

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2009

2008-0485 Business Identification on Ground Signs and Size of Street Address Numbers (Study Issue) –MH

Mariya Hodge, Associate Planner, presented the staff report. Ms. Hodge said staff's recommendations are outlined on pages 15 to 17 in the report.

Comm. McKenna said she liked this staff report as a number of issues are covered that are important for the public to understand including that signs are for notification, and not for publicizing. She referred to staff's recommendation to reduce the length of property frontage needed to allow a second ground sign from 500 feet to 300 feet and asked how this might impact the distance between signs and if they could run into each other. Ms. Hodge said there is a potential for the recommendation to decrease the spacing between signs. Ms. Hodge said that currently there is no requirement in the code for sign spacing and that generally it is good to have signs at least 150 feet apart. Ms. Hodge said that staff is not recommending restrictions on spacing at this time. Comm. McKenna said that she would like to see staff consider providing flexibility in spacing between signs rather than have a rigid requirement on the spacing. **Trudi Ryan**, Planning Officer, said that through the sign permit process staff could review the spacing between the signs and that the Commission could recommend that an additional guideline be included in the City-wide Design Guidelines addressing appropriate spacing between signs. Comm. McKenna said that she would like to see some flexibility regarding spacing included.

Comm. Klein asked staff about the proposed sign heights and why El Camino Real (ECR) has different requirements than the rest of the City. Ms. Hodge discussed the maximum sign heights throughout Sunnyvale. She said when staff looked at proposing the addition of more signs on ECR that varying the height of the signs would make the signage less dominating. Comm. Klein discussed the naming of shopping centers, naming conventions, and how some centers are named after a particular tenant asking what happens to shopping center signs named after a tenant when the tenant changes. Ms. Hodge said Sunnyvale does not have many centers that are named after a tenant and if the tenant were to change then the sign or the name would need to change and that this would be an issue for the property owner. Ms. Ryan clarified that currently the sign code will allow the name of center and three tenants, or four tenants. Ms. Ryan said staff is recommending that a sign can include four tenants and if desired the name of the center can be added which allows additional square footage for the signage. Comm. Klein said that the staff recommendation is to require at least the first letter of the direction of and address, i.e. N (North), S (South), E (East),

or W (West) and asked if staff has any recommendation as far as a Road, Street or Way or initials of street names like ECR. Ms. Hodge said that currently the code does not require the street name on the sign and staff is not recommending a change requiring street names, confirming that staff is recommending the requirement of the street number and the direction and that staff thinks the N, S, E or W should be included.

Vice Chair Chang asked staff that if a shopping center qualifies to have a second monument sign are the restrictions and guidelines the same as the first monument sign. Ms. Hodge said yes with the exception that the heights of the monument signs on El Camino Real would be different. Vice Chair Chang discussed providing a shopping center name on the monument sign with staff with Ms. Ryan saying that some centers do not have a name and staff does not recommend requiring a name.

Chair Rowe discussed with staff the recommendation of reducing the length of the property frontage needed to allow a second ground sign from 500 feet to 300 feet. Staff clarified that the height allowed for signs in most of the City is 10 feet or lower and along ECR a sign is allowed to be up to 25 feet and if there are two signs staff recommends that the second sign be restricted to 15 feet. Chair Rowe discussed the staff recommendation of the copy size versus the address number size. Ms. Hodge said currently there is no minimum size for text that is not the address and staff is recommending a minimum copy height of four inches which is smaller than the minimum for the address number size which is six inches.

Chair Rowe opened the public hearing.

Joe McKenna, owner of Golden West Collision Center, said his business is located inside Sunnyvale Chevrolet and both businesses are located on El Camino Real and cannot be seen from the street. He said when he started the business he did not realize there would be no visibility from the street. He said he has no signage on El Camino Real as the Sunnyvale Chevrolet property frontage is not long enough to support a second sign. He said he recently lost referral business from a large insurance company because customers said they could not find his business and emergency vehicles would have difficulty locating his business in an emergency. He said he is behind the dealership and the only access to his business is through the dealership. Mr. McKenna provided pictures of Sunnyvale Chevrolet, said he has a unique situation, and would appreciate any advice and flexibility regarding his signage.

Comm. Klein discussed with staff the length of the frontage of Sunnyvale Chevrolet with staff saying that it is approximately 300 feet and the new guidelines could possibly allow a second sign though the involved parties would

need to discuss whether the second sign would be allowed. Comm. Klein discussed with Mr. McKenna the length of the frontage with Mr. McKenna agreeing the length is about 300 feet and reiterated his request for flexibility in the code to help businesses with unique situations like his. Comm. Klein discussed possibly adding signage and working with the dealership about either adding the second sign or possibly putting additional signage on the existing sign. Mr. McKenna said that the existing sign is a corporate sign for Chevrolet and even the dealership does not touch it so he does not think it would work to add on to the existing sign.

