, 2015

COUNCIL CHAMBER
5111 Benito Street, Montclair, California 91763

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Sahagun led those present in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Flores, Commissioners Martinez, Sahagun and Vodvarka, Community Development Director Lustro, City Planner Diaz, Associate Planner Gutiérrez, and City Attorney Robbins

MINUTES

The minutes from the August 24, 2015 meeting were presented for approval. Commissioner Vodvarka moved, Commissioner Sahagun seconded, and the minutes were approved 4-0-1 (Chair Johnson abstained).

ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

AGENDA ITEMS

- a. PUBLIC HEARING - CASE NUMBER 2014-31 'A'
Project Address: 9303-9407 Central Avenue
Project Applicant: Montclair, LLC
Project Planner: Silvia Gutiérrez, Associate Planner
Request: Precise Plan of Design for a master sign program
CEQA Assessment: Categorically Exempt (Section 15311)

Associate Planner Gutiérrez reviewed the staff report.

Commissioner Vodvarka stated he was disappointed that the sign program did not illustrate exactly who the future tenants would be. Associate Planner Gutiérrez replied that a sign program provides general guidelines for future tenants, not to show specific tenants. The tenants that staff is aware of include Starbucks, Sleep Number, Dickey's BBQ, Tommy's, AT&T, Jersey Mike's and Fuji Grill.

Commissioner Sahagun asked for clarification about the signs on the east-facing elevation being halo-illuminated and asked if that meant lights would be pointed at them. Associate Planner Gutiérrez explained the illumination is placed within the interior of each channel letter as usual, but the face is opaque and the back of each character is open, creating a halo effect around each letter. Because the sign face is opaque, it will not be illuminated. City Planner Diaz stated the illumination will come from the halo so you can still see outline of the letters at night, but that it would not be overly bright. Commissioner Sahagun asked staff if they received any comments or letters from neighboring property owners. Associate Planner Gutiérrez replied since this item is not a public hearing, no notices were required to be mailed. She commented that after several rounds of communication back and forth between the applicant and staff working out revisions, the applicant is aware of and comfortable with the proposal. Commissioner Sahagun commented he was glad staff added additional conditions for the halo illumination and the timing. City Planner Diaz stated it was the only condition on the site where the front doors of the lease spaces face east as opposed to the other doors, which face west. The nearest residential property is about 70 feet to the east. The other buildings do not have signs of any kind on the back of the building. Commissioner Sahagun asked if there is a master sign program citywide to guide applicants on the minimums and maximums or is it individual? City Planner Diaz stated there is a City sign code that guides the overall preparation of signs for individual businesses and multi-tenant centers so staff uses these standards to work with in preparing particular sign programs. Commissioner Sahagun stated he understood there are a lot of national tenants out there that have their own logos and style. City Planner Diaz stated they may have their own styles and colors, but they are still subject to height limits and placements on buildings.

Vice Chair Flores asked how does the applicant decide how to put their signs? Normally, they are facing the street so you can see them as you drive by. With these signs, the only time you see them is when you turn into the property. How do you know what is at the

site? City Planner Diaz stated that is the purpose of monument signs. The monument signs are set perpendicular to the street to identify what is in the center. The other good thing about the center is that the buildings are less than 100 feet back from the street so the uses are easy to see. Vice Chair Flores asked if the chain link fence near the medical center at the north end of the property was going to stay or coming down. City Planner Diaz stated the chain link fence will be removed and the parking lot will be open but that parking in the north end would be for the medical center. The new project also would allow the medical center to get access from Central Avenue instead of having to go all the way around through the alley or from San José Street.

Commissioner Martinez asked if the monument sign would obstruct visibility for northbound traffic or cars exiting the center. City Planner Diaz stated the City Engineer reviewed the plans and does not expect it to be a problem. The setback for the sign is fairly far back from the street, and would not block the sight lines of drivers coming into or out of the site.

Commissioner Martinez moved that, based on the evidence submitted, a finding is made that the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 15311, Class 11(a), in that the project involves the approval of a sign program to govern the installation of on-premise signs, Commissioner Sahagun seconded, there being no opposition to the motion, the motion passed 5-0.

Vice Chair Flores moved to approve a Precise Plan of Design for a master sign program under Case No. 2014-31 'A' for the multi-tenant commercial center located at 9303-9407 Central Avenue, subject to the 22 conditions of approval contained in Resolution No. 15-1846, Commissioner Vodvarka seconded, there being no opposition to the motion, the motion passed 5-0.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Director Lustro updated the Commission regarding the Montclair Shoppes project. Building C, where Sleep Number and Starbucks are going to be, is almost completed. The reason construction on the rest of the site has lagged is because they are trying to get underground utilities in. He referenced the fact that the lot is only 120 feet deep so they are trying to do a lot in a small space. Once the underground utilities are in the ground, covered back up and base paving installed to allow the Fire Department access in the event of a fire, then Buildings A and B, Tommy's and the multi-tenant building, will start going vertical.

Commissioner Sahagun noticed storage containers in the back of the 99 Cents Only store and at Montclair East by the old David's Bridal. Director Lustro replied that staff will take a look at what is at the 99 Cents Only store. The activity next to the former David's Bridal is where Dollar Tree is moving into the southerly portion of that building.

Commissioner Sahagun asked when the mall construction would begin. Director Lustro replied that staff did not have an answer.

Commissioner Sahagun asked about bicycle lanes and wondered if there has been any thought into putting in bicycle lanes. Director Lustro replied that there is a Class 1 trail and a Class 2 trail currently in the City. The Class 1 trail is the PE trail along the city's north boundary, which extends from Claremont to Rialto. A Class 2 trail was striped on both sides of Mills Avenue between Holt Boulevard and Moreno Street several years ago as a CDBG project. A Class 2 trail that in the planning stages right now would be along Orchard Street between Mills and Benson Avenues. Staff is participating with the City of Ontario for a grant to construct this trail. There are a few other potential bike trails staff has discussed: one along San Bernardino Street, another possibly along Benson Avenue, which would require the cooperation of the cities of Ontario and Upland, and also another east-west bike lane in the south end of the City. There was a lot of resistance for years in Montclair to bike lanes and he feels there is more receptiveness to it now. The City Manager would like to pursue a comprehensive update of the General Plan, which is long overdue, and is interested in having an element added to address alternative modes of transportation, which would include bike lanes and bike trails.

Commissioner Sahagun asked about the Transcenter and the port-a-potty situation; a resident asked him to bring it up and, after running into some Public Works Department employees one morning at a convenience store, he learned the train station has earned a reputation as the "crack station." He knows our Mayor sits on two or three different boards representing us and he would like the Mayor read his comments and make the rest of our City Council aware. The Montclair station is very important and for comments like that to be made, maybe we need something other than port-a-potties because we have men and women using the station. This is the gateway to our city and what we are trying to achieve in Montclair. We have Metrolink, Omnitrans, and people boarding day and night and felt we needed to take a close look and do something. He understands it is not our property, but because it is one of the main gateways into our city. The resident that brought it up is involved with Neighborhood Partnership and uses the station and brought it to his attention. As development comes, the problem needs to be addressed and we need to come up with an alternative. Director Lustro replied this issue has been discussed by the Commission before and the Commission is well aware Caltrans owns the Transcenter. The City has very little ability to effect any permanent improvements or any significant improvements at the Transcenter at this time. One change that has occurred fairly recently is that the City has assumed responsibility for maintenance of the parking area because Caltrans was doing little to no maintenance. Staff continues to maintain the Metrolink platforms. The fact that the Transcenter is the gateway into Montclair is not lost on anybody in this building. As development continues to take place in North Montclair, what we ultimately hope to see happen is that the Transcenter will be transformed into a significant amount of housing that will have structured parking allowing the vast sea of surface parking to be replaced. Once Caltrans is out of the equation, staff can accomplish a lot more. Commissioner Sahagun commented that generally the cities do better than the agencies do because it's local and we own it.

Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Embree
Planning Commission Secretary