Comm. Sulser asked Mr. McKenna if there are any specific changes that he would like to see. Mr. McKenna said he would like the Commission to allow more flexibility. Comm. Sulser asked who he leases from, with Mr. McKenna saying that he and Chevrolet lease from the family that owns the property. Comm. Sulser discussed with Mr. McKenna the property and that the common areas of the property are the driveways, and that the main office for his business is behind his neighbor, Beacon Lighting.

Comm. Hungerford clarified with Mr. McKenna that he leases the property, that he has no frontage on El Camino Real, that the driveways are common area for his business and Sunnyvale Chevrolet, and that he shares the same business hours as Sunnyvale Chevrolet. Comm. Hungerford asked if a second sign were allowed does he think Chevrolet would let him have a sign. Mr. McKenna said the dealership is neutral and that the property owner is backing him. Comm. Hungerford confirmed with staff if the frontage length is 300 feet or more that a second sign could be allowed with the proposed staff recommendation.

Comm. McKenna commented that there is no relationship between herself and Mr. McKenna. Comm. McKenna said that signs should identify businesses not advertise and that Mr. McKenna is hoping to achieve business identification. Mr. McKenna reiterated that if there were an emergency that it would be difficult for emergency vehicles to find his business.

Chair Rowe discussed with staff the spacing between the signs. Ms. Ryan said the proposed provision is not the spacing between the signs, just that if there is 300 feet or more of frontage that two signs could be used.

Chair Rowe closed the public hearing.

Comm. Hungerford discussed with staff the numerical signs with the N, S, E or W directional indicator and said that he thinks it would be advisable to have a naming convention about where the directional indicator would be. Comm. Hungerford asked if staff has a recommendation. Ms. Hodge said there is the

option of providing the naming convention on the directions. She said staff had differing opinions about the naming convention. Comm. Hungerford commented that allowing flexibility from the proposed 300 feet on the length of frontage could present some “fuzziness” in the code and at the same time allowing flexibility for businesses with frontage a little short of 300 feet or with unique situations would be nice. Ms. Ryan agreed that allowing flexibility on the proposed 300 feet could be problematic and that the Commission might want to include in their recommendation to Council that staff determine how many properties come close to having 300 feet of frontage and propose a different number if it would help businesses.

Chair Rowe asked staff with the proposed changes to signs how staff would handle conformance. Ms. Ryan said if the proposed changes are adopted that any sign that does not conform to the regulations would only have to be brought up to code when a new sign is proposed or another major modification were being proposed for the property. Ms. Ryan added that any sign that was never legal, that staff has the authority to ask for modifications to the sign. Staff said that the City cannot regulate the content of the sign and can regulate how much information can be provided on the sign.

Comm. Sulser asked staff if the regulations are limited to 10 syllables or 10 items of information for each business. Ms. Ryan said the code is for 10 items of information and examples are a syllable, a logo, or in a language that is character-based, a character. Ms. Ryan said the 10 items can be a combination of the types of items.

Chair Rowe said that up to four names are proposed to be allowed on a sign and asked if that means only four rows of information. Ms. Hodge said that it is up to property owner how they allocate space on the sign. Ms. Ryan referred to attachment D, page 3 and 5 which show and examples of how four tenant’s information could be displayed in either rows or panels and both are legal signs.

Comm. McKenna moved with staff recommendation for **Alternative 1** with two minor modifications. She said the modifications would be to allow staff flexibility to review the 300-foot property frontage limit by taking a look at properties and to allow staff the flexibility to look at spacing between signs. Comm. Hungerford seconded the motion. Comm. Hungerford offered a Friendly Amendment that if there is a directional identifier in the address that the direction be included and that the naming convention would be to have the numerical address first with the direction indicator, such as East or West be displayed after the number. Comm. McKenna accepted the Friendly Amendment. Comm. Hungerford said, regarding Comm. McKenna’s modification about staff having flexibility on the

spacing between signs, that staff had mentioned that the spacing could be addressed in Design Guidelines. Comm. McKenna agreed that she would like the spacing addressed and said staff could address this issue however they would like to as long as it is addressed.

Comm. McKenna said she thinks staff has thought through many sign issues and that she thinks the proposed modifications deal with the concerns that are raised by the community and the concerns of the business community. She said she would like to forward these recommendations on to City Council.

Comm. Hungerford said that he thinks this was a well thought-out staff report and with the proposed suggestions that he is pleased to be forwarding these recommendations on to City Council for their consideration.

ACTION: Comm. McKenna made a motion on 2008-0485 to recommend to City Council staff's recommendation as shown in the Alternative 1 of the report with modifications: for staff to perform additional research on property frontage lengths to determine if there are a significant number of sites that would fall below the 300-foot standard and if so, allow the flexibility to slightly reduce the proposed 300-foot requirement for a second ground sign; for staff to review appropriate spacing between ground signs including distance from existing signs on neighboring sites; to require that where a directional identifier such as East or West is included with the address number that the direction be displayed after the number. Comm. Hungerford seconded. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

APPEAL OPTIONS: This recommendation will be forwarded to City Council for consideration at the February 10, 2009 meeting.